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

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 2 April 2007

Lundi 2 avril 2007

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 April 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 avril 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, today marks the second anniversary of the passing of Pope John Paul II. I want to advise you and members of this House that on this occasion I will be presenting a private member's bill which, if passed into law, will designate the second day of April of every year as Pope John Paul II Day in the province of Ontario. By doing so, this Legislature will not only honour the man who served as spiritual leader to millions in this province and around the world but will ensure that the values of compassion, respect and tolerance—values personified throughout his life—are contemplated and, indeed, celebrated by the citizens of this province.

Although I am not Roman Catholic, I have felt the powerful influence of this unique human being, who carried out his calling to leadership with humility, with compassion and with courage. He made human dignity and human rights his passion. His life has inspired young and old, and his great impact has been felt by faiths and cultures around the globe. It is my hope that by setting aside this day as proposed, every Ontarian, regardless of religion or culture, will be encouraged to embrace and to promote those values with the hope that we will be strengthened as individuals, as a province and indeed as a country.

I therefore ask all members to support this bill when it comes before the House next and that the government will support its speedy passage into law.

Dziękuję.

MINISTER'S VISIT TO HAMILTON

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I am pleased to rise today to talk about the success of the McGuinty government's initiative and dedication to injured workers across Ontario.

Last week, the Minister of Labour, Minister Peters, visited Hamilton to announce increases in reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. This is great news, not only to our community but to all of Ontario. An increase of 7.5% will be seen over the next three years to

injured workers' benefits. This will be a significant help to those who are unable to work due to their injuries.

During Minister Peters's announcement he mentioned how much he likes coming to Hamilton, where he always makes a point of shopping at the Beach Road deli to pick up some of their world-famous kielbasa. He is thrilled now that they have a new location on Locke Street, a wonderful and unique shopping district in Hamilton.

I accompanied Minister Peters on his Locke Street quest as another famous Locke Street location, the west town, is one of my favourite places. The staff at the Beach Road deli were delighted to have the minister shopping. The owner's daughter, Christina—Dan Kwiatkowski's daughter—was there, and with gracious hospitality served Minister Peters some tasty kielbasa. We then walked across the street to another Locke Street landmark, the Locke Street Bakery, for their famous bagels. Owner Peter Giorgini welcomed Minister Peters with his big smile and his ready handshake. He even took Minister Peters back to show him how he makes those famous bagels.

Citizens of Hamilton want to thank Minister Peters for visiting Hamilton, sharing the good news for injured workers, and for his interest in our small business community on Locke Street.

MINISTER OF PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): This Legislature has many traditions, ways that we show respect to the people who built this province and to the people who elected us. Over the past two weeks, we have seen the minister responsible for the lottery corporation ignore those traditions.

He refused to step aside even though the government agency he is responsible for has been mismanaged; even though the agency he is responsible for has allowed Ontarians to be victims of fraud; even though he knew about the problem six months ago and did absolutely nothing. This isn't acceptable. People expect integrity and honesty from their representatives. This minister has not delivered.

Dalton McGuinty has refused to deliver because he has refused to ask for the minister's resignation. That is why, on Friday, my colleagues and I were pleased to launch a petition to allow Ontarians who are outraged by the minister's behaviour to demand his resignation. I encourage Ontarians who are upset by the lack of integrity

of Dalton McGuinty's government to sign this petition and ask for his resignation.

The petition is available from my office in Woodstock, from all my PC caucus colleagues and their offices, or on my website, www.erniehardemannmpp.com. The petition says in part that Ontarians have a "right to expect leadership from their government."

The people signing the petitions are asking that "Dalton McGuinty start upholding the standards of integrity, responsibility and accountability, make the protection of the interests of all Ontarians a priority, and demand the resignation of David Caplan, the minister currently responsible for the lottery system."

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): There's a very well-used phrase, and that's about chickens coming home to roost. They're coming home to roost on Dalton McGuinty's mega nuclear power plan.

Just last week, it was reported that the Nuclear Waste Management Organization has deemed sedimentary rock, beloved of Ontarians, to be a worthy home for nuclear waste. In the past, it has only been something that would be shipped up north, but now reporters in London, Kingston, Windsor, Barrie, Toronto and Hamilton are talking about their communities being candidates as the final resting place for so many, many tonnes of high-level, toxic, radioactive waste. Obviously, being selected in this negative lottery is not a prize communities want to win. It's bad for investment and bad for people wanting to live in an area, frankly.

This government has a big window of opportunity to set aside this nuclear mega scheme, set aside wasting \$40 billion on nuclear plants and set aside the opportunity to make every community in Ontario a potential target for a nuclear waste dump.

Ontario communities count on the provincial government to protect them. The question is, will this one do that?

1340

BRAMPTON CIVIC HOSPITAL

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today to thank our health minister, George Smitherman, and our government for making an additional investment of \$114 million towards our new Brampton Civic Hospital and its capital costs.

This fall, the Brampton Civic Hospital will open with 479 beds, increasing shortly thereafter to 527 beds in 2009. Our current hospital's capacity to deal with emergency room visits will more than double by the time we reach full capacity.

This October, one of the finest hospitals in all of Ontario will open in Brampton. Our government's investment means that we're going to be able to provide the residents of Brampton with the highest quality of health care available.

Building a brand new hospital is rare for any community, and I'm extremely proud of Mayor Susan Fennell, the Brampton Board of Trade, community groups and individuals for responding to the fundraising needs of the William Osler Health Centre for the benefit of Brampton Civic Hospital. We are making history together. Clearly, my community recognizes and appreciates its role in helping our province build a world-class facility.

On behalf of the residents of Brampton, I would like once again to thank our government and the minister for their ongoing leadership and commitment to health care in my community of Brampton.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): Last week, the Toronto Sun carried an article titled, "How the Grits Tried to Spin a Scandal." Of course, the scandal referred to was with the Ontario lottery system and the rip-off of millions of dollars of winnings from ticket purchasers. The article detailed the efforts of highly paid political advisers Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren to come up with ways to dispute the claim and protect the tails of lottery officials and members of the McGuinty government.

The same underhanded efforts are now underway to stop an independent investigation of allegations of obstruction of justice, a Criminal Code offence, that the CBC's Fifth Estate suggested occurred in the Bob Edmonds case, a contention that Ombudsman Marin agreed could well have happened.

The allegation involved a senior command officer of the OPP, creating a clear conflict for the OPP, yet the government insists they are the appropriate police service to investigate. The government's highly paid spin doctors are advising them to push back at the opposition parties, charging they're not supporters of the OPP.

These are gutter Liberal tactics at work here. Police investigating themselves, especially dealing with serious allegations, is not appropriate and is a significant principle within government legislation currently before the House.

If the government continues with their refusal to allow an independent investigation of the obstruction-of-justice allegation, the official opposition will consider utilizing all procedural tools available to us to convey our abhorrence of what increasingly looks like a political cover-up.

JOHN ROBERTS

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): On Friday night, the Honourable John Roberts passed away and Canada lost one of the most intelligent and visionary politicians of our time.

John Roberts was elected to the House of Commons in 1968, 1974 and 1980 in the then swing riding of St.

Paul's. He served as Secretary of State of Canada, Minister of the Environment and Minister of Employment and Immigration.

During his time as Minister of the Environment, John Roberts was one of the first and most passionate defenders of our environment, going head to head against President Reagan and the United States government, bringing recognition to the need to protect the environment and eventually laying the groundwork for an historic acid rain treaty.

John Roberts ran for the Liberal leadership in 1984. While he didn't win, his contribution to the federal Liberal Party in Canada was a lasting one. There are still numerous Roberts supporters participating at a variety of levels in federal and provincial politics, including myself.

In 1984, as I was finishing up my last year of university, it was John Roberts's decision to seek the Liberal leadership that convinced me to take that step from a follower of politics to a participant, as I joined his campaign convinced, to this day, that he would have made a great leader and Prime Minister.

It was John Roberts's intellect, professionalism and compassion for the disadvantaged, the environment and democratic renewal, mixed with his dedication to growing our economy, that inspired me to dedicate my time, passion and eventually my life to public service.

On behalf of all members of the Ontario Legislature, I would like to express our condolences to the family and many friends of the Honourable John Roberts.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): I rise today to speak about an important day—a day that marked new beginnings for Ontario citizens. On March 22, no less than two weeks ago, the Honourable Greg Sorbara presented the 2007 Ontario budget. It spoke of creating new opportunities, strengthening our economy and building on our investments in Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

The words of my colleague the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, speaking to the new Ontario child benefit last week, drew on a serious truth: Family and child poverty in Ontario is an issue that affects more than one person, and in more ways than one. It affects the self-esteem of children, their families and their futures.

Through the \$2.1-billion Ontario child benefit, 1.3 million Ontario families with children will benefit from the program. It equates to providing thousands of low-income families the opportunity to move off social assistance without having to worry about losing support for their children.

I am pleased to see that this government is moving towards putting Ontario children first. The Ontario child benefit will be given to support any child from a low-income family whether or not his or her parents are working or receiving social assistance.

Later today, we will be debating this budget in further detail. Let me say that the present social assistance sys-

tem is not working in favour of Ontario children. It is a system that currently excludes the majority of children from receiving support.

ONTARIO PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise in the House today to talk about policy. In fact, it's about a lack of policy with regard to the members opposite.

Today's Pembroke Daily Observer raises the issue that the leader of the official opposition seems to come up short on a very necessary requirement of a leader, which is his policies. While the McGuinty government has been a leader in developing new, innovative ideas and legislation, the members opposite have been using every excuse they can to delay the release of their policy platform.

In the few so-called policies they have discussed so far, the Ontario Conservatives have pledged to cut \$2.6 billion from the health care system, take money from public health care and hand it over to for-profit-driven health care corporations, and take money from public schools and hand it over to private schools. We can't go back to the Harris days of cuts, damage and neglect, though that seems to be exactly what the Ontario Progressive Conservatives want to do.

What is more, the members opposite will be getting help from the right-wing radical Randy Hillier, who is quoted as saying, "[They] don't have their election platform outlined yet," but that he can help shape it.

The McGuinty Liberals are working hard to make Ontario stronger and give Ontarians access to more opportunities through providing strong leadership and effective policies. While the Tories have little to offer outside of cuts, we continue to move Ontario forward and to help Ontarians succeed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 109(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. McMeekin presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. McMeekin: Yes. This cleans up committee assignments to various standing committees given the recent appointment of a new Minister of Revenue.

The Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to introduce some guests in the members' gallery: Robyn Henderson-Espinoza and Stephanie Huston from Chicago, Illinois. Robyn works for the Attorney General of Illinois. Welcome to Ontario.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to acknowledge some guests from Hamilton. They are striking workers from the FirstOntario Credit Union, and they're here to bring issue with their cause.

1350

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Joining us in the west gallery today, on the occasion of the tabling of the private member's bill honouring Pope John Paul II, are Eparchial Bishop John Pzak of the Slovak Byzantine Catholic Eparchy; Father Thomas Rosica, chief executive officer of Salt and Light Catholic television; Father Matthew Drury of St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Thornhill; Mr. Neil McCarthy, representing His Grace Archbishop Thomas Collins of the Archdiocese of Toronto; and Mr. Joe Sinasac, the editor of the Catholic Register. Please welcome them.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Also joining us on the occasion of the introduction of the Pope John Paul II Day bill are Mr. Jesse Flis, former member of Parliament and first vice-chairman of the board of directors of the Pope John Paul II Care Centre, Copernicus Lodge; Mr. Vladislav Lizon, president of the Polish Canadian Congress; Mr. Ted Loyko, vice-president of the Polish Canadian Congress; Stanley Godzisz, general secretary of the Polish Canadian Congress; and Mr. Marek Goldyn, chairman of the Canadian-Polish Foundation. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming our guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day /
Projet de loi 194, Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Passing this bill into law will designate the second day of April of every year as Pope John Paul II Day in the province of Ontario. By doing so, this Legislature will not only honour the man who served as spiritual leader to millions in this province

and around the world, but will ensure that the values of compassion, respect and tolerance, values personified throughout his life, are contemplated and celebrated by the citizens of this province. It is my hope that by setting this day aside as proposed, every Ontarian, regardless of religion or culture, will be encouraged to embrace and to promote those values, with the result that we will indeed be strengthened as individuals, as a province and as a country.

I therefore ask all members to support this bill when it comes before this House next and that the government support its speedy passage into law.

FAMILY DAY ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DE LA FAMILLE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 195, An Act to proclaim Family Day /
Projet de loi 195, Loi proclamant le Jour de la famille.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The bill officially declares the third Monday of each February Family Day. I might add that this bill was brought to my attention by a third-year criminology student at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Alison Stycuk-Albrecht. She has worked in the field of social services and now is a legislative intern in my constituency office.

Research by the National Centre for Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that children who consistently eat dinner with their families are less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs. Other provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia—either have or are considering this legislation, along with other jurisdictions throughout the world. I would ask all members to support the initiative of this bill.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, April 2, 2007, Tuesday, April 3, 2007, and Wednesday, April 4, 2007, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will 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 1355 to 1400.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 297. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craiton, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Ferreira, Paul	Murdoch, Bill	Tory, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DU SPORT

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

It was only two weeks ago in a statement to the House when I congratulated Team Ontario on their impressive performance at the 2007 Canada Games in Whitehorse. For the eighth time, Team Ontario captured the Canada Games flag, and we are very proud of those young athletes.

I was proud to represent Premier McGuinty and the government of Ontario at the opening ceremonies, which showcased Ontarian athleticism at its best. All Ontarians and all of us in this House are proud of our amateur athletes for their performance, their ability and their dedication. Athletes, through their example, encourage and inspire us all to lead healthy, active lives.

The Ontario government is committed to providing the necessary support to help our athletes perform at their best. That is why today I'd like to take a moment to announce the appointment of 19 Ontarians to a new sport advisory committee for the Minister of Health Promotion. I'll have the privilege of working with this

highly respected group, and I've asked them to provide me with their expert advice. Our work will be aimed at building a stronger sport system and establishing Ontario's leadership in amateur sport.

L'idée d'un comité consultatif du sport provient d'un besoin d'étudier des moyens nouveaux et innovateurs de faire progresser le sport en Ontario. Le gouvernement McGuinty, dans la province de l'Ontario, reconnaît l'importance du sport et des loisirs. Nous offrons de nombreux programmes qui visent à aider nos athlètes à obtenir de bons résultats lors des compétitions à l'échelle nationale et internationale, et aussi à augmenter les taux de participation au sport et à l'activité physique chez les Ontariens.

One example is that Greg Sorbara, our Minister of Finance, reconfirmed our commitment to the Quest for Gold program, which this past year invested \$10 million in high-performance athletes, enhanced coaching and competitive opportunities, and received that budgetary commitment for the upcoming fiscal year. Other examples are the communities in action fund and the Sport for More program, which provide greater participation in sport and recreation throughout Ontario, a key goal of our Active 2010 strategy.

Our government also understands the importance of providing the community recreation infrastructure that is necessary for both high-performance athlete development and increased recreational participation, and has provided \$70 million in 2006-07.

While these initiatives are helpful, there is cause for concern. For instance, the number of athletes from Ontario on Olympic teams has steadily been declining. In 1984, for instance, the Winter Olympics held in Sarajevo, 52% of the team was comprised of athletes from Ontario. Since that time, the percentage of athletes from Ontario on winter Olympic teams has steadily reduced, with the most recent team, in Turin, having only 19% of our athletes coming from Ontario.

In an eight-year period, we saw a 42% decline in funding from the government. I'm proud to be part of a government that's seen a 134% increase in funding.

I'd like to introduce the members of the sport advisory committee. They're all located in the Speaker's gallery. Mentioning one or two sentences about these individuals does not do justice, so I apologize in advance, but such are the time constraints.

—Let me introduce an eminent sport specialist with a particular focus on women in sport, Dr. Julia Alleyne, if she could stand;

—One of Canada's most accomplished Olympic swimmers, who has returned home to Ontario after turning Australia's swim program into the best, winner of two gold Olympic medals, six world records in swimming, a member of the Order of Canada, Alex Baumann;

—Representing our provincial sport and multi-sport organizations, Mr. Jim Bradley—not that Jim Bradley; the better-looking Jim Bradley—president of the Sport Alliance of Ontario;

—Three-time wheelchair basketball Paralympics gold medalist Tracey Ferguson;

—The CEO of YMCA Ontario and president of the YMCA of Greater Toronto, Mr. Scott Haldane is with us;

—A leader in Canada's sport community, a former Olympic sailor, a past member of the International Olympic Committee, a member of the Canadian Olympic Hall of Fame, Mr. Paul Henderson;

—A renowned basketball coach, an aboriginal sport advocate, and a teacher in the school system in Ontario, Mr. Gregory Henhawk;

—Canada's greatest pro baseball player, baseball hall of famer, Cy Young award winner, 20-game winner for six consecutive seasons, Mr. Fergie Jenkins;

—An accomplished national swimmer and curler, a board member of the Canadian Olympic Committee, the Coaching Association of Canada and the Special Olympics for Canada, the executive director of the Canadian Canoe Association—and we ran into each other at a swim meet at the Nepean Sportsplex this weekend where her daughter and son were competing—Anne Merklinger;

—A long-time national swim team member, Olympic and national participant and champion, winner of more than 70 international medals for Canada, a 30-time national champion, Ms. Joanne Malar;

—A multi-talented athlete, coach, and president of the Toronto Sports Council, University of Toronto Sports Hall of Fame inductee, and executive vice-president of the Toronto 2008 Olympic bid committee, Karen Pitre;

—An eminent industry supporter through his work on behalf of RBC Financial Group, a volunteer swim coach, the manager responsible for marketing campaigns for the 2010 Olympics and Paralympics, from RBC, Mr. Andrew Shibata;

—Vétéran champion national de trampoline et médaillé olympique, a three-time national champion, a bronze Olympic medallist, in the third year of a four-year program to become a doctor of chiropractic, M. Mathieu Turgeon;

—Known to millions of Canadians for his insightful, informative and emotional sport commentary, Canada's Outstanding Sportscaster eight times, with six Gemini Awards and two Foster Hewitt Awards, Mr. Canada, our voice at the Olympics with CTV and TSN, Brian Williams.

1410

Mr. Speaker, there are a few members who had to leave prematurely: Dr. Bruce Kidd, perhaps one of this country's greatest and most knowledgeable sports specialists, and to this day the Canadian junior men's record-holder for 5,000 metres, which still stands after 44 years, dean of the physical education program at the University of Toronto, who was with us this morning, and we thank him; also, an individual who was at our first meeting but couldn't make it today, a distinguished Toronto Sun journalist and sport authority, president of Sports Media Canada and member of Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, Mr. George Gross. Also not able to be here, a former city of Toronto commissioner and respected community leader, member of the Canadian Olympic Association and the Raptors Foundation, Mr. Joe Halstead.

We also had two members who were not able to attend. I want to particularly thank in absentia—she is in China—Mayor Hazel McCallion, who is a great defender particularly of women's hockey and of participation rates of women in various sports, and we thank Hazel very much for being with us in spirit; and sport marketing visionary Elliott Kerr of Landmark Sport Group, who regrettably had a death in the family on the weekend and is not able to be here, but we thank Elliott Kerr, who will be at our next meeting, in June.

As you can well imagine, we have been blessed by the voluntary participation and the insight of the members of the committee. We had a very good meeting. We have our work cut out for us because, as I said, we have not done a stellar job in the last several years in this province, but we're starting to turn the corner. We want to build a healthier, stronger Ontario, to give all Ontarians a chance to become more active and to achieve excellence, whether recreationally or competitively, and I thank these distinguished Canadians for their insight and their support of making sure we do the right thing for our young athletes in this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): On behalf of my party, I would like to thank all of the very notable athletes and people who have been involved with athletics for their service to Ontario.

