



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 6 December 2007

Jeudi 6 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 décembre 2007

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(WAGE SECURITY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(SÉCURITÉ SALARIALE)

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

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program / Projet de loi 6, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin d'établir un programme de sécurité salariale des employés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Miller, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Paul Miller: The NDP has always been a party that puts working families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a good job is the best way to make sure that working women and men share Ontario's prosperity. In Ontario, manufacturing and forestry jobs are some of our very best jobs. But there is a problem in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry heartlands: a job crisis. Since July 2004, 174,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. In addition to this, more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and about 35,000 indirect jobs have also been lost.

I'd like to throw a few more numbers out to show just how important manufacturing is to this province. Manufacturing jobs paid an average of \$20.68 per hour as of August 2007. This is significantly above the average hourly wage of \$18.42 per hour. In large part, this is due to the fact that nearly one in three manufacturing jobs is unionized. As well, these unionized jobs pay wages higher than non-union manufacturing jobs and generally provide a much richer package of benefits and pensions.

But those who have lost jobs are not just numbers. They're people: people with families, mortgages and car payments; people who work hard and play by the rules so

that they can make a decent living. I believe that these decent hard-working folks are facing economic challenges that they haven't faced in the past. In fact, I believe that there are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist government action now. I believe that for more than a century, manufacturing strength became as much a symbol to Ontario as Niagara Falls and Algonquin Park and established the foundation of prosperity for the province and our working families. Now, amid changing global economic conditions and failed federal and provincial policies, that foundation is threatened to crumble.

I believe that the government must respond now. I believe that the government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime—a lifetime, Mr. Speaker—to a company are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable good-paying jobs.

Here are just some of the policies the NDP has been fighting for for the past four years:

—a five-year guarantee of industrial hydro rates so that Ontario manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates;

—a job protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs;

—a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

—tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant from closing;

—pension protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their pensions when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy; and

—an auto fund that would have ironclad guarantees that government funds are not just ending up in head office bank accounts in Detroit or Tokyo without any real job-creating investments being made here in Ontario.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward, and to this list I am proud to add the employee protection bill. Before I address the specifics of my bill, I want to make it clear that this bill is in no way a substitute for the federal legislation that puts payments to workers at the head of the line when a company goes

bankrupt. The NDP believes that companies shouldn't be allowed to unilaterally allow banks and suppliers to recover their money before workers see a single cent of what they are owed for what they have already completed. I repeat: We badly need federal legislation that reserves that order by giving priority to workers.

All over Ontario, companies are closing without paying their workers the monies owed to them. It would take far too long to go through all the companies that have left town without paying their bills in this province, but a very partial list of companies whose workers would have benefited from my bill are GenFast in Brantford, Amcan in Hamilton, Collins & Aikman in Mississauga, Mahle in Gananoque, Fincore in Toronto, and Hartford Fibre in Kingston.

The purpose of the bill is to create a fund that would compensate workers for unpaid regular wages, overtime wages, vacation pay and holiday pay, termination pay and severance pay. The fund works as follows: A program administrator would establish and maintain a fund to pay compensation to the eligible employees. The act empowers the administrator to charge employers sufficient premiums to maintain the fund. Where employees file a claim for unpaid wages, an employee standards officer will investigate the claim and will issue an order if he or she finds the claim is warranted. The program administrator would determine the amount of premiums that are required to maintain the program fund and is empowered to establish premium rates that will vary with the kind of company. Employers must register with the program, administer and provide various statements relating to total wages and the employer estimates it will pay in a given year. This is a practical, doable proposal. In fact, something very much like what was established by the NDP government in 1991, and it was extraordinarily successful in compensating workers for unpaid wages. The fund was killed by Mike Harris in 1995.

In summary, this bill is about people. It's about the people who have built and continue to build this province. It's heart-wrenching to be at a labour council meeting when proud, strong, middle-aged steelworkers break down while telling their story of how they've lost their jobs and how they can't even pay their mortgages, can't put food on the table for their families and are facing bleak futures with few job possibilities. Not only are the families facing such hardships, but to add insult to injury, there is no protection for their severances, benefits and hard-earned pension plans.