It might strike you that a member of the opposition is a little concerned when you are setting up advisory committees in the last six months of your mandate, but I must say that their advice will not only be listened to but acted on by Premier John Tory after the next election.

When I heard that the Minister of Health Promotion was going to speak today, I thought he was going to respond to the Ontario Health Quality Council, which just very recently—in fact, last week—came out with a very damning report of this government and its lack of attack on chronic diseases. This is their Ontario Health Quality Council, and what they said was that chronic diseases are taking up a huge amount of our health care budget. In fact, they are taking up 60% of that health care budget.

The report states that many of these chronic diseases are largely preventable if people subscribe to a healthy lifestyle that includes a clean environment, a nutritious diet and physical fitness. It goes on to say that efforts to prevent and manage this chronic disease are inconsistent and uncoordinated. Most patients with chronic conditions aren't encouraged to manage their own care or given written management plans, and the lack of electronic records means care is not organized and managed in the ways that give the best results.

I would have thought that now that we have gone through three and a half years of Liberal government we would get some answers with regard to chronic disease and the attack of chronic disease. Notwithstanding that, I want to thank the advisory committee. I hope their work will be fruitful in the future. At this stage, we are looking for results, and they are not there.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I only wanted to add to the very excellent comments of the member for Lanark–Carleton that I was very hurt, as a former commissioner of the CFL, that the minister did not mention that Brian Williams was also the host and front-face figure of the Grey Cup—that great Canadian tradition—for these last 25 years, until he made a change of employment.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to welcome the members of the advisory committee to Queen's Park. We recognize that the panel members are from all sectors of Ontario society. They have tremendous skills, talents and experience among them. Also the one thing they have in common is that they continue to make and they have made an enormous contribution in Ontario, in Canada, and some internationally, and so we thank them for their willingness to participate in a voluntary capacity in the way they have agreed to serve.

I understand that the mandate of the committee members is to “provide advice on promoting the benefits of both high performance and community participation in sport.” In that regard, an observation I'd like to make is that I think we require both a strengthening of the high performance system that's already in place for elite athletes who have already been identified as such, and we also need to broaden the pool of potential elite athletes at the other end by focusing on children who are involved in both school activities and in community sports.

I make this recommendation, then: that in Ontario we need to have physical education teachers in all of our schools, and we need to have physical education made mandatory right through secondary school, because it is not. Otherwise, we are not going to be able to look to the school system as a potential environment to spur on and identify athletes. In reality, however, the percentage of schools with physical education teachers today still remains below 1998 levels, and there is something wrong with that.

Secondly, because physical education is only mandatory up to and including grade 9, when it is not mandatory, after grade 9, there is a huge drop in the number of secondary school students who participate in gym and then subsequently who participate in intramural and interschool sports programs.

I just want to give you some results to show how dismal the situation is. This is a reference to a 2004 study of 474 schools in Ontario. It says the following:

“Curriculum-based physical education ... classes in grade 9 were reported to be offered in all schools and these classes in grades 10, 11 and 12 were offered in almost all schools. Student enrolment in PE decreased from grades 9 to 12” in these percentages: 97.9% to 49.6% to 43.3% to 35.9% by grade. “About two thirds (65.5%) of the schools had an intramural program” but only 15% of students participated in it. And 97.2% of the schools had an interschool sports program, but only 25% of students were participating in those. So it's very clear that we need to increase student participation in physical education, intramural programs and interschool sports

programs, and the way we need to do it is to make physical education mandatory right through to grade 12.

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I also think we can increase the pool of potential athletes by focusing on those kids who are participating in the community sports system. One thing we need to do—and I hope the committee is going to have an opportunity to look at this—is to remove those barriers which prevent children from participating in community sports. Those barriers can include some of the following: the need in the community for the physical facility to deliver sports in the first place, be it a soccer field, an arena or a pool. Another barrier could be the costs associated with the community use of the facilities that do exist and how prohibitive the fees might be to use the arena, the pool and the soccer field. There can also be a barrier around the fees associated with membership on the sports teams in the community and how prohibitive those membership fees might be for parents. Finally, there are the costs involved with equipment needed to participate in the first place. I understand clearly that that differs depending on the sports your children are involved in. Those fees can be prohibitive as well, especially if your kids have more than one and they continue to participate year after year.

As a parent of two children who play hockey, one of whom has played on a select team for the last two years and will try out again in the next couple of weeks for another, I can tell you that the fees are quite high. We are lucky as parents that we can afford them, but there are lots of kids out there who are equally talented who just cannot and lose that opportunity to participate.

Let me close by saying this: Ontario already has wonderful, talented amateur athletes. They are very committed and very dedicated and we salute them. But we'd like to see them in even greater numbers in Ontario. I hope that the committee and the government will look at some of the recommendations I have made to try to increase the pool, particularly at the bottom end, with those kids coming in both through the school system and through community activities. I want to wish the committee members well in their deliberations and plans and hope that they will be able to get us where we want to be.

VISITOR

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education): Mr. Speaker, I beg the indulgence of the House to introduce Lucille Walwich, who taught for 47 years with the Scarborough board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Could the Premier tell us how

many meetings Don Guy, his former chief of staff and the current head of his re-election campaign, attended with officials of the lottery corporation, the minister responsible for lotteries or his staff or the Premier and his staff to discuss any aspect of this current lottery scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I think what Ontarians remain interested in is the Ombudsman's report, the specific recommendations that were laid out in that report. They are, I think, very pleased to see our continuing resolve and determination to move ahead with each and every one of those separate recommendations. I think as well that Ontarians distinguish between the approach and the perspective brought by my friend opposite and the objective, non-partisan, dispassionate, responsible approach laid out for us by the Ombudsman. We take his advice very seriously, we thank him for his advice and we intend to move ahead on his very specific recommendations.

Mr. Tory: I thought the Premier was going to describe the dispassionate, objective etc. approach taken by his government, and fortunately he didn't. We are just interested in the truth. The Premier has not answered the question, which was very specific. We know that the Dalton McGuinty government did absolutely nothing between April 2006 and October 2006 while thousands of Ontario people were ripped off for the winnings they should have had from the lottery corporation.

Our sources indicate that Don Guy—and we are not dealing here with just some guy off the street; this is your main man, the big cheese, the grand fromage of your political organization—was involved in meetings that involved spinning the story and perhaps covering up things that shouldn't be covered up.

We're asking for a serious answer to a question as to who knew what, when they knew it and what they did about it.

My question again is, how many meetings, if any, did Don Guy, your grand fromage, attend with officials of the lottery corporation, the minister's office responsible for lotteries or your own office about the lottery scandal? How many meetings: a simple question.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition has a different approach and a different priority, but we're not going to take our eye off the ball on this side of the House. We're focused on the public interest; we're focused on doing what the public needs done. We'll focus specifically on the Ombudsman's report and the very specific recommendations he laid out.

I referenced this last week, but I think one of the most important recommendations has to do with the fact that, according to the Ombudsman—and an observation with which I agree entirely—you can't really have an OLG which is responsible for the sale of the tickets, when it has a direct interest in the sale of the tickets, while taking responsibility for overseeing those very sales. He recommends that we remove that responsibility from the OLG and that we give it to a separate authority. I think that is eminently reasonable, and I think that recommendation,

in and of itself, will go a long way to restoring confidence in the integrity of our lottery and gaming system.

Mr. Tory: If there's nothing to hide here, then I can't possibly imagine why the Premier wouldn't simply answer the question as to whether the grand fromage, the big cheese, Mr. Don Guy, was at these meetings or not. It's obvious: If you're not answering the question, if you're not indicating that there's nothing to hide and he never was at any meeting about the lottery scandal, then you should just get up and say so.

I'm going to assume that the Premier has chosen to respond to my questions in a very specific way and for a specific reason, and that's because Mr. Guy was in fact at these meetings. So I want to ask him, if Mr. Guy was at these meetings, does he think that's appropriate, that on a scandal like this, involving people being ripped off for their money—a government matter that involves all kinds of people looking into this—his top political man should be over there stage-managing the whole thing? Do you think it's right or not?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: In addition to having had the benefit of the Ombudsman's interest in this matter, his review and investigation effectively into this matter, we've gone beyond that and turned this matter over to the Ontario Provincial Police.

In terms of the approach that we brought when it came to dealing with the Ombudsman in this matter, he specifically addressed that in his report. He said, "This is the kind of support and commitment on behalf of government which is essential if we are to move forward to restore integrity and trust in the lottery system. I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change."

I leave it to the people of Ontario to draw their own conclusions with respect to who has a disinterested perspective on this. Again, I say to the people of Ontario that we will move ahead in their interest by following the Ombudsman's very specific recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question?

Mr. Tory: My question is for the Premier again. And to be noted: no answer with respect to Mr. Guy.

Just to quote something else the Ombudsman had to say, "There are disturbing signs that the culture that led to the difficulties in the first place is not gone. It was not conscience or self-criticism that smartened the OLG up—it was a public relations nightmare, played out on the public airwaves despite its best efforts at suppression," and on it goes from there.

My question to the Premier on the same subject is this: His continued refusal to answer questions spawns more questions. Last week, we made another simple request: Would you make available all the documents, e-mails, briefings, calendars and so on from your office and from the minister's office to show us whether or not there were people who were involved? Were there people in

meetings? Were there people who got briefings on this at a time other than what we have been told?

The process of FOI and order paper questions takes months. If you have nothing to hide and if you want confidence restored in the lotteries on the part of the public, why won't you simply stand up today and say that you will allow that information to be made public immediately so we can all see what went on, and hopefully everybody can get back to normal—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'll remind my colleague that the Ombudsman's report was instigated by a matter that arose on the former government's watch. I would suggest to him that if he has a keen interest in learning about the relationship between the OLG and the government of the day, he need look no further than one seat over to his left and ask the former minister about that very specific relationship.

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Again, we have received some very specific recommendations from the Ombudsman. They're laid out in considerable detail. The OLG is already acting on those which were directed to it. We are acting on those which were specifically directed to us in our capacity as the government of Ontario. From Ontarians' perspective, I understand that they're prepared to play the game, even though the odds are long, but what they're looking to us to do is to ensure that the game is fair, and we will uphold their interest in this regard.

Mr. Tory: The whole point here is, when you had the responsibility, you and your government, to make sure the game was fair, we believe you turned your back on it. We want the public to be able to see the documents and the memos to see exactly what you did when people were being ripped off and when reports were coming of people being ripped off.

Surely the Premier understands why this looks fishy. The minister says he knew nothing about insider wins and yet there are e-mails in his office. He claims to take action only after the story breaks on television and he gets caught. It's the only time he does a single thing about this.

Meanwhile, over at the lottery corporation—we can get an idea of how well things are running over there—they have a 60% increase in the people making more than \$100,000 since 2003; unbelievable. Now we hear that your very own chief of staff, your chief political guy, seems to have been involved. You won't tell us that he wasn't at any meetings, so we can only assume that he was.

You say you have great confidence—as we all do—in the objectivity of the Ombudsman. If you don't want to make all these documents public, why don't you turn them over to him and let him have a look at all the memos and e-mails and see what he has to say?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition knows that we have, of our own accord, asked the Ontario Provincial Police to look at this matter. We've provided them with the necessary documents, and I have

every confidence that they will do what they think is appropriate in the circumstances.

I'll also again remind the leader of the official opposition that he might look no further than a column that appeared in one of today's daily papers, where a question is asked, "What did Hudak do as the Edmonds case began to unfold? Nothing, says Hudak, because 'we had no knowledge of it.'"

Again, to the leader of the official opposition, he needs to get a better understanding about the relationship between the government of the day and the OLG. There is an important distance that separates the two for very good public policy reasons.

We received a good report from the Ombudsman. We will act on his report.

Mr. Tory: You are the Premier; the minister is the minister; the minister appoints the board; the board reports to the minister. All we're asking is, not what knowledge people had years ago: What knowledge did this minister have in this circumstance at this time?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: Real leadership means getting answers to people who do want to know, as you yourself said, that they can play these games with confidence and know that all of those involved in any aspect of this whole thing have actually left their offices—they've resigned or been asked to leave—so that people can have confidence again. Instead, you bob and you weave and you deny and you don't answer the simplest question about who might have been at a meeting or not, or make available the documents.

When you don't agree to make these documents available to the public or, as I've suggested, to the Ombudsman—in whom we all have great confidence in terms of his objectivity; you describe him as non-partisan, independent and objective—people are only left, as you say, to draw their own conclusions about why you won't make those documents available. Why won't you make them available so people can get their confidence restored in these lotteries and we can all see who knew what and when they knew it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The approach brought by the official opposition was described as being "gotcha' politics at its worst." I'll leave it to them to pursue their particular style of politics, but we will remain focused on the public interest. I'll leave it to my friend opposite to describe a double standard, one that would not apply to them in government but which now he would have apply to us in government.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): His nose is growing.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: It seems to me that the lady doth protest too much. I hear some howls of displeasure coming from former minister Hudak.

We will keep our eye focused very much on the greater public interest. The public interest demands that we adhere to the very specific recommendations laid out by the Ombudsman. I think it also demands that we invite the OPP to consider whether or not they might have a matter here which warrants their interest. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that people who put down their money can have confidence in the integrity of their lottery and gaming system.

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Premier. This weekend, the Ombudsman told Global TV's Focus Ontario that he is doubtful your approach to Lottogate will shed any more light on what really transpired. The reality is this: Hundreds, if not thousands, of hard-working Ontarians got cheated out of millions of dollars of lottery winnings, and the only way they'll get answers that they deserve about who knew what and who knew when is if the minister releases his briefing books, his e-mails and his records.

Premier, if you really want to get to the bottom of all this, if you have nothing to hide, order your minister to table those records in this House today. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): The member would be well familiar with the fact that we've had an all-party legislative committee, we've had the Ombudsman, we've had KPMG, and now we have the Ontario Provincial Police who are looking at the matters in front of them.

The Ombudsman in fact comments, and he says in his report on page 68—and I would quote it to the member—“I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

The responsible thing to do is to embrace the Ombudsman's report and recommendations—that's what this government has done, that's what real leadership is—and in fact to restore Ontarians' trust and confidence in their corporation. That's precisely what has happened. That is the undertaking that I took to this House when the revelations and allegations were made by the Fifth Estate. I'm very proud that we finally have a government which is prepared to take this kind of action, as opposed to what we've seen previously, where others swept this under the rug or put it away in a closet and were afraid.

Mr. Ferreira: Ontarians are sick and tired of the four-times-per-week Caplan comedy hour. They want answers from the top.

To the Premier: This is about your lack of leadership, about you sticking your head in the sand instead of protecting lottery consumers, and this is about fairness for people who were cheated out of millions of dollars—Ontarians who were cheated. Today, the respected independent Consumers' Association of Canada called for a judicial inquiry into Lottogate to “clear the air.”

Premier, if you have nothing to hide, will you call a judicial inquiry? Will you do it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want to follow up on the recommendations that the Ombudsman and KPMG made, some 60 in total. The member would want to know that 17 of those recommendations have already been implemented. I have an opportunity to list those to the member opposite.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre needs to withdraw that.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Withdrawn.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Twenty-five of the recommendations will be complete by the end of June and the additional 18 have begun and will be implemented as quickly as possible. I am working with my colleague the Minister of Government Services.

Unfortunately, the flaw that was put in place when the New Democrats set up this arrangement was to have a corporation in place with both retailer-operator, judge-jury investigation. As the Ombudsman indicates, you need proper oversight independent of the operator-retailer function. That's precisely why my colleague Minister Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, has begun the steps, has engaged the Ombudsman, I know has met with—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Ferreira: Ontarians are asking for briefing books on this, not ancient history books. I'm going to go back to the Premier.

Premier, no one has looked at the minister's files. No one has seen them. No one has looked at his e-mails. Instead of shining a light on this matter, you're allowing your minister to operate under a veil of secrecy. A judicial inquiry would make all of this public and give people the answers they deserve. The Consumers' Association of Canada wants a judicial inquiry. Consumers who were cheated out of millions of dollars deserve it.

Premier, will you call a judicial inquiry into your \$100-million Lottogate scandal?

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Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman is a non-partisan, unbiased, independent officer of the Legislature. He had a very public report. I commend it to the member. I hope you'll take the opportunity to read it. He made some very serious allegations in his news conference, and that is why, following that, I directed that all of the files that were reviewed by the Ombudsman be forwarded to the Ontario Provincial Police. They are the appropriate authority to make a determination into the allegations, to do the proper work and determine what the next step should be. I trust the Ontario Provincial Police. I trust Chief Fantino. I trust those who are responsible to look into these matters and do the right thing and take the next appropriate steps. I'm surprised that members opposite don't feel the same and don't have the same confidence in the police. I know that Ontarians don't agree with the position of the member opposite that our police cannot be

trusted to look into these matters. I know they will make the proper determination. I look forward—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth): A question for the Premier: Premier, the environmental assessment process is supposed to protect the environment for Ontario families, but companies that want to make money burning garbage say that protecting the environment costs too much. Last week, you brought in a so-called streamlined process to make it easier to burn garbage. In fact, some projects won't have to proceed with an assessment at all. But you went the extra mile for one company. You went the extra mile for Plasco in Ottawa. In May 2006, at a cabinet meeting, you exempted Plasco from its legal requirement to conduct an environmental assessment on its new plant in Ottawa. Why, Premier, did you make that decision?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about the tools that we're providing municipalities so that they can better manage their municipal waste. As we have said many times in the past, we are more than willing to respond to our municipal leaders and their calls for additional ways to manage their residual waste. But it is imperative to put in context for my friends in opposition that this is about disposal. In so many instances, our first priority is diversion. In supplementary answers I look forward to talking to you about the many steps that we have taken with respect to diversion.

Mr. Tabuns: It is true that the minister is trying to create a diversion, but I have a question for the Premier. Premier, Rod Bryden is the CEO of Plasco. He's a long-time active Liberal, head of Stéphane Dion's transition team and the single biggest donor to your leadership campaign. He has admitted that if the law had been followed and an environmental assessment had been carried out, Plasco's garbage-burning plant "might never have been approved." So why are you allowing this company to burn garbage without a proper environmental assessment? Question for you, Premier.

Hon. Ms. Broten: I continue to be shocked by the campaign of misinformation that comes across from the other side of the House. At the end of the day, there are rules in this province with respect to the air standards that every single business operation must adhere to. Every single facility, no matter what the approach, whether it is plasma gasification or any other type of industrial unit in this province, needs to live up to those air standards, which are some of the toughest in the world, and our government has taken significant steps forward on and improved those steps that were not taken for more than 25 years. We continue to move those standards forward. At each and every instance, those who are knowledgeable

about the new technology that exists around the world say it is incumbent on a government that hopes to provide municipalities with the tools that they need for us to have an open mind to examine that new technology.

I say to the opposition and I say to all Ontarians, no facility will be built in this province unless it meets our tough and rigid air standards and our tough standards with regard to—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tabuns: Ontario families don't believe snake oil pitches when they hear them from any minister of the crown or from the Premier. They don't believe that a magic box has been invented that burns garbage without creating pollution. Other jurisdictions have shut down these so-called magic boxes—the ones that on paper were supposed to burn garbage without creating pollution. They've shut them down because they've consistently broken local emission and pollution laws. Ontario families were counting on you to divert waste from landfill, not divert it into the hands of Liberal insiders who are going to make a profit by burning it.

Premier, how do you justify changing the law that protects Ontario's environment so that it's easier to burn garbage?

Hon. Ms. Broten: I know that the NDP is ideologically opposed to the examination of any new technology and it is their desire to continue to scaremonger and keep their head in the sand. That is not the approach that our government is taking. Our government is saying disposal options may be available to municipalities to pursue but they will meet our tough standards; they will have consultation with the public. If you examine the regulations that were put forward, you will see, sir, that there are 14 steps to that, and there are a number of opportunities for the communities to have a dialogue, as they should. These are only one of a few new tools that we have provided to municipalities so that we can progress into the 21st century and we do not become a jurisdiction and continue to be a jurisdiction that foists our waste problem on others in Michigan. That was yesterday. Today we are moving forward, working with municipalities to have long-term sustainable solutions that are good for the environment, good for our air shed and will help municipalities manage the waste that their community generates.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a question for the Premier. Last week, the Toronto Sun carried an article entitled "How the Grits Tried to Spin a Scandal," and it told the story of high-paid Liberal spin doctors Warren Kinsella and Jim Warren meeting to discuss ways they could disparage the CBC's Fifth Estate findings about the rip-off of millions of dollars from lottery ticket purchasers in the province of Ontario. We've now found out that your former chief of staff, the

head of your re-election campaign, Don Guy, was also a part of that process. You've refused to answer my leader John Tory's questions regarding that.

I'm going to try it once again. Why in the world would the head of your re-election campaign team be taking part in this kind of a meeting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I had a chance last week to ask Mr. Runciman, the member from Leeds-Grenville, a question back. In the case of Bob Edmonds, the unfortunate Ontarian, a cancer-surviving senior from Coboconk, Ontario—Mr. Runciman was the chair of the executive council of cabinet. I have stood and apologized for, unfortunately, Mr. Edmonds being treated in a most disrespectful manner.

I ask Mr. Runciman again: Will you stand up, do the right thing and apologize for the way that Mr. Edmonds was treated by your government, by folks who were your colleagues? I think that Mr. Runciman should do the right thing, should stand up and should apologize to Mr. Edmonds. I have done so on behalf of the province of Ontario. I know that former president and CEO Mr. Duncan Brown did the same. I think it is only appropriate under the circumstances for—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Runciman: The minister will get lots of chances to ask me questions starting in November.

With Minister Caplan in charge, the odds of winning a lottery in Ontario are the same whether you buy a ticket or don't. That's a reality. No one is answering the question and I think it's extremely important. Hopefully, the people of Ontario are listening to this. Instead of dealing with a real problem, where thousands and thousands of Ontarians were being ripped off of millions and millions of dollars, they're playing political games. They have the head of the campaign team in these meetings to come up with ways they can fool the public that there's no problem—to save the revenues, to save the reputations, to protect the hides of Liberal politicians.

We all demand a right to know: Why was the head of that campaign in there, in meetings dealing with the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp?

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Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, when Ontarians look back at the performance of the previous government—Mr. Runciman and his colleagues, Mr. Hudak and others—I don't think they're going to want to go back to those days. I think they want a government that rolls up its sleeves and does something about these problems.

The Ombudsman could not be more clear when he says in his press conference, "I conclude that they"—the OLG—"put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002.... At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, 'We'll apply the law and take the measures to act dili-

gently.' One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the" superior court "didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope."

That was the legacy of Mr. Runciman and the former Progressive Conservative government. This government, on the other hand, has shone a light on this corporation, has taken the responsible action—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Hard-working Torontonians got a pretty nasty little surprise last week. They learned they're potentially getting an 8% property tax increase if you don't come up with the \$71 million that the city says you owe them. The city's budget chief—a very good Liberal, she is—says that it's all because your government refuses to pay its bills for downloaded provincial programs, cost-shared agreements.

Minister, explain to Toronto's hard-working property owners why your government has no money to pay for your own programs and the debts that you owe but you have plenty of money to give yourself a 31% pay raise.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I am thrilled that my friend from the New Democratic Party has finally asked a question on the budget, and this one in particular. I was particularly pleased at how much the budget responded to the needs of the people of this great city of Toronto. I want to tell you, we are providing Toronto's businesses with a \$231-million reduction in business education taxes. As well, so many of the children who will be the recipients of the Ontario child benefit live right here in this city; so many of the people who will be getting the rent supplements.

Finally, I just note for my friend that, over the course of the past three and a half years, our assistance directly to the government of the city of Toronto has increased by some 300% over what existed under the previous—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Prue: I hardly believe the answer I just got, but I'm going to try again. Minister, because of your budget, Torontonians are facing an 8% tax increase with absolutely no increase in services and, in some places, decreases in those services. At the same time, you have chosen to give hundreds of millions of dollars to banks and insurance companies through your capital tax giveaway. I'm absolutely positive that this would go a much further and longer way towards uploading the downloaded social programs that you yourself had promised to do.

I repeat: Toronto's budget chief, a very good Liberal, says that your government owes the city hundreds of millions of dollars for social service costs and, in particular, \$71 million for a debt that you haven't paid. Why have you chosen to shovel money hand over fist to the

banks and insurance companies while refusing to help out Toronto's hard-pressed taxpayers?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I don't know why they do these set-up questions.

Because of our budget, the city of Toronto will be receiving \$222 million to assist in public transit, and that's above and beyond \$800 million to build a new subway up to York region. Because of our budget, the city of Toronto will be receiving \$362 million in gas tax money for public transit. Because of our budget, hundreds of millions of dollars will go into new affordable housing and social housing in the city of Toronto. Because of our budget, \$5.5 million will go towards Luminato, the great new festival of arts and creativity that will take place in the city of Toronto. And if you would permit, I could go on and on and on.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Minister of Labour. As you know, I have a large number of injured workers in and around my riding. I have heard, in different capacities for many years, their heartbreaking stories, their sometimes frustrating efforts, their sense of being forgotten and sometimes desperate, left behind by a system that no longer seemed to be working for them and supporting them properly.

In the government's recent budget, there are a number of significant measures, changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, which go a long way to repairing the damage done under two previous governments. After years of pleading for changes to unfair formulas and undignified language in the WSIA, injured workers finally have something real and substantial. But this is a group that's not accustomed to getting good news: substantial, structural good news that truly recognizes their plight. So could the minister please outline for us the significant action that was taken in our budget to continue to restore dignity and respect for our injured workers in Ontario?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I want to thank the member for her advocacy on behalf of injured workers. It's something that they can be very proud of, knowing that they've got an individual like her out there for them.

We are committed to making sure that there is a brighter future for injured workers in this province. Some 155,000 injured workers in this province have been left behind by two previous governments. This is the first real increase in benefits that injured workers have seen in over 12 years, because over the next 18 months injured workers are going to see a 7.5% increase in their benefits, an increase that is long overdue.

As well, we're going to provide greater flexibility to the WSIB in how they deal with injured workers. We're investing \$810,000 in the Office of the Worker Adviser. We're changing deeming. We're changing the lock-in rules and lump sum payment. But I think it's very important who created the Friedland formula. In 1994, the NDP created that—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Mossop: I am very heartened to hear about these changes and I am proud to be part of the government that has moved forward in this area to do right by people and also keep the books balanced. Last week's budget didn't just address concerns around injured workers in this province; there were further increases to the minimum wage, a third increase in social assistance rates, further investments in affordable housing, and the new \$2.1-billion Ontario child care benefit, which will help nearly 1.3 million children in this province annually.

I know that the proposed changes to the WSIA are to be funded by the WSIB, and even before the budget details came out, the WSIB had already increased certain benefits. I'd like the minister—who, by the way, has been to my riding a couple of times, as was the previous Minister of Labour, to meet with my injured workers—to explain those changes in the WSIB as well.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I want to thank the member for her question. As a government, we are committed to having a well-funded, accountable WSIB. The WSIB plays an extremely important role within the business community, the construction community and others in this province.

We recognize that there were some challenges at the WSIB. That's why, in 2004, we initiated an audit that looked at a number of areas within the WSIB. A number of recommendations were brought forward, and many of those recommendations, with the budget that's been introduced, are going to be implemented. I'm proud of that.

As well, we were able to move forward with certain increases in benefits in both 2006 and 2007 for such things as clothing allowances and guide dog allowances. These were things that were left behind. It has amazed me since we've taken office at how the NDP and the Conservatives abandoned and ignored injured workers. That is not going to continue in the future. We're going to work with injured workers and make sure that they aren't abandoned like they—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1500

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a question to the minister responsible for lotteries. Minister, we've been asking questions in this House, we've submitted freedom of information requests, and we've put questions on the order paper—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the member for Oak Ridges. He does not sit that far from me, so that means it's very difficult to hear in here. All members need to be able to hear a member place a question and a minister respond.

Member for Oak Ridges.

Mr. Klees: Notwithstanding all of those requests, Minister, you continue to refuse to release the files related to the lottery scandal. That continued refusal is causing some people to raise their eyebrows and to ask, “What are you hiding?” The Premier’s refusal to deny Don Guy’s involvement in all of this suggests that there may well be a cover-up afoot.

My question to the minister: If everything was above board, why do you continue to refuse to make those documents public?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I would say to the member from Oak Ridges, unlike the partisan perspective that all members of this House bring, the Ombudsman—an independent, non-partisan, unbiased officer of this Legislature—has a different perspective. I would read page 68 from the report that the Ombudsman tabled for the member, where the Ombudsman says, “I commend the minister and the government for its openness and responsiveness to my report and recommendations and for their immediate and resolute commitment to ensuring change.”

Regrettably, past governments chose, at the crossroads that the Ombudsman described in 2002—this member, in fact, sat at the executive council of the province of Ontario—to look the other way, chose to sweep these matters under the rug, chose not to do what this government has done, which has been responsive and open: to shine a light on and to roll up its sleeves to fix the problems that it inherited. That’s the response—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Klees: Minister, you should know, having been involved in politics for some time, that it’s much better to simply come forward with a straight response and the answer, because the more you dance around this, the more questionable your response is.

You continue to refer to the Ombudsman. This is the Legislature asking you a question. We as legislators are asking you to release certain information. The Ombudsman may well be happy with your conduct; we’re not. We’re saying to you, “Give us the information.” Why will you not do that? If you won’t give it to the House, give it to the Ombudsman, who you like so much. Let him know what the documents are, who did what, when they did it and why. Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: In fact, it goes well beyond simply the Ombudsman. We’ve had an all-party legislative committee, chaired by a member of the member from Oak Ridges’ caucus, look at government agencies, including Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

Even beyond that, I say to the member opposite, we’ve asked that all files be directed to the Ontario Provincial Police, so that they can review these matters and make the appropriate determination as to what the next step should be as to the allegations that the Ombudsman made earlier in his Monday press conference. I’m surprised that the member opposite, as much respect as I do have for him, does not have confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police, in their ability to get to the bottom of

matters, in their ability to determine what the next step should be, in their impartial, unbiased view of these matters.

I understand that the member opposite has partisan views; I do as well, as do members of the third party. All members of this place do, and that is acceptable. That’s why—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Paul Ferreira (York South–Weston): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I’m going to make him earn his paycheque this week.

Minister, there are tenants across Ontario who are forced to live in deplorable conditions, with cockroach and mouse infestations, sickness-inducing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The government House leader.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): The backbench has taken over the NDP.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health Promotion, I will not warn you again.

The member for York South–Weston.

Mr. Ferreira: The question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There are tenants across Ontario who are forced to live in deplorable conditions, with cockroach and mouse infestations, sickness-inducing mould and a lack of basic safety devices such as window screens and fire detectors.

Your party promised in 2003 that you would protect tenants from bad landlords. Instead, you voted against my motion on Thursday to implement a landlord licensing system across the province that would ensure tough standards for rental accommodation and crack down on big landlords who fail to maintain their buildings. Minister, why did the McGuinty Liberals choose cockroaches over people last week?

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): First of all, I can assure this member that we on this side of the House are working constantly to improve the quality of life of all Ontarians, have been working at it for the last three and a half years and will continue to do so.

But the member opposite—and I welcome him to the House, by the way—doesn’t realize that all municipalities have been given the power and the authority in both the city of Toronto through the City of Toronto Act and municipally across the rest of the province through the Municipal Act to set up this kind of licensing system if they now want to do so. We feel that this is best left up to our local municipal counterparts, who serve their communities to the best of their ability, to determine whether or not a licensing system for housing should be set up.

We believe in local government, we respect the local councils and we know they will do the right thing. If they feel it’s best to set up a licensing system for their own communities, they will do so.

Mr. Ferreira: Minister, in your very own riding of Kingston and the Islands, where affordable rental housing is tough to come by, tenants have been put through the wringer by greedy, negligent apartment building landlords. In one case, a Kingston tenant fought for many years to have essential repairs made to her apartment, which had traces of dangerous toxic mould. Based on her experience, this tenant, and rightly so, refers to the Liberal government's system of helping tenants as the "Ontario landlord protection agency."

Minister, why won't you offer real protection to tens of thousands of Ontarions who have been victimized just like your very own constituents?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: As this member well knows, the Residential Tenancies Act, which came into existence on January 1 this past year, has gone a long way in to equalize the opportunities available to both landlords and tenants to deal with disputes. It's a much fairer system than the system that existed before that. Every tenant has an opportunity to come before that board to raise any issues they may have with the landlord.

It is working well. The system has been approved, it's been applauded across this province by both tenants and landlords, and we feel that the new landlord and tenant legislation, through the Residential Tenancies Act, will address the kinds of issues he's addressing here today.

PROTECTION FOR SENIORS' INCOMES

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the minister responsible for seniors. Minister, seniors are an active and an important demographic in our province. In the very near future, as baby boomers hit 65, their numbers will be even more significant.

I've often had the chance to meet with seniors' groups in my constituency of Willowdale. They consistently raise issues specific to post-retirement. I've learned that as we age, our needs change. Those approaching retirement want to know that their pensions are secure. They want to enjoy this stage of their lives with peace of mind.

1510
Minister, how does this budget address the needs of seniors across Ontario? Specifically, what is this government doing to give pensioners more flexibility and certainty about their retirement incomes?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, for an exceedingly good question this afternoon. I'm pleased to rise in this House and advise him of the following: The government has taken a number of major steps forward in helping Ontario's seniors gain greater flexibility in managing their retirement income, as well as better value for their tax dollar.

First, we are creating a new life income fund that would replace existing locked-in retirement income funds and would permit pensioners to unlock up to 25% of the funds held in these accounts. This will result in increased flexibility in managing their retirement income.

Second, we're allowing senior couples to split certain types of pension income for Ontario income tax purposes. This would provide Ontario income tax savings of about \$170 million to Ontario couples with eligible pension income in 2007. For example, a senior couple with a combined income of \$50,000 annually will save \$980 a year in personal income tax in Ontario.

Mr. Zimmer: Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that issue. Another issue I'm worried about is that some retirees, unfortunately, find themselves not adequately prepared for retirement. They're going to encounter real financial difficulties in the face of unexpected costs. What strategy has this government created to assist vulnerable citizens who are facing significant challenges in their retirement years for which they're not properly prepared?

Hon. Mr. Bradley: Again, I would like to thank the member for his question. In addition to the measures I have just described, our government is conscious of the need to assist our seniors of more modest means. This is why we are enriching the Ontario property and sales tax credit for seniors. We are doing this by raising the income threshold from \$22,250 to \$23,090 for seniors who qualify for the credit so that more seniors will qualify. That means that in 2007, about 745,000 seniors will benefit from an estimated \$104 million in enrichments to this tax credit made by our government since 2004.

We first increased the underlying property tax credit amount for low- and middle-income seniors in 2004. We're bringing in a fairer property tax system with the introduction of a four-year re-assessment cycle and a phase-in of any assessment increases in order to provide greater predictability and stability for our seniors in Ontario.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the minister responsible for lotteries. Last week, we learned there was a 60% increase in the number of people at OLG who earn over \$100,000. This is shameful. It's shocking, given that all this time this government was doing nothing to protect the integrity of the lottery system in Ontario.

The bloating of the "100 G" club at OLG is just another example of this government's misguided priorities. Instead of working to fix the problems, they work to cover them up. Why else would Don Guy, the Premier's former chief of staff and head of the re-election campaign, be involved in a meeting on this? My question is simply this: Does the minister think this is the appropriate sort of thing to be done by the Liberals?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): One hundred and forty of the 7,800 Ontario Lottery and Gaming employees earn more than \$100,000. It's about 1.8% of total staff, well below the public sector average of 6%. I should note that Ontario Lottery and Gaming is

large; it's a \$6-billion corporation. I do believe that the salaries are in line.

I would note for the member from Nepean–Carleton that between the years 1999 and 2003, the percentage of those going on the salary disclosure list rose 310%. So if the member has some condemnation of a modest increase, I wonder what her comments were when her colleagues were in charge and at the helm of Ontario Lottery and Gaming. I'd love to hear the member's characterization and rationalization of Tim Hudak, Bob Runciman, Frank Klees, Liz Witmer, Norm Sterling—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The minister would know that you need to refer to members by their riding names, not their proper names.

Supplementary.

Ms. MacLeod: The minister's either in charge of his department or not, and I think he doesn't want to be today. He doesn't want to be in charge of his department. But maybe he'll change his mind once he realizes what people in the real world are thinking about him sitting under a cloud of controversy at the cabinet table.

Here's an e-mail I received from one of my constituents in Nepean–Carleton just last week who calls the minister a “big winner” who “gets to keep his cushy job by pulling a Sergeant Schultz” and saying “I know nothing.”

Minister, your staff knew about the scandal months ago, yet you claim you knew nothing. People have lost faith in the integrity of the lottery system. The Ombudsman is still investigating further possibilities of victimization by your department—and the list goes on and on and on.

Minister, do you think it's appropriate for your party's chief election planner to have been involved in this?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The Ombudsman disagrees with you and Joe Varner. The Ombudsman disagrees with members opposite when he says, “I conclude that they”—the OLG—“put profits ahead of public service. I think there was a point, a crossroads, in 2002”—and I believe that's when Ms. MacLeod was a staffer then in the government. “At that point, the OLG could have gone two ways. It could have said, ‘We'll apply the law and take the measures to act diligently.’ One month later, Bob Edmonds surfaced, and they pretended that binding law from the Supreme Court didn't apply. Then it became a slippery slope.”

That was the approach of that government: to hide things away, to sweep it under the rug, to put it in a closet. The approach of this government is to shine a light, to roll up our sleeves and to fix the problems left by, unfortunately, a regime that was tired and out of gas.

We have already implemented 17 of the 60 recommendations from both the Ombudsman and KPMG; 25 more by the end of June, and the remaining 18 are ongoing—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: He alluded to the fact that I was a staffer of the previous Conservative administration in 2002—

The Speaker: New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, 70 workers—mostly women workers—from FirstOntario Credit Union have been on strike for almost six months. The strike could have been resolved a long time ago except that FSCO interfered and permitted FirstOntario Credit Union to contravene its bylaws and delay an annual general meeting until 60 days after the workers returned to work. The McGuinty government's licence to delay that pivotal meeting has enabled FirstOntario to foot-drag ever since, giving management an upper hand in this dispute.

Minister, will you pledge to undo the damage brought by FSCO's interference and signal to both sides today that you want to see a neutral third-party arbitration and an end to this impasse at last?

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member for Hamilton East has been in this House long enough to know that her suggestion is repulsive to the relationship between the government of Ontario and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. We do not give orders to an arm's-length organization.