If we want to talk about the causes of the poverty in this province, let's look at the manufacturing job losses in this province and the poor treatment of these workers in their time of need. They were there paying their taxes and helping to build their communities and their province. Now it's our turn, as legislators, to protect them.

1010

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: First let me very sincerely applaud and thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney

Creek for his sponsorship of this bill in this Legislature today. This member has demonstrated in very short order that the people of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek are not going to be let down by their newly elected member of this Legislature, nor are the working people of this province. This first piece of legislation by this member underscores that in a most profound way.

I've got a problem because I really am concerned that people here in this Legislature, where the minimum wage is six digits plus, some of them don't really understand what being a working person means out there in the real Ontario. Like everybody else, a couple of months ago I was walking around my communities knocking on doors and saying howdy to folks, down in the south end. Not telling stories out of school, it was a somewhat low-income district; the housing prices there were modest. You knock on a door, like others, and, you know, sometimes you've got to wait a little longer, right? The member from Hamilton Mountain understands that, Ms. Aggelonitis, because she was out there too. Sometimes you've got to wait a little longer, because maybe it's a senior and they had a little trouble getting to the door; maybe they were at the kitchen sink and they had to dry their hands. I waited a little longer. It was a woman who was, oh, in her early forties. She was still wearing the restaurant shirt—I know the restaurant—you know, with her name on top of the pocket. She looked tired. It was 4:30 in the afternoon. I asked her, "You work there, huh?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "You look tired, ma'am, I've got to tell you." She said, "I am." She works a 40- and 50-hour week for sub-minimum wage because, you see, restaurant workers don't make minimum wage, because it's presumed that the tips will make it up. But I know the restaurant: It's not Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner up the road here, where I know some of my colleagues across the way are inclined to wine and dine from time to time, and where an entree is 25 or 30 bucks and the tab at the end of a meal is 80 or 90 bucks a person. Well, 10% or 15% of 80 or 90 bucks for a serving person is not shabby. But when you work where this woman works, and people are inclined to buy their \$1 coffees or their \$2.50 club sandwiches—because those are the kind of prices at this restaurant—10% or 15% of \$2.50 really doesn't make up for the sub-minimum wage of that woman and workers like her who are on their feet all day. Talk about working hard. We work hard? Horse feathers. That woman works hard.

Let me tell you, working women and men across this province, in plants, in forestry, in farmers' fields, in the retail and service sectors, they work hard, and increasingly they are working harder and harder for less and less, lower and lower wages.

This Friday afternoon I am joining Howard Hampton—or perhaps he's joining me—down in Port Colborne. We're going to be visiting some workers who have been forced out on strike down at the Port Colborne Drop Forge. What's one of the issues? The company wants to eliminate the defined-benefit pension plan and—oh, dare I refer to the leadership shown by so many

people in this Legislature?—replace it with a defined-contribution pension plan: not particularly impressive and not particularly meaningful for those workers who are aging and now have become fearful of their retirement rather than looking forward to it.

Then, I tell you, the worker after worker after worker, women and men, who have lost their jobs here in this province are forced into despair, and despair that I fear many members of this Legislature simply don't understand. It's not just a matter of walking down the road and picking up another job, because, let me tell you, the change in lifestyle from a good manufacturing unionized job, a value-added job, a wealth creation job, where you might be making \$20, \$25 an hour—mind you, you're working hard for it—or sometimes you're making \$17, \$18 an hour, the transition in lifestyle for that family and community when that job gets downgraded to one of Mr. McGuinty's \$8.25-an-hour jobs, I tell you it's dramatic.

New Democrats are going to be holding this government to account, because the despair out there across Ontario is growing, the fear is escalating, and the tragedy is compounding. Mr. Miller's bill today goes a small way to addressing that. I urge members to please support it.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour, I'm privileged to have the opportunity to join in this debate today as it relates to Bill 6, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Wage Security), 2007.

Since 2003, one of our government's focuses has been job creation. We can proudly say that as a government, we have been able to add 327,000 net new jobs in Ontario, with the projection of another 270,000 new jobs in the next three years.

While we understand the motivation behind this proposed legislation, this bill is another example of the NDP's inability to draft public policy that works for Ontarians, and puts the growth of our economy at risk. Legislation like the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Wage Security), 2007, would put more pressures on business and could potentially put Ontarians out of work.