So let's just set the record straight and describe what happened. There was a request by the credit union to delay their annual meeting until after the end of the dispute so as to protect the safety of workers and members of the credit union. That request was considered by FSCO and granted. What I could report to my friend is that the Ministry of Labour and their mediators continue to work with both sides, and we believe that, with the goodwill of all parties, we can reach a resolution to that dispute.

Ms. Horwath: Minister, whether you like it or not, you are responsible for FSCO, and FSCO's interference has made things worse.

I want to tell you a little bit about the drastic concessions that these women are fighting for in Hamilton—gains that they have realized over many years of struggle. FirstOntario doesn't want to provide women workers with full-time hours, it wants to reduce pension plan contributions and it wants a rollback on their sick benefits. While the FirstOntario Credit Union CEO, in the meantime, is boasting of record profits, he's forcing these hard-working women into poverty, with your blessing.

1520

Why wouldn't you want to see a neutral third party ensure that women working at FirstOntario Credit Union get decent wages and benefits so that they can support their families? Or would you rather they turned to food banks, charity and social assistance?

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: I think I understand as well as anyone in the House how difficult it is when members of a collective bargaining unit are on strike. We are trying, with the means that we have within the Ministry of Labour, to help the parties come together.

Frankly, I don't mind the member using question period to put a spotlight on this labour dispute, and we all

hope it gets resolved soon. What I regret and resent and would advocate against is my friend foolishly suggesting that we should interfere in the independence and the autonomy of a commission like the financial commission of Ontario to suit her narrow political purposes. She knows it would be wrong; everyone in this House knows that would be wrong.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Minister, recently you had the opportunity to hear from and speak directly with small businesses in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. I want to thank you for coming to Sault Ste. Marie and for listening to our community's concerns. As we all know, small businesses face many unique challenges and, as a government, we want to ensure that we are promoting their growth. Our government's support of the business community in my riding has played a significant role in helping to reduce our unemployment rate from 9.2% to 6.5% today.

Minister, can you elaborate on what your ministry is doing to support the growth of small businesses in northern Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship): I would like to thank the member for asking this question. Very recently I had the chance to visit Sault Ste. Marie with the member and meet with the small business people there. I can tell you, he does an outstanding job of supporting the small businesses there.

In addition to having an outstanding member who is serving the community, let me just tell you what else we have been doing up north, especially in Sault Ste. Marie. We have seven enterprise centres in northern Ontario and one satellite centre. We also have specially designed programs just for the north, like the northern Ontario heritage fund, the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program and the Enterprises North job creation program. In addition to that, in our recent budget the Minister of Finance proposed a reduction of \$540 million in business education taxes, which will make the business environment equal throughout this province. So we are doing a lot to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Oraziotti: Minister, that's great news and further proof that our government is committed to helping small businesses in northern Ontario succeed and grow. In Sault Ste. Marie, the business education tax reduction will save local businesses \$4.7 million, or more than 30%.

I also want to reference that our flakeboard company in Sault Ste. Marie has received funding through the northern Ontario heritage fund, the prosperity fund of MNR, as well as the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: truly a success story in our community.

In order to ensure that Ontario's small businesses remain competitive, it's important that we also provide

our youth with the opportunity to develop the essential business skills they need to lead our businesses on the world stage for years to come. A great example of this is a constituent from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. This past November, Sarah Fortais, a student from Korah Collegiate, was the third-place winner in the northern Ontario Secondary School Business Plan Competition.

Our government has made it a priority to encourage youth to build their careers in northern Ontario. Minister, can you tell us what additional steps we are taking as a government to foster the entrepreneurial spirit among youth in my riding and throughout Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me thank the member again for asking this question. It's absolutely important for us to create a culture of entrepreneurship in this province, and there's no better way to do it than to start with our young people. We have some programs specially designed for young people. We have a summer company program which has been in existence for a while and is a very successful program. In addition to that, this year, for the first time, we held a conference just for young women to promote entrepreneurship culturally among our youth.

We have also introduced what we call the global edge program, which will give our young people international experience so that they can succeed in the world of business. All these programs are designed to make sure that the culture of entrepreneurship is alive and well in this province.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario will not meet the needs of its aging population and ensure access to hospital services unless long-term-care homes can provide the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas staff are now run off their feet trying to keep up and homes are unable to provide the full range of care and programs that residents need or the menu choices that meet their expectations; and

"Whereas dietary, housekeeping and other services that residents and their families value are being put at risk by increasing operating costs; and

"Whereas some 35,000 residents still live in older homes, many with three- and four-bed ward rooms and wheelchair-inaccessible washrooms; and

"Whereas, on November 23, 2006, this Legislature unanimously passed a private member's motion asking the government to introduce a capital renewal program for B and C homes; and

"Whereas such a program is required to support the limited-term licensing provisions in the proposed new Long-Term Care Homes Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$390 million in 2007 and \$214 million in 2008 to provide an additional 30 minutes of resident care, enhance programs and meal menus and address other operating cost pressures, and introduce a capital renewal and retrofit program for all B and C homes, beginning with committing to provide \$9.5 million this year to renew the first 2,500 beds."

I've signed this, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I have a petition here signed by thousands of people from across the province, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd. has knowingly and intentionally violated section 212(2) of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994 with the full and advance knowledge of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, that the Ministry of Finance immediately order a full regulatory investigation into the officers and management of FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd.;

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

"To immediately implement the powers and authority of the ministry by launching a full investigation;

"To immediately implement section 322 of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994;

"To order the immediate rescheduling of the annual meeting of FirstOntario Credit Union Ltd. under the bylaws of the corporation, and to monitor the meeting of members."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition wholeheartedly. I've signed it and send it down to the table by way of page Hayley.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to introduce the following petition titled "Physical Activity Petition." It's signed by a number of people, including Susan Clark from Niagara-on-the-Lake, Simon Reeves from Fort Erie, and Sherry Allen, also from Fort Erie. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I'm pleased to have signed all these petitions to show my support for them.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition on behalf of the Speaker and the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating the landscape of part of rural Ontario;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are making beaches unusable;

"We, the undersigned, support the private member's bill of Ernie Parsons, MPP from Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the harvesting of these double-crested cormorants."

I affix my name in support.

1530

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

"Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward-Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment."

I'm pleased to add my signature to this petition.

REGULATION OF ZOOS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline (Burlington): I have a petition here regarding protecting animals in zoos.

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I fully agree with this petition and affix my signature in support and give it to Craig.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

“Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

“Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

“Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province’s affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

“Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

“Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

“Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Accept its responsibilities and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home.”

I’m in agreement and would affix my signature thereto.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to stand again and introduce the following petition. It reads as follows;

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of the province of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and their grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas we support Bill 8 as introduced by MPP Kim Craitor;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition in total support of it.

LANDFILL

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): “Whereas there is currently a proposal to more than triple the size of the Carp landfill in west Ottawa; and

“Whereas this site has been in operation for some 30 years and had been expected to close in 2010; and

“Whereas this landfill sits on porous fractured limestone, the worst possible substratum for a landfill; and

“Whereas the dump is in direct conflict with the exploding residential and commercial growth, soon to be 150,000 plus in Ottawa’s west end; and

“Whereas the municipal councillors representing this area—Eli El-Chantiry, Shad Qadri and Peggy Feltmate—and the MPP, Norm Sterling, all oppose this expansion;

“We, the undersigned, support our local representatives and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ensure the Minister of the Environment does not approve the expansion of the Carp landfill and instead seeks other waste management alternatives.”

I have signed that.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that Lakeridge Health should have full funding and not be facing an \$8-million shortfall;

“Whereas this would affect many programs, including the mental health program at Lakeridge Health;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fully fund the \$8-million shortfall for Lakeridge Health.”

I'm in agreement and sign my name thereto.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand for the third time to read in the following petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

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

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas studies indicate that overcrowded emergency rooms result in higher mortality rates; and

“Whereas growing demand and lack of availability of long-term-care beds place increased pressure on acute care beds; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC must reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

“That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and allocate more long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound.”

I support this petition.

Mr. Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to stand again:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the funding provided to long-term-care facilities for dietary needs does not keep pace with the expectations put forward from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

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

“We feel the funding provided from the provincial government to long-term-care facilities for raw food and dietary labour is inadequate. We ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase the funding provided to long-term-care facilities for raw food and dietary labour across the province.”

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support.

CORMORANTS

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have another petition. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas recent scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated that double-crested cormorants consume more fish than commercial fishing, sport fishing and poaching combined;

“Whereas double-crested cormorants are devastating nesting areas for other birds;

“Whereas double-crested cormorants are fouling water and making beaches unusable;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the private member's Bill 156 of Ernie Parsons, MPP Prince Edward–Hastings, to reclassify the double-crested cormorant into the same family as American crows, brown-headed cowbirds and the common grackle. This will allow for greatly increased opportunities for the culling of cormorants, in addition to other steps being taken to control cormorant populations and protect the environment.”

1540

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice dealing with this afternoon's business in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, and Bill 171, An Act to improve health systems by amending or repealing various enactments and enacting certain Acts, following which, notwithstanding any other order of the House, the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. on April 3, 2007, and that this afternoon be considered one full sessional day of debate on Bill 187, An

Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 187, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 187, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sorbara, the floor is yours.

Hon. Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm delighted to rise and begin the debate on second reading on the budget bill. Mr. Speaker, might I just advise you and other members of the House that I'm going to be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge? I'll do the lead-up and he's going to do all the salient points. That's the way it works in our ministry.

Could I just point out at the beginning that this budget bill amends a number of pieces of legislation? I just wanted to make note of them. It gives you a sense of the comprehensiveness of the budget we presented a week and a half ago in the House.

There are amendments to the Assessment Act, the Corporations Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, of course some amendments to the Retail Sales Tax Act, and amendments to the Tobacco Tax Act. Interim appropriations are achieved by way of this act. We are, in this bill, providing for the College of Early Childhood Educators. I'm very proud that that initiative was contained within the budget bill.

We are making changes to the Environmental Protection Act. We're providing for the establishment of a French-language services commissioner. We're dealing with the Justices of the Peace Act. We have created a new piece of legislation in the budget bill dealing with the status of Ontario artists, a specific act dealing specifically with the special role of artists in Ontario's society and culture and in our economy as well.

Finally, we are making amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. Through those amendments—something that I'm very proud of as a former Minister of Labour—is the fact that we're making adjustments to the benefits paid to some 155,000 injured workers.

I guess the various segments of the budget bill don't really tell the whole story. In the time allotted to me, I simply want to share with the members of this House and those who are following parliamentary proceedings just a few further thoughts on what was really contained in the budget that our government presented a week and a half ago.

I think the strongest part of the budget was that it truly reflected the values of the people of this province. The greatest challenge in government is to make sure that the initiatives we take are somehow in harmony with the vast majority of the people. Does that mean that every single person in Ontario says, "Yes, I see myself in the McGuinty budget?" No, I don't think so. That would be taking it a little far. But the values of the people of this province need to be reflected in everything we do and I think we captured that in this budget.

One of the most strongly felt values is simply that the people of this province want good government. They want government that is well managed. They want government to be prudent and disciplined and sure in the steps that it takes. That value was really reflected in the heart of this budget because, finally, with this budget—as I said on budget day—the province has returned to financial health. It's as simple as that. The province has finally, after a struggle of three and a half years, returned to financial health.

What does that mean? It means that we've left—however, I hope—the era of chronic deficits, structural deficits, being in the red. We started out, when we were sworn in, with a deficit of \$5.5 billion. That was the starting point. Finally, after three year and a half years, we were able to present a budget which shows that the province is back to financial health. Not only do we provide for a surplus but in the years ahead we provide for a sustainable surplus. I think that reflects one of the deepest-held values of the people of this province. They want us to manage well and prudently. They want us to make sure that every single penny that they send to this government by way of taxes is well spent. I feel that the fact that in a relatively short period of time we have emerged from structural deficits to surpluses is an indicator of the quality of the management of this government.

I also believe that a deeply held value of the people Ontario is the value that they put on the public services that government provides, notably in the areas of health care, education, and other public services as simple as getting a birth certificate on time. I think that's why my friend and partner for all these many years, Gerry Phillips, the Minister of Government Services, was so proud of the fact that we went beyond just saying, "We're going to try to do it on time." We provide a money-back guarantee now. Whether it's the first money-back guarantee of government in history I don't know, but he is very proud. He showed me the statistics the other day. I think there were a handful of occasions, in hundreds of thousands of applications for birth certificates, where the government wasn't able to deliver. But that's at the level of documentation.

What the people of Ontario really value is the quality of their education system and the quality of their health care system. I invite members of this Legislature to think back four years, about where we were both in the areas of health care and education. I'll tell you where we were. In education, the idea was, "We don't have much faith anymore in the public education system," so the party that was in government then, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, was saying, "We're going to provide money to private schools so public schools don't have to meet that standard anymore."

1550

That was just four years ago. Four years later, I invite members of this House, I invite members of the public to have a conversation with a teacher, to have a conversation with parents. Our schools aren't perfect, but they are so much better as places to learn than they were four years ago, and we are very proud of that.

I heard the other day my friend the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tory, talking about all these expenditures and no results. He must not have visited a school in the past two years if he says that, because they're much, much better.

The people of Ontario value high quality in health care. What was the debate four years ago? The debate four years ago was to the effect that maybe we can't have universal, publicly funded health care any longer. Talk to nurses today; my friend the minister knows about the nursing profession. Talk to doctors today; talk to patients; talk to practitioners. Visit a community health centre and just see the new sense of determination to be the very best we can be in the area of health care. Those are things that the people of Ontario value, and this budget and its expenditures reflected those values.

The people of this province also value government's responsibility to assist those amongst us who are living on the edge, those who are living in poverty—and there are too many living in poverty; those who are living with disabilities—and there are too many living with disabilities. The people of this province value government's responsibility to take action. For me, the proudest moment of this budget was that finally, after years and years, we are discussing, frankly and openly, poverty in the province of Ontario. This budget totally transforms the way in which we provide for children living in poverty, living in low-income families.

Mr. Tory says we're not doing it quickly enough. He says we're spending too much and yet we're not doing it quickly enough. You can't have it both ways, I say to my friend Mr. Tory. He wants us to spend much more money much more quickly, but he says we're spending too much. He wants to eliminate the health premium but he wants us not to go back into deficit.

I'm very proud that we have had the prudence to bring, over the course of five years, a new system to support children in poverty that will literally transform Ontario. We don't come to paradise, we don't come to the Garden of Eden, but we come to a much better place for our kids living on very meagre means.

I'm proud of the fact that we're putting money into housing, affordable housing. We're going to build new social housing. We're providing rent supplements. I'm so happy that we are able to put money to invest further in community living for people living with disabilities. I'm delighted that we were able to put additional funds to legal aid so that those living on the edge would have access to legal services. That system was in very bad shape. These are values that the people of Ontario hold and they're values that are reflected in the budget.

I also understand that the people of this province value diligence, particularly by their local representatives. In this case I want to say a word about my friend the member from Brant, Dave Levac, who has been fighting so strongly, with such power and with such an articulate ability for his community of Brantford, particularly in the area of brownfields. The people of Ontario value that kind of representation. I was thrilled to include in our budget an allocation of \$5 million for the city of Brantford to clean up brownfields. Does everyone understand what "clean up brownfields" means? It's simple. We've got old industrial areas that are polluted and have been denigrated by inappropriate use—maybe 50 years ago it wasn't inappropriate—and the soil is no good. You can't build on those sites and you can't use those sites and you can't get involved in urban redevelopment unless you clean them up.

The member for Brant, Dave Levac, has been making his pitch at this desk and all the desks around here and across the aisle that we need to start doing something about brownfields. We were able to do so with an allocation of \$5 million.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Sorbara: He just pointed out to me that that will be topped off with another \$2 million to be used to build affordable housing on a site that will be cleaned up with the allocation on brownfields. The people of Ontario value what we're doing in Brantford and they value the work that a guy like Dave Levac does on behalf of his community.

There are so many other things to talk about in this budget. I know that my parliamentary assistant worked side by side with all of us. It's like one big family over there. It really is. Sometimes the fights are just like big families, but we worked so closely together and he did such a great job in bringing a perspective to budget-making.

We began four months ago on this budget. The crafting of each initiative was thoroughly vetted throughout this side of the House and, now and again, with members of the opposition as well. I think that the product speaks for itself. It's a budget that says that we're healthy again in Ontario. It's a budget that says that we need to continue to invest in our schools, in our health care system and our post-secondary education system. It's a budget that says that government has to be a leader when it comes to creating new economic capacity. We do that in a variety of ways, including lower business education taxes—half a billion dollars when you add it up all

around Ontario. It's a budget that says that government has a role to play—a very big role to play; perhaps a pre-eminent role to play—in helping vulnerable populations. All together, it is a budget that speaks to the values of the people of this great province.

Over the course of the next several months, a number of these initiatives will be initiated. The first part of the Ontario child benefit will be paid out. The down payment, as we called it, will be paid out in July. A little later on we begin with increased benefits for injured workers. In my own home communities in the greater Toronto area, we're beginning to eliminate the dreaded pooling tax, which was such an unfortunate legacy of the previous government's restructuring of the property tax system.

I think we're well on our way with this budget. I can simply tell you that everyone in my own ministry worked very hard to make sure that it responded to the needs of the people of Ontario. I'm very pleased by the way in which it responded to the values of the people of Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I'm particularly pleased and honoured to join the debate and follow the Minister of Finance and his comments about the budget and what it means to the people of Ontario and the optimism that he finds in this budget and the work we've been doing as a government over the past three and a half years to bring stability to the finances of the province as well as to invest in those core value systems that we set out three and a half years ago, whether it was education or health care, infrastructure in this province, public service, and the economy, and, at the same time, using the prudent fiscal management necessary to set us on the road to good health.

I'm pleased to be part of the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007. The minister outlined the fourth part of our government's overall plan to invest in people and to expand opportunities for all Ontarians, and that means not only those who find themselves in a position to do well, not only those who have the opportunity to have the education that provides them with unique opportunities, but opportunities for every single Ontarian.

1600

The minister spoke about the way this particular part of the plan, this fourth year of the plan, makes investments in children and in families while projecting a budget surplus for the second consecutive year. These new measures are to build on our ongoing investments in health care, education and infrastructure in the province of Ontario. Indeed, the minister outlined for each of us the way the budget measures in this bill build on the achievements that have gone before over these previous three years and that position us here in the province of Ontario for a very bright future.

In speaking to the bill today, I'd like to highlight a few of the initiatives in the bill and take some time as well to talk a bit about the interim appropriations measures that are included in the bill. It's critical to the delivery of the plan that's been laid out in the budget to have this bill

and the interim appropriations dealt with by this Legislature.

Expanding opportunity for all Ontarians helps build a strong and prosperous Ontario, one in which every individual can participate to their fullest. Our government recognizes that giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is the right thing to do—the right thing for society and the right thing for the economy of this province. If each and every Ontarian is to be able to participate in the province's prosperity, the appropriate and necessary support and opportunities must be made available to each and every one of them.

This, our fourth budget, is the next step in our plan to strengthen Ontario by strengthening its people. That's why we're focusing in this particular budget on making opportunity more accessible and success more achievable.

It's why we're moving yet again on raising the minimum wage. Having completed the first part of our plan to achieve \$8 in this mandate, we're now moving through this particular budget bill to a minimum wage of \$10.25 over the next three years.

We're investing in this budget in affordable housing, providing the resources necessary to the housing providers through municipalities and others to put those units in the ground so families have places to live in an affordable fashion.

We're enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credits for seniors. This is the fourth time in four years that we've done this. This provides a wonderful opportunity for seniors who may be of more modest means in their pensionable years and on fixed incomes to offset some of their costs. We hear a lot from seniors about their costs for education taxes, and the property tax credit coming from the province is a wonderful offset to the education taxes that are necessary in their communities.

The minister spoke to the opportunity for pension income splitting, following up on the federal budget initiatives, to allow that pension income splitting to occur as well on the provincial side of the tax ledger.

We're working in this budget as well to enhance workplace safety and insurance benefits for over 155,000 injured workers. In January of next year, the rates for WSIB claimants benefits will rise by 2.5%; on July 1 of next year, by a further 2.5%; and on July 1 of the following year, by a further 2.5%. So over that two-and-a-half-year span, those rates will increase by some 7.5% for injured workers, those who aren't able to be in the workplace, to help them support themselves and their families.

There's increased funding in this budget for Legal Aid Ontario. We know there are those in our community who need access to legal services who can't afford them, and we need to have the resources available so they can get the legal assistance they need to clear up matters in their life in as short a time frame as possible. We know, particularly when we have parents who need to have support payments that have to be dealt with through the legal system, as an example, that it's important for them to have access to the legal aid that might be available.

This budget is part of the reason why we're moving to take children off the welfare rolls. It's why the Ontario child benefit will address not only children of families who find themselves in need of that type of social support, but it will also address the opportunities for families that are out there working at low-income levels. All children must be given the best possible start in life if they're to seize the opportunities for success that each of us would like to have our children have the opportunity to seize.

Families must be given the support required to secure their most basic needs and be equipped to participate in Ontario's economic prosperity. To achieve these goals, we're proposing measures in the bill to implement the Ontario child benefit that was announced in this budget. The minister has already spoken to the number of children—some 1.3 million children, over 600,000 families—who will benefit as the plan comes into its full implementation.

Minister Sorbara spoke about this particular initiative, so I'm not going to speak much more of it, only to say that I hope members here in this Legislature will be supporting Bill 187 because there are so many children in this province and so many families across the province that would benefit from this program and are deserving of our support. Children who are growing up in low-income families in Ontario do deserve a better start in life and the provisions of Bill 187 will help to make that so.

This bill will also benefit children by supporting a higher-quality early learning and child care system. I'm referring to the proposed establishment of a college of early childhood educators. The college would improve and maintain consistent standards of quality in the child care system in the province of Ontario by establishing, among other things, professional standards of practice, qualifications and ongoing professional development for early childhood educators. It's not unlike what already exists for those in the elementary and secondary systems of public education here in this province. It's being extended to those who are dealing with our children at the youngest age, more and more of whom we find in the system at an earlier age gaining the education they so desperately need as they enter into the formal system. This is an important step toward a better child care system here in Ontario.

I want to speak briefly about some matters in the budget. We talk about creating new economic strength and expanding opportunities as the foundation of a successful, caring, compassionate society. Other elements of the bill include the amendments being proposed to the credit unions/caisses populaires legislation. It's a significant piece of legislation. That part of the economic system, that part of the lending and borrowing and saving system, has been wanting for some time, and we're pleased to see that included within Bill 187. It's going to go a long way to help modernize and regulate this particular industry and bring them current in what they're doing, put them in a more competitive position within the banking system overall. It's a commitment we made to

this industry in 2003 and we're happy to be able to fulfill that commitment to the credit unions and the caisses populaires through this legislation.

A key element of the government's strategy for strengthening the Ontario economy is maintaining a competitive tax and business environment to encourage additional investment growth. The House's support for Bill 187 can be an important step in supporting a strong and dynamic economy in Ontario. In the budget, we announced our intention to accelerate the elimination of the capital tax, which is currently scheduled to be eliminated by January 1, 2012. This legislation would legislate this acceleration so that by July 1, 2010, the tax would be fully eliminated for all businesses in Ontario regardless of size. This is one of the key elements we heard from the business community over the last number of years, that it's a regressive tax, an unfair tax and one that needed to be eliminated. So I'm very pleased to see the minister, within the context of developing the budget and the bill, has found the means to accelerate that and also legislate it so there's surety for the business community as they do their capital planning strategies that this particular tax will be eliminated by July 2010.

1610

The bill also proposes amendments to the Corporations Tax Act to extend certain key tax credits that support Ontario's competitiveness. One of these is the apprenticeship training tax credit introduced in 2004. This represents a 25% to 30% refundable tax credit on salaries and wages paid to eligible apprentices and encourages businesses to hire and train apprentices in many areas and designated skilled trades that are and will be needed for the economy of Ontario in the years ahead. We're proposing to extend this credit to eligible apprentices who start employment before January 1, 2012.

And to help support the availability of skilled workers in key sectors of the economy, we're adding six more trades, bringing the total number of qualifying trades under this particular tax credit to 123. So a broad range of skill sets and trades in the province of Ontario will now have access to these particular tax credits as new apprentices are being trained in their particular field of endeavour.

Bill 187 would also extend the 18% rate for the Ontario production services tax credit until March 31, 2008. This particular tax credit is an important part of our support for Ontario's film and television industry, and for maintaining the competitiveness of our entertainment and creative cluster.

As you're aware, last fall we introduced legislation to streamline the administration of the province's corporate tax system and harmonize it with our federal counterparts, the federal corporate income tax base. There are further amendments necessary within Bill 187 that will help keep this harmonization process moving along with the federal government to bring it to conclusion.

These are a few samples of the measures in this particular bill, Bill 187, that will help to foster a strong and dynamic economy and keep Ontario competitive in the global marketplace.

I said I would speak briefly to interim appropriations. As you know, we're entering a new era in the province of Ontario, one of fixed election dates, taking the guesswork out of when an election will be held and allowing the public to understand and prepare themselves for their choices with respect to the leaders in their communities. With interim appropriations, not only can we move forward the initiative that Minister Sorbara has already spoken about, but we'd also have the legal spending authority from the start of the fiscal year, April 1, through to the general election. This system is consistent with other jurisdictions and allows the Legislature to approve government spending, a more transparent method than was used in previous election years. That's why we're introducing a budget bill that includes the Interim Appropriations Act, 2007 to ensure that the province of Ontario can continue to make scheduled and unscheduled payments, including payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors and municipalities right up to this fall's election.

Without a general election, our supply process generally uses motions for interim supply. In that scenario, the assembly grants the government the authority to spend out of the consolidated revenue fund that keeps us functioning pending the completion of the estimates process and the passage of the relevant Supply Act. However, because of the rules of sessionality, a motion for interim supply would not work in our current state of affairs. Courts have ruled that once dissolution has occurred, an interim supply motion would not hold. So, in the interest of ensuring that the government has proper spending authority, we've introduced interim appropriations legislation as part of this spring bill.

It's the responsible thing to do. It ensures that during the period surrounding the general election in Ontario, the province retains legal spending authority until a new government is formed. Enacting the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007, is the first step in modernizing the process that authorizes the government for expenditures to occur. With the support of this Legislature on Bill 187, we'd have the legal spending authority, from the start of the fiscal year through the general election, so we can move forward with the necessary services we provide for over 13 million people in Ontario.

I am particularly proud of what we've accomplished so far in our three and a half years, and particularly so in the budget the minister presented in this House just a week or so ago.

I am excited about the plans we have for our future, because ultimately they will strengthen the people in this great province we have. We will build upon the prosperity of the people of the province of Ontario; we will build upon the health of the people of Ontario; we will build on their education and the skills necessary to continue our prosperity.

We've made tremendous progress over the past three and a half years, but there's still much to be done. I would ask the members of the Legislature for their

support for Bill 187 so that we can continue to move forward on our plans, invest in Ontarians and expand opportunity for each and every one of us. I'm pleased to be able to stand today and speak to Bill 187 and ask this Legislature for the support of the bill when it comes to a vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 187. I know that the forest industry has been devastated in northern Ontario with the changes that have taken place there, the downsizing; it doesn't matter if it's Sault Ste. Marie, Chapleau or any of the places that are very dependent on the forest industry. Yet we have a company that's come forward—and quite frankly it does deal directly with Bill 187—that's willing to invest \$1 billion in northern Ontario. My understanding is that they are going to bring over 400 new jobs to northern Ontario.

But the concern there is that they were never consulted on what's taking place with the new diamond royalty tax that's being implemented here. It's upwards of 13%, where the standard mining industry in Ontario is taxed at 10%. There's no fixed aspect of it; it's supposed to be related to the value of production in a year, which causes a lot of concern. If you look at Attawapiskat, for example, it's a devastated community each spring and it has problems with flooding. They talked about relocating Attawapiskat to other places. Quite frankly, that's where this diamond mine, the Victor mine, is being located.

It does a number of other things, and I certainly hope the parliamentary assistant or the minister addresses the diamond tax issue, because it's going to cause a lot of individuals concern over whether they even intend to do any further diamond exploration in the province of Ontario. I know there are a number of other sites that are currently being reviewed for potential diamond development. However, if this diamond tax moves forward, that \$1 billion, which will generate \$7 billion net into the northern economies, will be substantially affected.

I certainly hope the minister intends to meet with the diamond industry, as my understanding is that there was no consultation when this process took place. It was just brought forward as, "That's the way we're going to do it." It's going to have a substantial impact on the north. I hope the current government takes a look at this and tries to address concerns about the royalty tax.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I listened to the minister and to his parliamentary assistant in their statements—literally effuse about the bill, effuse about the budget—talk about how wonderful this budget really is. I would gladly be persuaded, but not against my better judgment, to quote Socrates.

When one looks at this bill, in the end, all there is are a few small, incremental steps being taken. When the parliamentary assistant stood, the member from Whitby–Ajax–Uxbridge, he said that there is much more to be done." That's the way he ended, and he's so right. There was so much more for this government to have done within their four years of this mandate than they have

actually done. Had they started off on the budget which was presented a few weeks ago as their first budget and built upon it, one might have said that they had made real progress. But the reality is that they wasted the first three and a half years, and now they come along and pretend that they're actually doing something.

I've looked at the time frames, and I invite everyone to look at the time frames of this budget. How much is being done in 2007? How much money is being spent before this House rises or before the election on October 10, 2007? Precious little. What is being done is nothing more than promising what is going to happen. In 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2017, some of these budget measures might actually take place. In fact, this is not a budget of which one should be proud. This is a budget that has come far too late and a budget that really has accomplished very little within the four years of this government's mandate. They should not be up here being proud; they should be standing up here trying to explain why they have failed so miserably.

1620

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion):

I'm very proud of this budget and proud to vote for it, proud because it brings \$60 million to the city of Ottawa.

I'm not the only one who's praising Minister Sorbara. I love reading the community newspapers in my community. One of them, Barrhaven This Week, has a couple of quotes from a number of city councillors. Gord Hunter, from part of my riding, says: "He added that the city's long shopping list has almost been filled through last week's provincial budget."

Gloucester-South Nepean councillor Steve Desroches "called the funding a step in the right direction and added he is hopeful the money will be used to upgrade some buildings in communities across the city."

Councillor Jan Harder said, "I think it shows this council is working closely with the province. They have listened. That's a lot of money. It's a good start in rectifying the funding gap."

This is in addition to the \$111.8 million that the McGuinty government has brought to the people of Ottawa through gas tax, through funding of police officers and through a wide variety of other initiatives. I'm particularly proud that a number of community centre projects, which is part of my portfolio—the Ministry of Health Promotion—are going to be funded. I was at the Ottawa South Community Centre on Sunnyside Avenue in my old neighbourhood, presenting their councillor, Clive Doucet, and the president of their community association, Michael Jenkin, with a \$200,000 contribution for that project.

I also read in the Manotick Messenger that the member from Nepean-Carleton—all sorts of negativity about this budget. So I understand that she and her party are going to vote against the budget. That means they're going to vote against \$60 million coming into Phil McNeely's community; coming into Jean-Marc Lalonde's community; Richard Patten's; Madeleine Meilleur's; our

Premier, Dalton McGuinty's; and mine in Ottawa West-Nepean.

This is a good-news budget for the people of Ottawa. It reinvests in priorities like transit, housing and community recreation infrastructure, including \$2 million for the World Junior Hockey Championship, which is a good investment for tourism development.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I was disappointed in this budget, as were many people across the province of Ontario. I read from the Ottawa Citizen about the budget the next day: "This week's Ontario budget should" be "called the 'vote now, pay later' budget, which, come to think of it, would have been a good name for the Ontario Liberals' last election platform." Vote now, pay later. That's because many of the things promised in this budget won't even be complete until 2014, seven years away. What is the chance that this government will be in power at that time? Not very great.

I've also heard the minister from Ottawa talk about the wonderful \$60 million given to the city of Ottawa. That's less than the Harris government gave to Ottawa in centennial year. It was over \$70 million given to the city of Ottawa in centennial year. Here they are so flush with money that they're trying to get it out the door and all they can come up with is \$60 million for the city of Ottawa. What a pittance. No wonder the member for Ottawa Centre talks about the province being ruled from Toronto and by Toronto. Toronto gets the big bucks; Ottawa gets little, if anything.

As well, it talks here about the Liberal plan to raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010. A study accompanying the budget says that it will cost between 90,000 and 180,000 jobs—90,000 to 180,000 jobs down the drain, according to the study attached to the budget. If they're going to raise the minimum wage or they're going to have a plan to do it, it should be supported by studies—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, you have up to two minutes.

Mr. Arthurs: I certainly wanted to thank the members from Oshawa and Beaches-East York, as well as the Minister of Health Promotion and the member from Lanark-Carleton, for their comments in respect to both the minister's initial speech and my follow-up comments.

The question I have to ask is, in the absence of a plan, in the absence of a premise to go forward, in the absence of dealing with children through the Ontario child benefit, in the absence of a strategy over two or three years to deal with WSIB, without a strategy on a go-forward basis for developmental services, without a strategy to deal with the minimum wage in a progressive fashion, how do we get there? We can't get there today in one fell swoop on all of these fronts. There has to be a planned, go-forward strategy.

I would ask members opposite, particularly the member from Lanark-Carleton: Which of these measures would you want to undo? Would you want to undo the Ontario child benefit for those are in need in our

community—our youngest, most vulnerable children? Would you want to undo, in a subsequent government, WSIB enhancements for those injured workers? Would you want to undo the investment in developmental services for that very needy sector? Would you want to undo the capacity to see those who are working at a very modest level have an increase in their wages over the next three years to \$10.25?

I can appreciate that members want us to do it all today. That's simply not possible. One needs a structured plan to make investments now and know when we're going to achieve those end results. I would challenge members of this Legislature to tell us which of those initiatives that they see in a subsequent budget year that they would want to dismantle. Would it be the Ontario child benefit, WSIB payments, developmental services support or the minimum wage? I think they would be hard-pressed to find any of those on which they would want to turn the clock back, based on this budget plan and this budget bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in the debate on Bill 187, the Budget Measures and Interim Appropriation Act, 2007—hopefully the very last budget bill of the Dalton McGuinty government. I'll even put a few things into perspective at the beginning on this bill and then I'm going to get into some of the details about many of the offensive measures that my colleagues from Lanark–Carleton and Oshawa—Mr. Ouellette already covered some of those items. I'll relate my own views on those. But let's put the financial picture of the province into perspective before we get into some of the details of the bill itself.

Now we are—what?—I guess just a week plus from the day the budget was actually read in the Legislative Assembly. It reminds me very much, I say to my friend from Brantford and to the minister for recreation, of the 1994 World Series. Do you remember the 1994 World Series?

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I should ask the Minister of Tourism, I guess. The 1994 World Series we won't remember very well because in fact there was no 1994 World Series. It's the one people won't talk about. That was the year the World Series was cancelled.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): Trick question?

Mr. Hudak: It's not meant to be a trick question per se but just instructive, in that nobody's talking about this budget.

Mr. Levac: I got it.

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Brantford understands the analogy. This has gone over like the proverbial lead balloon across Ontario. It was, at best, a one-day wonder. If the average working person and the average senior in the province of Ontario, working hard to try to make ends meet in the province, knew anything about this budget or had any thoughts a week and a half later, they'd say that there was nothing in it for them. They are paying higher taxes, higher utility fees, new user fees thanks to Dalton

McGuinty's privatization of elements of the OHIP system like chiropractic care and physiotherapy, higher licensing fees for the driver's licence, etc. Lord knows how many of the various and sundry charges that the government has on the books have increased. I think they even increased the price of beer in the province—the Dalton McGuinty government has—as well as spirits.

I think that if you asked the average person watching today what they thought about the budget, they would have very little recollection about the promises in the budget and they would say that very little, if anything, is of importance to them. I think they're tired of working hard, paying more taxes, playing by the rules and falling further and further behind in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Let's put the total spending of the Dalton McGuinty government into perspective. It took from Confederation—our first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald—until 2003 and the then Premier, Ernie Eves, to get spending to \$68 billion annually—from Confederation to 2003 to get spending to \$68 billion annually. Now, in one term alone, Dalton McGuinty has blown the roof off of provincial spending, skyrocketing it to over \$91 billion. From \$68 billion to \$91 billion in one term alone is simply breathtaking.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): That's more than we did.

Mr. Hudak: They make Bob Rae look like a piker, and that's back when he was NDP, at least in card.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation actually put out an interesting report on this, I say to my friend from Timmins, Monsieur Bisson, that showed that Dalton McGuinty's increase in his first two budgets was greater than Bob Rae's or even the former poster child for runaway spending, David Peterson's. Dalton McGuinty in fact has left the Peterson and Bob Rae governments in the dust. I know my friend from Timmins–James Bay knows that to be the case as well. It's rather eye-opening to think that you've actually outspent Bob Rae and David Peterson when it comes to budget increases. It's probably shocking and eye-opening to most people watching today.

That is basically about a 33% increase in government spending, obviously fuelled by higher taxes and higher fees. You know how that all works. If you ask the people of Ontario if they've seen anything near a 33% increase in the quality of services and in their own ability to afford goods and services, it would be a resounding no.

Let me put that \$22 billion in increased spending in another perspective. That's \$4,500 per household in increased spending or an additional \$750,000 in additional spending per hour that Dalton McGuinty has been office. This is the Steve Austin, the Six Million Dollar Man of spending. You can't keep up with it: \$750,000 in additional spending per hour since Dalton McGuinty came into office. For those born after 1975, I'll explain that one later on.

Program spending has increased by an astounding 8.8%, 8.9%, 7% and 6.8%, respectively, in the first four

years. So between 7% and 8%—just doing that in my head—an almost 8% increase in annual spending growth when the average working family has seen their income increase at half of that rate, at the very best.

On top of that, the McGuinty Liberals have added over \$10 billion to the net provincial debt, and it could grow further if they follow their projections in the time ahead.

Mr. Sterling: that's \$10 billion more you've added to the debt.

Mr. Hudak: It's \$10 billion more, Lanark-Carleton says correctly, added to the debt.

What is also important is that we all remember—I think my colleagues probably haven't burned their last copy; they probably have it somewhere in a safe or buried in the bottom drawer of their desk—the Dalton McGuinty platform. Surely there must be a copy left somewhere in the province of Ontario for comparison sake. Maybe they were all burned. Maybe they're buried under those houses on the Oak Ridges moraine they promised to stop. I'm not sure where the last of the campaign platforms go. Fortunately, we kept a photocopy. It's almost like seeing one of the Dead Sea scrolls, a photocopy of one of the original platforms.

In Plan for Change, the McGuinty Liberals said they would raise spending to \$81.1 billion by fiscal year 2006-07 and revenue would be \$83.4 billion, leaving a \$2.3-billion surplus. We remember this. This was the so-called fiscal plan of the McGuinty government that they claimed people had signed off on. They would keep all of their promises: \$81.1 billion per year fuelled by revenue of \$83.4 billion per year. In fact, I think it would be an understatement to say that Dalton McGuinty has kept very few of his promises. He has broken promises at a rate that would make Pinocchio blush.