In fact, in the past, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has strongly opposed this idea of a wage earner protection fund. Their argument was that this fund would increase the burden of payroll taxes and that well-run firms should not be required to subsidize the poor business practices of others. Our government recognizes the challenge that employees, companies, unions and communities face when a company closes, and we have taken action.

Through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: I remember earlier this year, Minister Chris Bentley visited Sheridan College in Brampton, and I was quite impressed to see what Sheridan College is doing in terms of training students in modern state-of-the-art machinery—I don't know what the technical term was—in the machine shop tooling business, because there are a lot of companies in my riding that do have employment for these people, and I know of a few of these businesses that have problems recruiting skilled people. I made a

point of mentioning that to the president of Sheridan, and I commended him along with Minister Bentley for all the good work that they are doing.

Through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: The NDP called our trade mission to China and India junkets. But what happened? Last year, TADA from India opened up in Mississauga and created 300 good jobs. That is just one company out of the many that we contacted while we were in India with the Premier, and there are many, many more that are looking to do business. So what we are doing to progress in Ontario, the NDP is calling a junket. What a shame. And they are saying they care about Ontario and employees and job losses.

Getting back to this bill, under the current Employment Standards Act, enforcement of employee wage claims policies are in place. Currently, the policy of the ministry in the context of a claim from an employee whose employer or former employer is bankrupt or insolvent is as follows: The ministry first accepts a claim and does their investigation. They appoint an employment standards officer, who further investigates, and if there is any entitlement, a proof of claim is issued. In the case of a privately appointed receivership, an order to pay wages is sometimes issued against an employer.

So there are provisions already in place. The Employment Standards Act also provides that related employers and directors may also be liable to pay entitlements owing to employees. As such, they may be made the subject of orders under the Employment Standards Act.

1020

Also, this is federal jurisdiction. There is already a bill at the federal level, Bill C-12, which has passed second reading in the Senate. I don't know what the NDP is trying to accomplish here. Bill C-12 is aimed at protecting employees' wages and would largely accomplish the objectives of this member's bill, making it redundant. Bill C-12 would help employees who unfairly lose out on wages when an employer files for bankruptcy or is put under receivership. The Ministry of Labour is committed to continue to work with our federal government on the implementation process to ensure that the Ministry of Labour's current policies and claims process under the Employment Standards Act interact smoothly with the federal program.

This bill is redundant. The NDP doesn't know what they're talking about in terms of formulating policy for Ontarians. It's for this reason that I cannot support this bill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I would like, first of all, to congratulate my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—who, like me, is a newcomer to this House—for being the first person up with a private member's bill in this session. It's some testimony to his conviction. Congratulations.

For me and for our party, this is really a question of philosophy. I can speak with some degree of knowledge to this, because I've been a private businessman myself—a private business owner—and I know what it is to feel the pressures of that particular position.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: God forbid you should have to pay your bills.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's right: You do have to pay your bills.

But what this bill proposes is to create yet another fund for NDP cradle-to-grave care of everything they think is wrong with this province. Employers—and at one time, almost, myself—have caved in under the financial pressures and more and more are feeling financial pressures that cause that because of the economic conditions we face today, which include a fluctuating dollar, globalization, the high business tax rates in the province of Ontario, high electricity costs in Ontario—things that haven't been addressed, for example, in the throne speech—and the list goes on and on. What happens is that businesses fail, become insolvent, go bankrupt, shut down and leave, as the case may be, and it's a very sad thing to see. But nobody looks at what's behind it. It's bad business and it affects the people who own the business as much, if not more, than the employees.

What's being proposed in this bill is, "Let's pile another imposition on these companies in bad times, so that they have to pay more money into a fund that ultimately is for distribution to employees." The federal government already has legislation on the books that prioritizes employees as primary creditors. Perhaps, as my friend suggests, this is not strong enough, and perhaps the feds should consider strengthening that legislation so that there is primacy for employees in the distribution of whatever comes from a bankruptcy. However, this is not a provincial matter.