Let's be clear about this: \$83.4 billion was the amount of revenue that Dalton McGuinty said, when he looked into the eyes of voters across the province of Ontario in those famous TV commercials—infamous TV commercials—he needed to meet all of his campaign promises. Instead, he has received, for 2006-07, \$89.1 billion in revenue. I think that's from the Q3 fiscal update. So he has exceeded, by almost \$6 billion, what he said he needed to keep his promises and still has 50-plus broken promises, many of which aren't even fulfilled in this, his last budget, showing that he has had a lot of revenue coming in but despite that cannot set priorities and therefore has not kept his promises.

On the expenditure side, as I indicated, in the Liberal election platform Dalton McGuinty said he needed \$81.1 billion to finance his expenditures. The actual expenditure has been \$88.8 billion over the last fiscal and, as I said, it goes over \$91 billion in 2007-08, so some \$7.7 billion more in expenditures by the McGuinty government—\$7.7 billion more in expenditures—than he said he needed to keep his campaign promises, and they remain unfulfilled. It's a cumulative increase of some \$21.7 billion.

We have talked—I'll get to this momentarily—about the impact of Dalton McGuinty's failed fiscal policies on

the economy in the province of Ontario, which has spurred significant flight of well-paying manufacturing jobs from this province, some 120,000 manufacturing jobs in the last two years alone. If you look at the real GDP growth rates in the province of Ontario and compare what has happened between the experience of the previous government, which was reducing red tape and reducing taxes and spurring the economy—the economy wasn't strong when we began in office in 1996; the growth rate was only 1.1%. Our agenda for economic growth kicked into overdrive, and we saw in 1997 an economic growth rate of 4.5%; in 1998, 4.8%; in 1999, 7.5%, in 2000, 5.9%. Unfortunately, we had 2001, with the attacks on the United States, which slowed down our economy and impacted; it rebounded in 2002 at 3%. At any rate, you can see the types of growth rates that transpired under the previous Progressive Conservative government of Mike Harris. As part of that, we had a net creation of one-million-plus new jobs in the province of Ontario, which led not only Canada but North America in job creation.

Sadly, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is another take altogether. The 2004 economic growth, when he came into office, was decent at 3.1%. Once Dalton McGuinty's taxes—the highest taxes now in business in North America, along with Saskatchewan—kicked in, and higher hydro rates and increased red tape, we saw growth rates slow down to 2.8%, a dismal 1.3% in the 2006 forecast, and forecast once again in 2007 to be an embarrassing 1.6%, when you compare it to the growth rates of the other provinces.

I was absolutely shocked, and I know my colleagues across the floor were shocked as well, to hear that Ontario last year was dead last in economic growth in all of Canada. That's certainly not the Ontario, Mr. Speaker, that you grew up in and that I grew up in, that immigrants who have come to this province to find work anticipated. But now, sadly, Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is last in the pack in economic growth and is forecast to be last in the pack again in 2007.

Let me talk a bit about the spending habits of the government as well, because they like to spin this myth that all of the revenue they brought in is needed for planned government expenditures. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Year after year, the McGuinty government has taken in more revenue than they said they needed. I spoke earlier about their economic plan as part of their platform. They have some \$7.7 billion more in expenditure than they said they had needed. By the way, the so-called health tax—which we all know doesn't go to health care; it goes to the consolidated revenue fund, the same place that gasoline taxes go, or slot money from the casinos, for example, the sales tax. It all goes into that giant pot of money at the Frost Building, so to speak. So there was some \$7.7 billion more in revenue than they said they needed when they made their promises. This so-called health tax is really nothing more than an income tax on the backs of the middle class and seniors, which now is about \$2.6

billion, so almost three times as much additional spending has occurred as this so-called health tax. The health tax is really effectively doing nothing but fuelling the runaway spending of the McGuinty government outside of priority health care services.

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My friend from Brantford I know will be very interested in some of the numbers here. Last year the McGuinty government had a significant, what we call a slush fund. This means more revenue came in at the end of the year than they said that they needed for the platform or that they were forecasting in their third quarter finances only a couple of months before.

Let me just go over for those—I know that they visited mcguintywatch.ca, but I'll go over some of the numbers on mcguintywatch.ca for the sake of the record. Visitors to mcguintywatch.ca will remember that last year we projected Dalton McGuinty's end-of-year slush fund would be approximately \$3 billion. That would be a large number indeed. We saw a substantial end-of-year slush fund due to \$2.1 billion in higher-than-expected revenues, \$360 million in lower debt interest costs, \$1.2 billion in contingency funds, and a \$1-billion reserve. In other words, the actual slush fund, if you totalled those up, was a shocking \$4.6 billion more in end-of-year revenue than they claimed they were receiving, far outpacing the \$3 billion that we projected.

That does far exceed the so-called health tax, which was \$2.6 billion, not quite twice as much but definitely a much larger margin than has come in through the health tax. Most of that spending, by the way, that \$4.6-billion cushion, went into further government spending as opposed to reducing the tax burden or paying down the debt. Really, a paltry \$310-million surplus is not something to boast about when you had a \$4.6-billion end-of-year slush fund in the finances and the year before was quite similar.

I'll remind members of what happened this time last year. That was when Dwight Duncan, the member for the Windsor area was finance minister. As opposed to reducing the tax burden on working families and seniors, they went on a mad money spending spree extraordinaire. The Auditor General actually has circled this as part of his report and indicated that Dalton McGuinty last year had several last-minute treasury board orders in order to spend millions of dollars per minute. We all know why he did that. If he didn't, the money would be used to balance the books and pay down the debt, but instead the McGuinty government made a choice to spend that money at an extraordinary rate.

On March 9, 2006, the McGuinty cabinet met to spend \$432 million in a single cabinet meeting, or \$2.4 million per minute. Not to be outdone, they came back March 23, all psyched up, ready to spend, pencils sharpened, cheques ready to go. On March 23, 2006, the McGuinty cabinet met to spend \$640 million, I'd remind you, eight days before the end of the fiscal year. What a flurry of spending to get it out the door before it could be used to balance the books or pay down the deficit—\$640 million,

or, to top the week before, \$3.5 million per minute. My goodness, the finance minister's arm must have been falling off with that rate of spending.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I don't know how much of that money went to Niagara West—Glanbrook. In fact, the problem is, we don't know where all that money went.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Erie—Lincoln.

Mr. Hudak: Well, I'm not so sure. That's a lot of money—\$3.5 million per minute.

On March 30, 2006, 24 hours before the clock went out, they still had a big lump sum, a big slush fund there sitting over at the Frost Building. Twenty-four hours, one day before, they went on another mad dash, spending some \$205 million, or \$1.4 million per minute—24 hours before the gate came down. That is a total of about \$1.6 billion in end-of-year spending.

Let me read into the record what the auditor said about this. This is a quote from the Auditor General's 2006 annual report, page 344: "Just prior to or on March 31, 2006, the government entered into a number of transfer-payment arrangements and expensed the amounts involved, thereby reducing the surplus for the year by almost \$1.6 billion more than otherwise would have been the case ... in many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing prior to ... fiscal year-end."

Further, "The transfer agreements did not set out specific conditions for the use of the funds. None of the transfers resulted in any investments in capital assets or infrastructure or in delivery of services to the public during the 2005-06 fiscal year..."

Let me reiterate that point: "In many cases, normal accountability and control provisions were reduced or eliminated to ensure the transfers would qualify for immediate expensing," meaning, in the vernacular, "no strings attached." The cheques were sent out—shovelled out the door—as fast as it could happen, with no strings in how those provincial dollars were accounted for. We're not really sure even how they were used by the various groups that received those funds.

Let me read a few third-party comments on the 2007 budget spending, which is also similar to the previous two years: a lot of last-minute cheque-signing as the calendar turns to March 31. The Royal Bank Economics Research from March 22, 2007, says, "Going forward, the province has, in our opinion, lowballed forecasts for both revenues and spending. We're suspicious on both counts as revenue growth may well surprise on the high side again this year, which may well leave the McGuinty government with the freedom to spend off-budget amounts in the lead-up to an election."

No wonder they're suspicious. That's the exact same trick that the finance minister and Premier McGuinty have used each of the last three years. They lowball revenues, they overestimate expenses, and when they

have a lot of room at the end of the year, they just start dishing it out as fast as they can. I think we're particularly vulnerable to this given that there's an election set for October 10, 2007.

Dr. Sherry Cooper, chief economist, Bank of Montreal capital markets, had this to say: "The strength in revenues would suggest scope for an even larger improvement on the surplus. The offset was that program spending rose 6.8% or by \$5.1 billion. Thus the fiscal year 2007-08 surge in revenues was absorbed by higher program spending. The FY2006-07 surplus was only maintained by debt servicing costs falling \$0.2 billion." In other words, as Dr. Cooper points out, the government had unplanned spending increases of some \$5.1 billion—mind you, approximately twice the value of the so-called health tax.

One more quote and then I'll move on to another section of the binder in response to Bill 187. Kevin Gaudet, Ontario director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said, "The more money Ontario taxpayers have sent, the more the government has spent. Premier McGuinty never met a program he didn't like or a tax he didn't hike." Well said, Kevin Gaudet, Ontario director, Canadian Taxpayers Federation. One more time to my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, who I know appreciates and agrees with the sentiment of Mr. Gaudet: "The more money Ontario taxpayers have sent, the more the government has spent. Premier McGuinty never met a program he didn't like or a tax he didn't hike." He's absolutely right.

Let me summarize before I move on to some of the jobs and economy impacts of the high tax and runaway spending and high-energy fiscal policy of the McGuinty government. We had projected that the end-of-year slush fund for 2006-07 was going to be \$3 billion. We said that would be about \$400 million in higher revenues and \$400 million in lower debt costs. There was a \$1.2-billion contingency or slush fund already on the books and a \$1-billion reserve. So that's \$3 billion, a rough estimate of the slush fund. As I said earlier, it turned out to be—what's the word for it? Shocking? Enormous?

Mr. Bisson: Appalling.

Mr. Hudak: Appalling—in terms of the inaccuracy. Gargantuan. How often do you get to use the word "gargantuan" in a sentence? "A gargantuan slush fund of some \$4.6 billion—\$2.1 billion in higher revenues than they said they had in the third quarter; \$360 million in lower debt servicing; \$1.2 billion in contingency; and a \$1-billion reserve—\$2.4 billion of which was used for a mad money spending spree. Last year mcguintywatch.ca projected that the slush fund would be between \$2.5 and \$3.1 billion. The 2006 end-of-year slush fund was \$3.7 billion. I guess we have to, based on the performance of the McGuinty government, ratchet up the amount of money that is socked away in end-of-year slush funds.

1650

Let me make that case one last time as I get closer to the halfway point of my speech—

Mr. Bisson: Don't tell me you're almost halfway done already.

Mr. Hudak: Because of these time limits—I mean, if there is unanimous consent, I could go on.

Mr. Bisson: You can ask; I'll give it to you.

Mr. Hudak: My friend from Timmins—James Bay says that he may consider extending my time. We'll ask in about half an hour and see if you're still of the same view.

Let me make this clear: The only reason Dalton McGuinty had to break his promise on taxes is that he also broke his promise on spending restraint. We all remember that mother of all broken promises—

M. Bisson: Je me souviens.

Mr. Hudak: "Je me souviens," my friend for Timmins—James Bay says accurately—the \$2.6 billion on the backs of middle-class families and seniors brought in by Dalton McGuinty, even though he stared directly into the camera and said that he wouldn't raise your taxes. The only reason, when we look at the numbers now—three years later, four years later—that Dalton McGuinty broke his promise on taxes was that he also broke his promise on spending restraint.

We all remember that Dalton McGuinty swore up and down that he wouldn't increase taxes. We all remember that, a few months later, once safely elected and he had the keys to the Premier's limousine, he swore up and down that the reason he broke his tax promise is that there wasn't enough revenue to fund his election commitments. Remember all that talk about the deficit left behind? He said that there wasn't enough money coming in to support his spending initiatives, and therefore he had to break his promise. He swore up and down, but again, the Premier broke that promise. When we look at the numbers now, three and a half years later, it shows that that is not even close to reality.

The McGuinty government's own 2007 budget, the one we're debating today—this fellow here—shows that in 2007 he spent a massive \$7.7 billion more than he promised in the fiscal plan he released during the election; \$7.7 billion more than he said he needed to finance all of his promises. And after the one-time revenue crunch in 2004 that was detailed in the Peters report, revenue actually rebounded to \$3.1 billion more than McGuinty said he needed when he made those fateful election promises. In fact, that's the level of revenue even before you count one penny—even more than one penny—of the so-called health tax on the middle class and hard-pressed seniors in the province of Ontario. Even that \$3.1-billion cushion above what the health tax was was not enough for Dalton McGuinty and his greedy spending. He said that he needed more, and that's where this health tax comes in, fuelling runaway spending in violation of his own election spending promises, some \$7.7 billion—

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Erie—Lincoln is referring to the member from Ottawa South, the Premier of Ontario, by his full name over and over again in this speech. I believe that the Speaker earlier today advised the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal that we were to refer to members by their ridings or their titles.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll help you remind members that yes, you're to refer to members by their ridings. The Chair will listen carefully and therefore won't allow anybody to use names. We'll all refer to them by their ridings.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. I should have made it more clear: either by riding or by the minister's or the Premier's position.

Mr. Hudak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm just following what I hear my colleagues across the floor say regularly: the "McGuinty government." I don't see why—

Ms. Smith: That's okay.

Mr. Hudak: That's okay? Okay.

The McGuinty government has \$7.7 billion more in revenue that has come in than they said they needed to keep all of their campaign promises. Despite that, despite the \$7.7 billion in additional room, they continue to break promises. That is almost three times the value of the so-called health tax, which we know flows into the consolidated revenue fund; it doesn't flow into health care at all.

So what does this mean for jobs, for the state of the economy? I've already talked about the runaway spending that would make David Peterson and Bob Rae envious if they were twins.

Mr. Bisson: They are.

Mr. Hudak: They are, now, aren't they? I guess they're birds of a feather now. We see that Dalton McGuinty has even outpaced those former—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I don't know if they get along that well, but the point being that the McGuinty government has outspent even the halcyon days of runaway spending of the Peterson and Rae governments. This has impacted, obviously, on confidence in the province's books. It will mean higher taxes if the economy slows down even more if this government continues down their current path. I will talk about the hidden tax hike that was part of the budget. But sadly, the high taxes, high energy prices and runaway-spending fiscal policies of the McGuinty government have had a devastating impact on the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario.

I was just in Cornwall, as a matter of fact, this weekend in support of an outstanding young businessman, a former councillor in Cornwall, Chris Savard, our candidate in the upcoming election. It was a great event, and I was pleased to be there with him. I had some meetings with local municipal leaders at the same time. Sadly, Cornwall and eastern Ontario have effectively become the poster children of manufacturing job losses under the McGuinty government. We all know, of course, that just by unfortunate coincidence, the day I was there was the one-year anniversary of Domtar shutting its gates—approximately 1,290 employees out of work, a plant with over 100 years' history in the area—a proud history. Many families and generations of families employed at Domtar found their economic wherewithal at that plant.

They're now out of work and have left the area, finding lower-paying jobs in the service sector when they want to be working in the manufacturing sector. And 1,290 jobs is simply devastating not only to Cornwall but to that eastern Ontario region of the province. It's not only Domtar with its losses; we also have in the area the Nestlé plant in Chesterville, another icon of manufacturing in a much smaller town than Cornwall. When you lose a plant like Nestlé and some 300 jobs, the impact that has on the tax base of a municipality is extremely damaging and worrisome.

Not too far away is Hershey in Smiths Falls. It's not in the same riding, but just up the highway. Hershey in Smiths Falls closed down—another major loss in the area; World's Finest Chocolate factory in Campbellford—I'm going across the province a bit here—ATS, Automated Tooling System in Bowmanville, closed; Harrowsmith Cheese in Harrowsmith; United Tri-Tech Corporation in Cornwall; Satisfied Brake Products. More layoffs.

In my own region in Niagara, Ferranti-Packard in St. Catharines, 212 jobs gone; Bazaar and Novelty in St. Catharines, 200 jobs gone; GM in St. Catharines, 130 jobs gone; Redpath Sugar in Niagara Falls, 20 jobs; Automation Tooling Systems in Cambridge, Burlington and the neighbourhood, 169 jobs; Rheem Canada in Hamilton, 150 jobs; Ball Packaging in Burlington, 300 jobs.

The list, unfortunately, goes on and on as part of a 120,000 exodus of well-paying manufacturing jobs under the Dalton McGuinty government in the province of Ontario, unfortunately, with no end in sight, because I see no policies as part of this government's high-tax, high-spending, high-energy-rate policies that will turn this around—120,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs.

They talk a bit about minimum wage as part of their budget. They talk about transfers to low-income families, but the best social program is a well-paying job. The best social program in the province of Ontario and Canada in our history is a well-paying job. The best way to move people from poverty into work is through employment and well-paying jobs. No wonder the concentration on the minimum wage is part of the Dalton McGuinty economic platform suddenly, after they got beat up by the NDP for months and years on end; no wonder the emphasis—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: Well, it's true. I think they've been on this one for quite some time. No wonder the focus on the minimum wage, because that's the kind of jobs that the McGuinty government has created in the province of Ontario. We've seen a significant shift from well-paying manufacturing jobs like Domtar, like Cascade, like Rheem, like Ball Packaging into the low end of the economic ladder. Burger-flipping jobs are replacing the blue-collar jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and no end in sight.

I've got an extensive list here of the sad closures and losses. I know my friend from Timmins—James Bay, I

know my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka as our natural resources critics and my colleague from Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, for northern development and mines are aghast at this government's inaction when it comes to the massive exodus of jobs from the forest industry sector, which is absolutely devastating to towns like Smooth Rock Falls, when jobs pack up and leave. It's devastating across all of the province of Ontario.

Interjection.

1700

Mr. Hudak: I guess my friend from Ottawa thinks it's socialist to talk about the loss of manufacturing jobs. He thinks the only way to solve this, I guess, is to take them over. I believe the answer is simple, I say to my friend from Ottawa: reduce the tax burden on the business sector. Make sure that you have an energy policy that actually encourages energy supply, to help reduce energy rates. Make sure you have a stable and predictable government that doesn't spend like—a bunch of pirates on shore leave would show more restraint than the McGuinty government. That's how to help bring manufacturing jobs to the province.

I pointed out that I'd compare that record any day: a million net new manufacturing jobs that had come into Ontario before the Dalton McGuinty government, and some 120,000 jobs lost under the Dalton McGuinty government. I don't think they're ignoring it; they just don't understand it, and they're making excuses for it. But I think they should know, and they've forgotten, that the only way to finance programs like health care, like education, like more police on the streets, like better highways, is to ensure that you have a healthy economy that's creating jobs, well-paying jobs, because that increased revenue then comes into the treasury to help pay for programs in the long run. In many ways it's like David Peterson, déjà vu all over again: a big spending party as the economy slows down. That leaves you in a lot of trouble if you can't spend within your means.

There are a number of initiatives that I want to get to in detail in the budget after I've set out some preliminary comments on the runaway spending and the broken promise of Dalton McGuinty when it comes to controlling his own spending to finance his campaign commitments, and the devastating impact on jobs in communities like Cornwall, St. Catharines, Hamilton and Burlington. This government is now suddenly boasting about its plan to reduce capital taxes. Well, isn't this something? This is actually the fourth position of the Dalton McGuinty government on the capital tax in the last three or four years. I think they've had more positions on this than the first chapter of the Kama Sutra when it comes to capital taxes.