This bill views the corporate world as, in one word, "bad" and employees as "good." I have seen the bad side as a small business person. I have faced insolvency. I've had the bank come to my door and say, "We want a collateral second mortgage on your house," and I've had the absolute negative feeling of going home to my spouse and saying, "They want a collateral second mortgage on the house," and looking at it from the standpoint of not only putting 100 or 150 employees out of work, but perhaps not being able to pay the mortgage myself. I got by that one; some companies don't.

Before we pass legislation that says, "Pay yet another tax, Mr. Employer," because that's what this fund would be, "and another brick to the thing that's causing you to fail," we have to look again and perhaps see it as a function of the federal government to ensure that there is priority for employees when a business fails and not lay it on the step of the employers.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I'm pleased to rise to support An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program. This amendment to the act would put working families first. Ontario is going through a manufacturing and forestry job crisis right now. It doesn't need to be that way, but our government being what it is, here we are in a crisis, and with a job crisis, workers and their families suffer. The NDP believes that we can do something to lessen that suffering by amending the Em-

ployment Standards Act. We believe that government has a role to play in protecting good jobs, and, when those jobs cannot be saved, in making sure workers are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force.

Aujourd'hui, mon collègue, M. Paul Miller, présente un projet de loi qui modifie la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin d'établir un programme de sécurité salariale des employés. Saviez-vous qu'en Ontario aujourd'hui, il est possible pour une compagnie de fermer ses portes et de foutre le camp sans jamais avoir à payer le salaire, les vacances, le temps supplémentaire ou le prime de séparation qui sont dûs à ses employés? Cette pratique est beaucoup plus courante qu'on ne le pense et c'est ça que le projet de loi va changer.

Ce projet de loi va garantir à tous les travailleurs et travailleuses en Ontario que si jamais ils se retrouvent dans une situation non enviable, que leur employeur s'en va, ils n'auront pas à subir le traitement que j'appelle « tourner le fer dans la plaie », que non seulement tu perds ton emploi, mais en plus, tu ne te fais pas payer ce qui t'est dû. Ceci n'est pas acceptable et le projet de loi vise à changer ça.

As my colleague Paul Miller has explained, the purpose of the bill is to make sure that employees are compensated for unpaid wages, overtime, vacation pay, termination and severance when a company closes. Isn't it incredible that in this day and age, legislation like that doesn't already exist and that some companies are allowed to up and leave without paying the workers the money that they owe them? Well, it's happening right here in Ontario right now.

J'espère que les membres de tous les partis verront l'importance de protéger les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'Ontario.

I, for one, think it is high time that such legislation be put into place so that people never have to go through that kind of hardship again. I hope that my colleagues would agree.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to provide some remarks this morning on Bill 6. I certainly want to welcome my new colleague to the House, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I know that with his background, he'll certainly make a contribution to discussions in this place.

I represent the riding of Peterborough. Peterborough is the home of a diverse manufacturing base. We have everything from General Electric, which has the headquarters for its nuclear products division in Peterborough, to Quaker Oats, which is a world-renowned supplier of food products, breakfast cereals, to the North American market. We're very proud of those industries, along with Siemens Milltronics, which is a world leader now in manufacturing calibrated instruments throughout North America and in several other markets.

We do know that over the last number of years, the appreciation of the Canadian dollar from 63 cents US to, a couple of short weeks ago, when it hit a historical high of US\$1.10, has put tremendous pressure on Ontario's

manufacturing base. Certainly, it has put pressure on manufacturers in Peterborough.

Over the last year or so, we did lose MasterBrand Cabinets, which was a manufacturer of kitchen and bathroom cabinets. In that particular case, those jobs were moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where MasterBrand has a much larger facility to get those kind of production runs that are needed in order to achieve the economies of scale to stay competitive in the North American market. But I must commend MasterBrand Cabinets, because they certainly treated those departing employees extremely well. They worked with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to provide a transition to allow them to renew their skills, to take advantage of additional employment opportunities in the Peterborough area.

1030

Over the last number of years—I wanted to thank my colleague the member from Northumberland—Quinte West and the RED program, which provided some \$900,000 in financial assistance to establish a manufacturing training program in the riding of Peterborough. I'm pleased to report this morning that 2,000 employees have now been through that program in order to upgrade their skills for the respective businesses that they work at in order to keep those businesses competitive.

But I want to touch upon, today, an area of manufacturing that's very important to my riding in Peterborough, to the community of Port Hope and my good friend the member from Northumberland—Quinte West to Mississauga and the people in Cambridge, and that is the nuclear industry, which employs so many individuals at high-paying manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. I said at the opening of my remarks that we have 500 employees directly related to that industry in my riding of Peterborough. I had several meetings during the campaign with my good friend Mike Keating, who is president of local 524 of the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding of Peterborough. He looked upon my friends opposite, who certainly are not supportive of expanding that particular industry in Ontario and Canada in order to retain those manufacturing jobs.

Let me put it in perspective. The people who are members of CAW 524 who work in GE Peterborough—their salaries are about \$30 per hour, including benefits, the kind of jobs in my riding that allow those individuals to go to Jack McGee's Chevrolet-Oldsmobile to buy a new Chev Impala that is manufactured just down the road in Oshawa. It gives them the kind of economic base to go to my good friend Steve Cavanagh, whose family has owned T.J. Cavanagh appliances for some 90 years, so they can buy that new fridge and stove and sustain the local economy in Peterborough.

I'd be remiss if I didn't get it on the record that the last four projects that AECL were involved in in China were on time and on budget. That addresses the myth that gets perpetuated around here that these nuclear stations cannot come in on time and on budget. In fact, with the new development of modular construction, helped develop by engineers in Peterborough, when these projects go ahead,

they use modular construction, where the modules are produced in Ontario and then transferred to the site, where they're assembled to start generating electricity. We do know here in Ontario that to keep businesses operating and keep the lights on, we need 14,700 megawatts of base power, and we know that generating electricity from nuclear sources allows us to meet that demand of 14,700 megawatts of baseload capacity on a daily basis.

So when we want to defend manufacturing jobs in Canada and Ontario, I don't think we can pick and choose. I think we try to look after all the manufacturing base in Ontario and the key investments that we need to make in terms of the AMIS program, the advanced industrial manufacturing program, which has provided those financial resources needed for manufacturers in Ontario to refine their product base in order to stay ahead of the curve. It's interesting: That's the real challenge that we have, with the appreciation of the Canadian dollar, the fact that China and India and Brazil are now becoming economic colossi and are challenging certainly not only Canada but North America, and how we must make those key investments to make sure that we can remain competitive. We've been doing that on a priority basis through a number of programs that we believe will achieve results.

The other thing: We keep investing in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education to make sure that we have a workforce in Ontario that meets the needs of the future.

I'll talk about the challenges. Research In Motion, which manufactures the BlackBerry—one of the principals of that company is a Peterborough native, Jim Balsillie. I've heard him from time to time—in fact, every six months they must reinvent the little BlackBerry that we have to stay ahead of the competitive curve. I think that does provide an example for other manufacturers in this province of the need to stay ahead of the curve, to keep reinventing products that will meet the market demand throughout the world. That's critically important.

But why was Research In Motion so successful? It was the entrepreneurial talent of one Jim Balsillie and his partner Mike Lazaridis, but frankly, they took advantage of the University of Waterloo, the key investments that have been made there not only by this government—I always believe in giving credit where credit is due; the previous Conservative government of Ontario made strategic investments in the University of Waterloo. Out of that came the BlackBerry product, which now gives Ontario and Canada an international reputation. Those are the kinds of examples I think we need to champion and be involved with.

Secondly, I also want to talk about another company in my riding of Peterborough, FisherCast Global. There's another interesting, innovative company. For years and years and years, they have been involved in zinc die-casting in the Peterborough area, but they found out over the last number of years—again, manufacturing jobs that

pay \$25 and \$30 an hour, the kind that sustain an economy—that companies in Brazil, India and China can now make zinc die-cast products more competitively than we can here in Ontario. Smart company that they are, FisherCast are now reinventing themselves to get into magnesium die-casting, to be one of the world leaders in producing that product. We know that the auto industry, which is looking at ways today to remain competitive, is looking at introducing more and more magnesium die-cast products, because magnesium as a material is both harder and lighter, which allows car companies to increase fuel economy and, in fact, reduce their environmental footprint.