Laughter.

Mr. Hudak: I'm glad somebody appreciated that line.

The initial reaction under the previous Progressive Conservative government—Ernie Eves had committed to reducing the capital tax and eliminating it by 2008. Their initial position was that that was a giveaway to our rich friends. Remember that? Dalton McGuinty's gang, in

opposition, said that that was a giveaway to our rich corporate friends and they would not reduce capital taxes. That was position number one.

Then, in their first Liberal budget in 2004, they were suddenly in favour of eliminating the capital tax. They were vehemently opposed, to get votes in the last election; then, less than a year later, they're vehemently in favour of eliminating the capital tax—so maybe not that vehemently, because the schedule, if anybody actually believed it, would eliminate the capital tax by 2012. So initially it was going to stay in place. The PCs had a policy of getting rid of it by 2008, by the legislation before the House at the time. And now it was going to be eliminated by the McGuinty government in 2012. That's quite a turnaround. But then, shortly thereafter, under then-Finance Minister Duncan, the third Liberal position in less than three years' time was that they had a small reduction in the capital tax and would eliminate it in 2010 instead of 2012 if they could afford it, whatever that means.

Now we see in this budget, as part of the bill before us, the fourth and, I would assume final—but who knows?—position on the capital tax, which is to eliminate it by 2010, finally, in legislation, but oh, my goodness, what a torturous turn this one has been. And I don't know why you'd trust them when they've had four different positions in the last three and a half years alone. Far be it from them to boast about reducing capital taxes when, if they hadn't had their initial position, they would have been eliminated by 2008, which, I say to my friend from Ottawa, would have helped keep some of those jobs in Ontario and encouraged more investment. That's what you say in 2007's budget, but a few years ago capital taxes were gifts for rich friends. Now they sing from a different songbook.

That's why a number of us over here could barely contain some chuckles when Finance Minister Sorbara indicated that they were going to reduce business taxes with a business education tax cut. As I said, we welcome reductions in the tax rate. There's no doubt about it: We feel that lower taxes will help us to get back on a better economic footing like we were under the previous government before Dalton McGuinty jacked up taxes to among the highest in North America.

Ms. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It seems the member for Erie–Lincoln's having some trouble with short-term recall today. It would be the member for Ottawa south or the Premier of Ontario, and I wish he would stop referring to members—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Let the Chair explain just a little bit. I've been here about 14 years, and it's not uncommon to refer to governments and identify them by a name. That's why the Chair has been allowing that today. I don't encourage it, but it seems to be a practice that's followed here.

Mr. Hudak: Again, I have no problem with short-term recall because, as I said, I just outlined the McGuinty government has had four different positions on the capital tax in the last three and a half years. If you

recall your short-term memory, that's more positions than in the first chapter of the Kama Sutra, I'd say to my friend from Nipissing.

To hear the government boast that they're reducing business education taxes: Come on. We all know that one of the first bills that the McGuinty government brought into this Legislative Assembly was the biggest increase in tax rates in the history of this province on working families, seniors and businesses. My goodness, what kind of gift is this anyway when it will be 2014 by the time that this BET—business education tax—reduction is fully implemented?

I mean, this is not just Dalton McGuinty hoping that he's re-elected, but maybe he's hoping that there will be a second Dalton McGuinty Jr. government, for example. Come on. Nobody believes this guy is going to be around till 2014. I don't know how many promises there have been of this nature that are seven years down the road. I know my colleagues—and I'll get to it later hopefully in the child tax benefit. Similarly, you don't keep the promise for three years of your government and then you expect taxpayers to believe that seven years down the road you're going to do it. Hardly. Not hardly.

Finally, we're seeing some understanding from the McGuinty government that high taxes cost jobs, but there seems to be a conversion on the road to defeat, that suddenly they've found this religion and even when they find that religion, I don't know if there is strict adherence to it. They've had four positions on the capital tax in three and a half years and a business education tax reduction that is not fulfilled until 2014.

Let's not forget what's happening here in the city of Toronto today. The McGuinty government conveyed to the Miller administration—if that's okay, I say to my friend from Nipissing, the Miller administration—new taxing authority. Every day you wake up and you read in your local newspaper—and I know my friend from Ottawa West—Nepean is a big fan of David Miller. He'll see all of his crazy tax plans. They spend all night thinking about what they're going to tax next. What was the one about the video machines over the gas pumps at your local gas stations? These keep me entertained. I've got a 100-litre tank in the Avalanche. I need these things to keep my mind focused if it's a little dull at 100 litres, and they want to tax them.

It's incredible. Every day you read about David Miller's new plans to tax things from billboards to housing exchanges to the hard-pressed hospitality sector. Where does this come from? Courtesy of the Dalton McGuinty government with the City of Toronto Act to give permission for these massive tax hikes in the city of Toronto that are going over just about as well as this dud of a budget.

Let me move on to another tax item before hopefully having time to get back to the child tax credit. There were two items that were not in the budget speech; surprising. We know the one, of course, because it's been embarrassing to the Minister of Finance to ad-lib a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation, still with no real

details released over what the \$50-million grant to Magna corporation is going to be all about. It wasn't even in the budget speech; he had to ad-lib it on the floor, and it was about 24 hours before some key members of the media and local staff picked up on the ad-lib of \$50 million. I mean, this is your equivalent of a Magna budget. The \$50-million gift to Magna wasn't even in the budget papers.

1710

And the same thing, not in the budget papers: a new tax specifically to the Victor project just outside of Attawapiskat in northeastern Ontario, where they've changed the tax regime substantially. I understand—and I hope my colleagues across the way prove me wrong—that the company, the proponent, De Beers and the First Nations who are beneficiaries and partners on parts of this project, the first time they heard about it was in budget lock-up. There were no discussions, no signal the government was going to jack up the tax rates. They signed out in the budget that it goes up to some 13%, after hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent, a billion dollars committed—my goodness, it sounds like a banana republic over there: increasing taxes with no notice whatsoever on a project that is already under way, with benefit impact agreements with the First Nations in the area, many different First Nations that have worked closely with the company, to benefit from jobs and investments, based on the profits. Now these profits will be reduced because of the Dalton McGuinty government's greedy tax grab at the last minute. Do you think President Chavez of Venezuela wouldn't play these kinds of tricks that the McGuinty government is playing in this budget? They just signed a contract. They finally got a contract with Crystallex, right? They've agreed with the Chavez government in Venezuela that Crystallex is to do a project in Venezuela—and not even Chavez is playing these kinds of tricks that were in your budget, of a mining tax hike.

What does this mean? You may recall that the Mike Harris government, as one of its many initiatives to support mineral investment in the province of Ontario, lowered the mining tax rate to among the lowest in Canada, and also had a special benefit for mines that were in remote areas. Those investments have paid off in projects like the Victor mine outside of Attawapiskat: a 5% tax rate. What this budget does is it jacks it up to some 13%, with no notice, and what kind of signal—I guess maybe they're laughing over there, at the Ministry of Finance, or whoever came up with the idea; I don't think it was ministry staff. I can't believe they would do this. I certainly know that the hard working civil servants at the Ministry of Mines are probably apoplectic about this Chavez-like turn. I know the Minister of Mines is going to be fighting against this, and I'll support him in any initiatives he has to fight against this.

We worked hard to make decisions to lower the tax rate to invest in Operation Treasure Hunt, to streamline the Mining Act, to reduce the red tape burden, to encourage investment, and we've been paid off with

benefits and jobs and investment in the province of Ontario. And now you see this banana-republic-like attack by this backdoor tax hike. It's absolutely shameful, a ploy that Chavez wouldn't try on his worst day.

In fact, you'll recall that the initiatives that the previous PC government of Mike Harris brought forward elevated Ontario from way down the list to number one, not only in Canada but in the world, in mineral investment attractiveness, in the Fraser Institute survey.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Give Ernie some credit.

Mr. Hudak: Ernie Eves was the finance minister, as part of the Mike Harris government, I say to my friend. Ernie Eves was the finance minister, as part of the Mike Harris government, that brought in these initiatives that made us number one in the world in mineral investment attractiveness. I will say that under the McGuinty government we've moved down, I think, to number seven or number eight—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: No, no.

Mr. Bisson: We're down to number 11.

Mr. Hudak: Number 11, my friend from Timmins—James Bay says. Number one, like going over the falls in a barrel—what do you think, I say to my friend from Ottawa, this Chavez-like manoeuvre is going to do for our attractiveness? Why would you, as a company that can invest anywhere in the world, want to invest in Ontario when you see, behind closed doors, the finance minister jacking up the tax rates with no notice, no consultation, and ripping up an existing deal? It's unbelievable, and I do hope that the government will back down from this because of the impact that it can have not only on this project, but the First Nations in the area that can benefit from it, people from as far south from the project as Timmins—it will benefit that part of the province—and also the unfortunate signal that it sends to other companies in the world interested in investing in Ontario. We have great mineral potential, we've got solid policies in place, and this banana-republic-like manoeuvre is very unfortunate and I hope it's reversed.

Let me give you an example. Chile was ranked number two on the mining potential index and in one year it dropped to 14th due to controversy over mining royalties. I fear—as my colleague said, we're already down to number 11—how much further Ontario may dip because of this bizarre move by the Minister of Finance.

I don't know if I'm joining dots that don't mean to be joined, but as I said, there were two items that are part of this budget that were not part of the budget speech but are impactful: the sneaky increase in the mining royalty on the Victor mine project, and at the same time a \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation for a project that is not clear. It looks like it's going towards the Magna institute, a private university with the company.

Coincidentally, I could estimate that the mining change on the Victor mine project is about a \$50-million tax hike. Maybe I'm wrong and I hope the parliamentary assistant will correct me if I'm wrong. But I wonder if, at the last minute, when the finance minister said, "Hey,

I've got to flow this \$50 million to Magna as part of my budget and we need to make up that revenue somewhere," they said, "Aha, we'll screw over that project Victor because it's up in Bisson's riding. We'll increase their taxes to pay for the benefit to Magna."

I say to my colleagues from the north here this afternoon, what are they going to say in northern Ontario to contemplate that a tax was introduced behind closed doors on a northern business that's going to invest in the local economy to support a successful business in southern Ontario? We already know about the impact and the feeling in the north about resources being drained down to the south. But now look at this potential connection between an increase in the mining tax to help fund a project for the Magna corporation, within 24 hours, incidentally, of them making a multi-billion dollar bid for the Chrysler corporation. They're hardly crying poor over at Magna corporation—a \$50-million investment.

I do hope the minister or the parliamentary assistant will correct me if I'm wrong, but the Magna project has an optimistic projection of some 60 students graduating over the next five years as part of your Magna budget.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: The culture minister is right: It's your Magna budget—the \$50-million grant to the Magna corporation.

If there are 60 students graduating every five years, that's an \$830,000 subsidy from Ontario taxpayers for this project at Magna. If we understand as well—and correct me—it's not an open application process for anybody to apply. A student at home watching could not put her application forward for the Magna university, but it's for mid-level career engineers already working in industry, drawing from eligible applicants within the Magna corporation. It's not of general benefit, as far as I understand. It wasn't a competitive process to see where the \$50 million could be invested. It's for one corporation, on the eve of a multi-billion dollar bid for Chrysler, to benefit their own employees, at a subsidy of \$830,000 per year.

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: My colleague from Lanark—Carleton is likewise suspicious about the motivation of the McGuinty government towards this project.

As I said, its absence from the budget speech I think is very telling, and we intend to pursue this issue further in the Ontario Legislature. This seems to be entirely different from the previous investments in the auto sector, because I'm not aware of a single job being created by this \$50 million. The Magna university is opening up I think this fall for its first students. It's already under way, so it's \$50 million coming in at the very end of the process. Unless I am mistaken, not a single job will be created as part of this \$50-million gift to Magna at the same time that northern Ontario is having its taxes increased, working families and seniors are seeing no benefit from this budget, and taxes in Ontario are now among the highest for business in North America. Seniors and working families are having trouble making

ends meet because of the increased taxes and fees they face courtesy of the McGuinty government.

1720

My last point of focus is the child tax benefit. I know some of my colleagues will get to this in a little bit. I found Randall Denley's recent column in the *Ottawa Citizen* very interesting. We all know the Ontario child benefit—if there's anything that people will remember, and I don't think they'll remember much about this budget other than that there is nothing in it for middle-class families or seniors—begins to be phased out at \$20,000 per year. So a total payment for a one-child family with \$25,000 income in 2007 will be a grand total of \$80. Mind you, they also now pay \$300 in the so-called health tax, courtesy of the Dalton McGuinty government; when phased in more in 2008, it will be \$200 in benefits, \$300 in higher taxes. It's an extraordinarily high rate of marginal taxation with the clawback in the child benefit coupled with the Dalton McGuinty health tax.

Randall Denley of the *Ottawa Citizen* says this—this is his column of Saturday, March 31—“By making a new social welfare program the centrepiece of his budget, Premier Dalton McGuinty is making a clear statement of values. He's telling us that government's job is to provide handouts, not to encourage and reward individual effort and entrepreneurship. Just to underline the point, McGuinty dismissed tax cuts as ‘trinkets and baubles.’”

Certainly we on the Progressive Conservative side of this Legislature believe that the best benefit to help out low-income families is a good, well-paying job to help them move up the economic ladder as opposed to Dalton McGuinty's, as Mr. Denley says, concentration on providing handouts as opposed to hand-ups.

Mr. Denley goes on to note quite well that Dalton McGuinty's government has failed to keep its campaign promise to end the clawback. He says, “McGuinty campaigned on a promise to end this unequal treatment. As a result of his new Ontario child benefit ... that same parent on welfare will receive \$11,660 by 2011.” The year 2011 is significant because that's the year that we're supposed to believe that Dalton McGuinty's government, if re-elected, would actually implement the program—another four years plus down the road after three and a half years of breaking promises.

Mr. Prue: Another election cycle.

Mr. Hudak: Another election cycle, as my colleague from Beaches rightly says.

Mr. Denley: “As a result of his new Ontario child benefit ... that same parent on welfare will receive \$11,660 by 2011. So after eight years, the person on welfare will be \$2 ahead of where they should have been in 2003.”

So they have to wait eight years, or 2011, and at the end of the day, that person on welfare will be \$2 ahead of where they should have been in 2003 if the McGuinty government had kept its promise.

“The challenge for the McGuinty government,” Mr. Denley says, “was how to take an unmet four-year-old

election promise and turn it into a shiny new program. Just saying that you were ending an unfairness for people on welfare, eight years after you promised to do so, isn't a winner.” Clearly so. So I guess we'll see the broken promise from the McGuinty government continue for another eight years.

Mr. Denley concludes, “McGuinty says his child benefit is ‘a powerful economic strategy.’ What low-income families really need are those \$20-an-hour manufacturing jobs that have been disappearing at an astounding rate during the McGuinty regime. What offers low-income families the greater hope—a better job or a better handout?”

Clearly we in the Progressive Conservative Party believe a better job is the best way to move forward and to help one's family.

The last point I want to get to deals with the property assessment system. I could probably do an hour on this issue alone. The number of reversals by the McGuinty government on this issue rivals their reversals on the capital tax—several positions in the last few years alone. After initially rejecting assessment averaging—go back to one of their early budget bills where they actually eliminated the schedule for assessment averaging, criticizing assessment averaging. So they were against it a couple of years ago; now they're all for it as we get close to an election. The point being that assessment averaging does nothing to stop the scourge of skyrocketing property assessments in the province of Ontario. John Tory and the Progressive Conservatives have brought forward a policy to cap annual assessment increases at 5% per year as long as you maintain ownership of your home—real protection for taxpayers from skyrocketing property assessments. Dalton McGuinty? No such thing. He tries to hide it in the language he uses around the policy, but, in reality, after four years of assessment increases, you get your bill and then you climb up to that over a four-year period. For example, a home that had an average increase of 12.5% last assessment, last year—that was an average home. Let's say they experience a similar increase for the next three years. When they get their bill at the end of the day, it's about a 48% or 50% whammy. Instead of putting the knife to you all at once, they put the knife to you in four jabs and claim that is a better policy.

Let me give you an example. We were at Mr. Cook's home for an assessment-related event. PC policy would cap his increase at 5% a year over five years, meaning his home's value would increase by \$21,000 in the first year and \$22,000 in the second year, with a 5% cap. Under the McGuinty regime, if it went up 12.5% annually over four years, it would leap to \$77,000 in the fourth year; it would start at \$54,000, \$61,000, \$68,000 and \$77,000. Under the John Tory plan, his assessment would be \$25,000 over four years; under the McGuinty government's phoney plan, \$77,000. Higher taxes for seniors like Mr. Cook.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bisson: I appreciate the support from Mr. Hudak, the member for Erie–Lincoln, when he talks about the issue in regard to the diamond tax this government has imposed on De Beers. We may as well call it what it is: This is the Victor diamond tax. It's as simple as that.

This is a move by the provincial government to change again, two thirds of the way into it. What's happened is that De Beers, for the better part of 10 years, has been working at exploration and making a decision to go or not go when it came to the development of the Victor diamond mine just west of Attawapiskat. They made a decision based on the economics of the property. One of the decisions was the 5% royalty that would have to be paid on diamonds that are extracted from the ground.

Here's the interesting part: I believe—and I don't think I'll be corrected on this—the original reduction from 10% to 5% on the royalties paid was originally done by the Liberal government, by the McGuinty government, when they were first elected. They argued the royalties are 10% across Ontario, and because it's so expensive to develop a mine north of 50, they reduced the royalties to 5% as an incentive to attract investment north of 50 so that we could work at trying to create economic development. Here we are: De Beers makes a decision based on that and other things the company had to do, including what the royalty rates were, and they find out as they're bringing the mine into operation that the provincial McGuinty government has decided to whack them with a tripling of the royalties on that diamond mine. I'm just saying that I concur with my friend the member for Erie–Lincoln, Mr. Hudak, who says this is like a banana republic.

You've got to understand what mining's about: Mining is about finding money for exploration and then bringing a mine online. You're competing with absolutely everybody. Having a tax regime as bad as they've got in the Northwest Territories is not a way to attract mining to Ontario.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me the chance and the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member for Erie–Lincoln.

I've been listening to him for the last hour, I believe, and I don't expect him to support the budget because there's no doubt in my mind they have a different approach to many different issues. Of course they are against public health care, they are against public education, they're against investing more money in the poor segment of our society, against the children.

I'm proud and honoured to be a part of a government that believes strongly we have to continue to invest in public education, in post-secondary education, in our infrastructure, in our schools. It's very important for all of us to keep investing in our public infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

I was listening to him when he said the government of Ontario in the last budgets handed out to many different people. But I want to tell him that it's important to all of us to give a chance to vulnerable people among us to start a new life, to support our kids—more than one million

kids. I am proud to be a part of a government that issued a budget to support the poor people among us, to give them the support to come walk with us. It's the only way we'll have a prosperous province.

1730

This budget talks about different elements, talks about the environment, education, health care and infrastructure. It also talks about attracting more business and supporting many different municipalities that pay high taxes and education tax; that's why we give them support and they can attract more investment to their municipalities.

The member for Erie–Lincoln, I believe—I don't know how he got some information. Maybe it's due to his ideology, part of his government, part of his party to go against the public interest. I believe strongly we have a great budget and hopefully all of us will be convinced and support that budget.

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): I'm very pleased to offer a few comments with respect to the excellent response to the budget offered by my colleague the member for Erie–Lincoln.