Again, those are the kind of companies that we need to get out there, that we need to make those investments in and champion. That, I believe, is the appropriate role for government to play. In fact, we have been demonstrating clearly over the last four years—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to speak this morning in this 39th Parliament of Ontario and to congratulate the new member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his recent election and on presenting the first private member's bill to be discussed in this session. Good for you; congratulations and welcome.

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program: I think the timing of this discussion on this type of program is interesting, seeing as how in this House already this week we've talked extensively about the economy and the numbers of manufacturing business sectors that are struggling in these tough economic times. The leader of our opposition party, the member from Leeds–Grenville, spoke of over 150,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector alone that we've had in this province. It's a critical time in our province right now.

Earlier this week, on Monday morning in a terrible snowstorm, I held a round table for business leaders, chambers of commerce, local business development associations and representatives from the city of Kawartha Lakes, and they are hurting. Some retail stores have a third of the business they should have. This time of the year, especially, they're laying off staff, not hiring staff. There are many factors involved in that—certainly, the high cost of the Canadian dollar is one of them—but when you see that they're letting staff go at this time of year, you know how much of a struggle it is for small businesses to try to keep themselves afloat, with high energy costs, taxes and, as I mentioned, the Canadian dollar.

In the manufacturing sector in Lindsay alone, unfortunately, I've had two closures within this year: Fleetwood manufacturing, which manufactured RV trailers, hundreds of jobs lost; and in the last six weeks what used to be Bonar Plastics and now Promens, it was called, announced the closing of their doors and another loss of 80 jobs. When you talk about the size of the community of the city of Kawartha Lakes, around 75,000 people,

that's a lot of job layoffs. That's a huge economic impact for our area.

1040

I'm phoning the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. There's a contact there in human resources to work with the companies. We've opened a couple of offices in which the employees can come in and get some human resource guidance training and on what's available to them.

It's just a tremendous challenge that I don't think this government can ignore anymore. The times here are not going to get better. We've heard prediction upon prediction from many financial institutions about the not-good projections that are to come. So it's time for this government to take heed that they need to take this seriously and do what they can to help our employees and to help our employers as well.

Small business, the entrepreneurs and the manufacturing companies are already responsible for so many, many things. First of all, they supply the jobs in the first place and they pay wages, employment insurance, vacation, holiday pay and sick pay. You can go on and on with the extensive list they have of what they're paying for. There are many, many good employers out there who are fighting for their employees and fighting to keep their companies going so they can provide the jobs for their employees.

So when this legislation suggests to me that the businesses and manufacturers aren't already doing enough, that concerns me, because they are working and trying to survive, providing jobs, and making the best of the economic situation that has been put before them. They're already overburdened. When this is a new tax on business and job creation—I think the new member from Thornhill hit it on the head when he said, "We don't want to go down that path as a principle of our party." New taxes are coming in: another burden on employers.

We have to be very, very careful that we don't crush any more employers—more employers go out; less jobs are there. We want to provide a climate for these employers to grow, prosper and provide jobs. This bill concerns us in that this will just put another burden on our employers and will drive more of them out of our province.

We should be focusing our efforts on trying to reduce the red-tape burden on small businesses. We think this bill we have before us this morning will only add to that burden.

There's no question that Ontario's economy is hurting. I would be remiss not to mention the agricultural sector and the burdens that they've been facing for many of the past several years, but especially right now with the hog and pork industry and the tremendous, critical time that they're facing.

I praise the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his first private member's bill, but we certainly have a lot of concerns on this side of the Legislature in regard to the content of this bill.

I want to thank you for the time allowed this morning by this debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is indeed my pleasure to have a few remarks on the bill introduced by my new colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. I'm very thrilled to have yet another New Democrat elected in the Hamilton area. People might know that we now have several New Democrats, both at the provincial level and at the federal level, very strongly representing the issues of the people of our community.

Of course, that is reflected in this very first effort of our new member, Mr. Paul Miller, who brings to the House today a private member's bill that really speaks to the issues that are being faced by workers in our city. I have to congratulate him for that. He ran a campaign that spoke to the hard-working families of Hamilton, and his first order of business was to bring a bill forward that basically reflects what he heard from them. What he heard from them was story after story of tragedy. He explained that in his remarks, and I'm going to reflect on that too because that's my community too and those are the same stories that I heard as well.