There are many areas that I could speak about, but I would like to focus in on one specific area. That's the issue of the McGuinty health tax and the impact that has had on my riding of Whitby–Ajax and Durham region in particular, because this, of course, was the first of many broken promises by this government. When I walk into my riding and speak to people about the effect of this health tax, they reasonably believe that this money is being used in order to provide better health care for the citizens of Ontario. They're initially shocked to find out that that's not the case, that this money is going into the general revenues and being subject to the same waste and disregard for the taxpayers that's being shown by this government in so many other areas.

But then, when my constituents take a look at the state of health care in Durham region, it's not at all surprising that this tax isn't being used for that purpose. I have to say this is no criticism whatsoever of the hard working doctors and nurses and health care professionals in our area. They're doing an excellent job with very limited resources. But the fact of the matter is that in terms of what's happening in our area, in one of the fastest-growing regions of Ontario, in an area that's already significantly underfunded with respect to the rest of the province, we're not having health care spending increased. No, we're being told they have to slash \$8 million from the health care budget—\$8 million from services to the most vulnerable people in our community: mental health issues, children's mental health issues, addiction programs and treatment.

It's incomprehensible to me how this can be. Many of the residents of Durham region are asking the same question. This is probably the biggest issue that they're facing. I think it's something this government needs to turn its attention to.

Mr. Prue: It is a pleasure to stand here and to comment on my colleague from Erie–Lincoln. He gave a very

impassioned, long and detailed speech, lasting a full hour, pointing out many of the flaws, many of those areas of the budget which are not going to deliver what has been promised. But it was towards the end of his speech when he got very impassioned again about ending child poverty that my ears perked up. We know this province is one of a number of provinces—in fact, the wealthiest province—in Canada that choose to claw back the national child benefit which is given to every poor child in Canada. This province, among others but alone among the wealthiest provinces, has determined that they want to claw back that national benefit when the child lives in a family whose parents are either on Ontario Works or on the Ontario disability support plan.

The way he described this I think is true. The amount of the phase-in that is anticipated in this budget is minuscule. The amount of money that a child is going to get in Ontario in this budget year amounts to a maximum of \$250, or about \$5 a week. That is the maximum you can get if you live in a family where the parents' combined income is \$20,000 or less. He talked quite clearly and carefully about the phase-in until the year 2011. I think that needs to be addressed and I plan to do that in my own speech. But what he didn't talk about, and what I think needs to be talked about, is the 2011 phase-out of the clawback, because that is taking place simultaneously, so that people who are having that money clawed back and who can ill afford it will not see until 2011 the phase-out of a program that was promised to be phased out in 2003. He did touch on that, and I commend him for doing so.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Erie–Lincoln, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hudak: I thank my colleagues for all their comments. There are a couple of things I wanted to just leave some final notes on at the end of my comments with respect to home assessments. We have a letter you may have seen in the Toronto Star of Monday, March 26, from Bob Topp, Coalition After Property Tax Reform. It seems to support the position I brought forward today. He says:

“Ontario Finance Minister Greg Sorbara's plans to deal with property assessment hikes over four-year cycles is just tinkering. It doesn't fix the unfairness. It means the property tax pain for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians will be inflicted over a longer period, when their double-digit assessment hikes lead to higher property taxes.”

He cites an example:

“In the last assessment in 2005, more than 100,000 properties in Ontario were up between 30% and 150%, compared to the average provincial increase of 12%.”

I think all of my colleagues in the assembly probably have had a constituent who has seen his or her assessment increase by 150% in previous assessments. If you extrapolate that over a four-year period, just for the sake of rounding it as a two-year increase, that's a 300% increase that that individual or senior would receive over a four-year cycle, meaning that under the McGuinty gov-

ernment's proposed assessment averaging, her assessment would increase by 75% per year. I know that all of my colleagues have seen constituents with those types of assessment increases, versus the John Tory plan, which would be a 5% maximum increase as long as the home ownership is maintained.

I hope I get a chance to speak later. I know my colleague and fellow finance critic from Beaches–East York will address the minimum wage issue. I've got to tell you that, to the credit of the NDP, this is an issue they've championed, the \$10 wage, consistently for some time. The McGuinty government opposed it lock, stock and barrel, and then suddenly, just before the budget, they emerged and upped the ante by a quarter. I think that was one of the most duplicitous, sneaky and phony promises that I've seen.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Prue: It is that time again in the day—which happens to me all too often—where I begin a speech but cannot finish it. I call it my bifurcated speech. This one is actually one third today and two thirds, I guess, on the next occasion.

Today I want to talk mostly about Bill 187 because I want to get into the budget and how it relates to Bill 187. But I want to talk mostly about what is contained in this bill.

For people who are watching on television, you might wonder. You saw the bravado, you heard all the great speeches, you saw the Liberals standing up and clapping literally for everything, even though sometimes it wasn't in their best interests, as the finance minister spoke. Then you might wonder, “What is happening here? We have a bill, Bill 187, which isn't exactly on point with the budget.” Just for the edification perhaps of some of my colleagues but more so for those people who may be watching, it is quite standard for a government to introduce two or three bills following a budget. I would take it that since we have a truncated time here, a limited amount of time between now and the next election on October 10, everything has been jammed together in this bill under the vernacular of Bill 187. It contains a great many things that would surprise people that are non-budgetary in nature, and they're all rolled into one bill.

Interruption.

Mr. Prue: I think somebody is about to lose their BlackBerry. Somebody was calling the Liberal backbencher.

The changes that I looked through—and there are some 40 of them—include such things as the credit union changes, which we would welcome, by and large; property taxes, which I'm going to talk about; the child benefit package; the royalty for diamonds; the Securities Act regarding mergers; and the status of the artist. All of these legislations are contained within the body of Bill 187 and are in part only related to the budget, but they're contained within that bill. It's an omnibus way of getting a whole bunch of legislation through under the rubric of the budget because, as the finance minister and the Premier know only too well, every government backbencher,

no matter what is contained within this Bill 187, will support it because to not support it would cause the budget to fail and the government to fall. I have no illusions, nor should anyone else, that this Bill 187 will pass largely unchanged, unscathed, and it will become law at some point.

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I just want to talk about what is contained within Bill 187, so everyone should know. The first thing that disturbed me and continues to disturb me—and my colleague from Erie–Lincoln talked about this in his own party’s way—was the changes to the Assessment Act. What is contained within the body of Bill 187 is the provision that assessments of properties will not take place every year, but will now take place on a rolling average of every four years.

At the outset one might say, why is the government passing this? The answer is very simple. They are passing this because this is a political hot potato for them, on a government that has chosen, up until this time, to do absolutely nothing when it comes to property tax reform. I remember those heady days back in 2002 and 2003 leading up to the election when the then leader of the official opposition stood and talked about property tax reform, how it needed to be changed and how he used to mock the Conservatives by having changed their very own property tax bill that led to this some eight times in the final four years of the mandate of the Eves-Harris governments. They mocked them and said that things had to be done to change it. It had to be more workable; it had to be understandable; it had to have people have confidence in the system.

What they’ve introduced here does absolutely none of that. Instead of having your house assessed every year, it’s now going to be assessed every four years. There was an assessment back in 2005 and the next one won’t be done until 2009. For the government seeking re-election in October 2007, this is a hot potato that they don’t want to surface. They’re going to pretend that they’re actually doing something, but the reality is that nothing whatsoever will be done. People will get property tax increases. They won’t see it on a yearly basis, but when they see it every four years, it can potentially be four times as large. In four years, you may see, and you will see, properties doubling in value. You may see properties which were assessed at half a million dollars suddenly becoming million-dollar properties because that assessment has taken some four years. I’m not exaggerating the point. There were many, many properties in this province—and I salute Bob Topp and his whole group of people who are out there showing the tens of thousands or the hundreds of thousands of properties that had escalated in value more than 25% to 30% in single years, some escalating in value 100% in single years.

All this is going to do is get rid of a political hot potato and pretend the government is doing something. It leaves the whole concept of current value assessment pretty much as it is, and it does not change any of the government legislation to actually mitigate against the

property taxes being out of whack and mitigate against that whole feeling that people have that they’re being ripped off by the system.

There is nothing in this portion of the bill on which I can comment favourably. Sure it’s good, if somebody gets an increase, that it’s phased in over four years, and somebody who gets a tax decrease—and that does happen too—sees it immediately, but I have to ask you, what does that mean for the municipalities who are collecting the tax?

I turn to my colleague the former mayor of Pickering, now the parliamentary assistant to the minister. He has to know that if you phase in the increases over four years, but if you give all of the money in a refund for those who actually get a tax deduction, it means that the municipalities that collect it will not have sufficient monies, in some cases, to do the job they need to do.

I’ll put it in very simple terms. If your taxes go up \$100, it’s phased in over four years: You get four \$25 increases. If your taxes go down \$100, you get it all in one fell swoop. So the municipality, in the first year, is out \$75 on those two properties, is out \$50 in the second year, is out \$25 in the third year and only gets rationalized at the end. So municipalities across this province that have housing prices that are fluctuating—some that are going up and some that are going down—are going to see that in the short term, in the first, second and third years of this four-year cycle, the value of the taxes that they collect actually declines. This is going to cause a great many problems to municipalities. Nothing that has been explored here—not by the minister, not by the parliamentary assistant; I hope they’ll comment on this—will mitigate against the tax losses to the municipality in the beginning of the cycle. That’s a very real question that I think needs to be answered. The province has said they will step in and mitigate the losses against the city of Toronto for the pooling effects, but there is nothing here for the 480 municipalities that will suffer in the interim in this four-year cycle.

There’s no long-term plan. There is absolutely no long-term plan. It’s business as usual, as far as this government is concerned, throughout the four-year cycle. There’s nothing here to remove the volatility and there’s nothing here to enhance the fairness that the minister spoke so often about wanting to do and which André Marin, the Ombudsman, said was absolutely essential when he went in and looked at the whole problem around MPAC. There is nothing in this for renters. There is nothing in the program that will help those who rent properties in Ontario, particularly those who are tenants in large apartment buildings and apartment blocks; be they in Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton or Thunder Bay or London or Windsor; there is nothing here for them. The people who rent in apartments pay disproportionately higher taxes than those who own houses and live in those properties. In fact, in some cities, like my own city of Toronto, it is estimated that it is sometimes three times as high. In Mississauga they pay only 1.7, in Ottawa 1.6 times as much as a comparable property that

is home-owned. You can see the real difference when you look at identical buildings, one being an apartment building, side by side with a condominium-owned property. You can see the difference in the taxes that are paid on each of those buildings and on each of those units. There is nothing that this government has done within this legislation to help people who are tenants and who are paying taxes that are far too high.

There is nothing in this legislation that will help the aged, the infirm and those on fixed income to continue to live in their houses. There is no tax, there are no grants, there is no program that will help people who are whacked with high taxes over that four-year cycle to try to remain in their homes, absolutely nothing; it didn't even deserve a mention in their budget.

There is nothing in this that will do anything about seasonal property owners. When I went around the province, as did my colleagues the Conservatives, asking people about the taxes they paid, one of the real things that was raised over and over again was people who own seasonal properties. We live in a country and in a province that is blessed with many lakes and rivers and wonderful places where people like to spend their time and recreation. It is not uncommon, and it is not just for the rich, that people own these small properties where they could put a trailer, where there could be a cottage, where they could camp on them. They own those properties, and there is nothing whatsoever in this legislation that recognizes the seasonal nature of the properties that people own and the reality of how much money they pay in property taxes.

In fact, we have shown I think consistently to this government that people who own these seasonal properties are really paying far more than they should. They occupy them sometimes for two or three months of the year, but they pay taxes on them for 12. When they occupy them, they often get no services. How many times has this government talked to people from northern Ontario particularly who have no hydro, no water, no sewage, no municipal services, no garbage pickup, no access to the libraries, no access to a town, sometimes don't even have a road going into them, yet they pay taxes to the max. The people who are there quite frankly have to question why they are paying for 12 months of municipal taxes whereas in some cases they get absolutely no municipal service. There's no discussion whatsoever in this budget or within Bill 187 of the need to upload the download. If there is one thing that is causing municipal property taxes to escalate at an alarming rate, it is the fact that this government continues the Harris legacy of allowing the download to remain in place.

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The Association of Municipalities of Ontario has conservatively—and that's with a small "c," Mr. Hudak—estimated that the province of Ontario takes some \$3.2 billion out of the property tax system to fund provincially mandated programs—that's \$3.2 billion of hard-earned taxpayer money out of the property taxes to fund provincial services. These provincial services have

nothing whatsoever to do with property; they have to do with social policy. They involve, amongst other things, Ontario Works or ODSP. It involves child care; it involves land ambulance; it involves public housing. All of the social benefits that flow from this are taken from the municipalities, and the Premier and the finance minister back in those days in 2002-03 said that this was wrong, that it shouldn't continue and that the upload should take place.

Although I would commend the government for the tiny, tiny ways of looking at the uploads, so that the government now pays its fair share of land ambulance, because they didn't before, and now pays its fair share of the public health proportion, which they didn't do before, there has been virtually nothing done over the four years of this mandate to redress that problem. We had hoped in this budget to see that. It didn't happen.

This government promised to end the volatility. There's nothing here to end the volatility of property taxes. It's just going to put them out over a longer period of time and allow them to remain volatile.

Last but not least, and this one here is a shocker to me, the Ombudsman in his report talked about 17 programs, 17 things that had to be done, but 13 or 14 of them were really easy. MPAC, the property assessment at arm's length from the government, said that they could do 10 of them right away. The government said they could do two or three right away too, and in fact they were done, but there were two outstanding reports which needed to be done and which this government in this bill and nowhere else has—they've just turned a blind eye.

The first one, of course, was to—

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: It's getting a little noisy in here.

Interjection: The Speaker is a part of it.

Mr. Prue: The Speaker's a part of it. Okay. We're all having a good discussion. I hope someone's listening.

Interjections.

Mr. Prue: Okay, a few people are listening. Thank you.

The first one was to force MPAC to do what was right by ordinary taxpayers, and that is to give them the information which they claim is proprietary, and to give it to them, so that they would know the reasons and the rationale for their property values that are escalating, on a computer model. It seems to me very reasonable that if the government is going to rely on this, then the government has to make this information available to the public. The finance minister has nothing like that in this bill.

The second one is to reverse the onus. This is a really simple one. It's done in the province of Manitoba. It says that when MPAC says your house is worth a lot more than you think it is, it's up to them to prove it is worth that much, not up to you as a lowly individual taxpayer with limited resources to say it's not. This would completely make it a fairer system that could be implemented, but I am saddened to say that this is not contained within the body of Bill 187 either.

I go on to the child benefit, and I hope I have enough time to finish this before we get to six o'clock. I've got five minutes.

The child benefit: I looked at this as well. This benefit between July 1 of this year, when this Parliament in all likelihood will no longer be sitting, and June 30, 2008, when a new Parliament will return, will grant some \$250 to some of our poorest citizens: our children. Quite frankly, any money is welcome, but I want people to think about what that \$250 involves. It's less than \$5 a week for a child and the child gets the money only if—only if—his parents are both working, or at least one of them is working, and only if the combined income is \$20,000 or less. At the same time, this government is continuing what I consider to be a heinous practice of clawing back monies from the national child benefit. You're giving \$250 with one hand but you are continuing to claw back \$1,250 from kids who are in families where people are on Ontario Works or whose parents are disabled and are on Ontario disability. So you give \$250 but you continue the clawback of \$1,250.

I have to think this is a poverty budget. This is a poverty budget where the Premier talks about alleviating poverty. This is a poverty budget that the Minister of Finance says he's going to do something about. Well, this is a budget, I would suggest, that keeps children whose parents are on Ontario Works or on ODSP—it continues to keep them poor, because although it alleviates \$250, you continue to keep the \$1,250, so they're only \$1,000 ripped off instead of \$1,250. Is that what your government is about? Is that what you want? Is that what you think is a poverty budget? Because it's not what I consider to be a poverty budget; it's what I consider to be a rip-off of those poor children. If you were serious, you would have ended the clawback. If you were serious, you would have done what Dalton McGuinty said back in 2003, that it was a disgrace and that it needed to be ended. But here we are in the fourth year of a four-year cycle talking about ending it in 2011, so, "I couldn't do, I didn't do, what I promised to do. Elect me, and then at the end of that four-year cycle elect me again, so that I can finally keep the promise that I made in the first place."

Mr. Bisson: Isn't it three strikes and you're out in baseball?

Mr. Prue: That's why I'm wearing a baseball tie today. It is the opening of baseball season as well. But anyway, three strikes and you're out.

Okay, so there you have it. You have a budget and you have this legislation in Bill 187 that implements this laudable goal in 2011, so it will take five solid years to get them up to the money you want to give them and five solid years to end the clawback, so all of those kids who are on OW and ODSP will continue to suffer under this government and you will treat every one of those children differently than you treat the children of the working poor. I don't understand where Liberals get off doing this. They're children. They don't know the

difference. They don't know that their parents work or some don't work. They don't know why their father has been hurt in an industrial accident or is disabled. They don't know that. But they do know and they will know poverty.

Mr. Speaker, I see it's about 6 o'clock, and I think that's an appropriate time for me to stop. I will continue on the next day.

HEALTH SYSTEM
IMPROVEMENTS ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 171, An Act to improve health systems by amending or repealing various enactments and enacting certain Acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi visant à améliorer les systèmes de santé en modifiant ou en abrogeant divers textes de loi et en édictant certaines lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? If there's no further debate, Mr. Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 171. Is it pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I request that the bill go to the social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2007
LOI DE 2007 SUR L'INTERVENANT
PROVINCIAL EN FAVEUR DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 165, An Act to establish and provide for the office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à créer la charge d'intervenant provincial en faveur des enfants et des jeunes et à y pourvoir.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? If there is no further debate, Mrs. Chambers has moved second reading of Bill 165. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): Mr. Speaker, I'd really like to refer the bill to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

Pursuant to a motion earlier today, this House is adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Boutrogianni, Hon. / L'hon. Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, government House leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brown, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	Speaker / Président
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Attorney General / procureur général
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Colle, Hon. / L'hon. Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Correctional and Emergency Services) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Services correctionnels et situations d'urgence)
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjoint parlementaire au ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées

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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West–Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest–Mississauga	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Di Cocco, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (L)	Sarnia–Lambton	Minister of Culture / ministre de la Culture
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Hastings–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–St. Clair	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Ajax	
Ferreira, Paul (ND)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Erie–Lincoln	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales et ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Klees, Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce et au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Environnement
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	Chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Marsales, Judy (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
McMeekin, Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Aldershot	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Transports
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Milloy, John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)	Stoney Creek	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / York-Nord	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	Deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services (Disabilities) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires (Personnes handicapées)
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjoint parlementaire au premier ministre
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Peterson, Tim (IND)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York / Beaches–York-Est	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph–Wellington	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Victoria–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre–Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (L)	Vaughan–King–Aurora	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Lanark–Carleton	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford	
Tory, John (PC)	Dufferin–Peel–Wellington–Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Agriculture and Food) / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Agriculture et Alimentation)
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Wilkinson, John (L)	Perth–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney,
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Finances et affaires économiques**

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Deborah Matthews, Phil McNeely,
Carol Mitchell, Michael Prue
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Tim Peterson, Lou Rinaldi,
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Cheri DiNovo, Brad Duguid,
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mario G. Racco
Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey, Rosario Marchese,
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Ted Chudleigh, Peter Fonseca,
Kuldip Kular, Jeff Leal,
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro, John O'Toole,
Ernie Parsons, Khalil Ramal
Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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