It's absolutely wrong to have a situation where workers work extremely hard and where they, day after day, week after week, year after year, toil in these factories and where, through no fault of their own, at the end of the day, the company ends up closing, maybe taking its orders and its work south of the border to its other plants.

I'll describe a situation where exactly that happened in a community close to ours, where, through no fault of their own, the money that they're owed—this is not money that's coming off of some place where nobody knows why people might think that they should expect this money; this is money that they earned. This is severance pay, in some cases. These are wages, in some cases, that have not been paid. This is sometimes overtime pay that has not been paid. This is real dollars that people have earned and deserve and, by the laws of this province, are entitled to. So I don't know why anybody here would say that these workers and these families for some reason have to bear the burden of the companies that they work for breaking the law when they happen to go out of business. That is what's happening: They're breaking the law. They're not providing the workers the wages, the severance and the vacation pay that they are entitled to in the province of Ontario. And that is just wrong.

I hear my colleagues here in this House talking about the sympathy for the companies. Certainly everybody has sympathy for the companies. But let's face it, these companies are going off and setting up shop or taking their business, in many cases, to other plants in other jurisdictions around the world, and leaving our workers hanging out to dry, leaving these families in a situation where in many, many cases, in fact the vast majority of cases, they lose their homes. The stress and anxiety that is caused in these families is absolutely enormous: divorces, kids who can't go to college all of a sudden because the money is not there anymore. Let's not pretend that this bill does anything but provide the appro-

priate amount of justice for the workers, who through no fault of their own are being denied the very basic things that they deserve like the wages that they worked for and the severance pay that they have entitled to. That's what we're talking about here. What the heck is the problem with that?

There is a company—and my friend from Brantford will know about this company—named GenFast. It had a plant in another jurisdiction across the border. It decided that notwithstanding the fact that the Brantford plant was more productive and had better-quality production, they were going to move their business, all of their orders, to their American sister plant. The problem was that there were a number of outstanding orders that still existed at the GenFast plant in Brantford. They told those workers, "You do what we need to do and we'll pull together and we'll get those orders filled and we'll make sure that we can at least as a company fulfill the obligations to our customers, to our clients." Well of course, they want to that, they want to keep their goodwill as a corporation. Obviously that makes sense. What they never told the workers is that all that overtime they put in, all that extra work they put in to save the company's good reputation, to make sure that none of those orders were not fulfilled—they never told the workers that at the end of the day they were going to shut that plant and walk away and not pay the workers the overtime that they earned while trying to help the company in its adjustment. You tell me that that's fair and you tell me that that's right and you tell me that that's the kind of province that we're happy to live in. That is just wrong.

I congratulate Mr. Miller. He has done an excellent job in bringing forward this bill because it is about everyone. It's not just about one sector of the economy. And I can tell you that those workers who worked at GenFast certainly are not spending money in the local economy in Brantford the way they were when they were gainfully employed and working hard at GenFast. There's many, many plants that have the same history. In Hamilton we can name them off very quickly: Rheem Canada, Camco and Amcan. I know the member had mentioned a number of them in his own speech as well. Levi's—I mean the list goes on and on for the Hamilton community only. Across the province it's the same story. It's time for this Legislature to acknowledge and recognize the fact that workers have a right to the kinds of compensation that are guaranteed by the laws of this province or that at least should be at this point in time.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Miller, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. Your first bill, your first time in the Legislature—I commend you as your background would lead you to bringing this forward.

Your colleague from Hamilton as well mentioned the importance of employment standards. I think all of us here would admit that the employer has legal and legislative responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act as it exists today with respect to holiday pay, overtime, hours of work and severance provisions. I think

that's the issue here. Quite honestly, this government is not following the current legislation and enforcing the act as it exists.

1050

Even taking a cursory look at this bill, Bill 6, an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, I am wondering if it is actually in order. I'm on my own on this one, but I say that because it requires the government to create a position, which is a program administrator, and it provides some ability to collect revenue and make sure there are reports filed. In private members' business you are not allowed to require the government to spend money. That's one of the provisions of private members' business, but I'm sure legislative counsel know what it's about.

But what does it mean to me and my constituents and the people of Ontario? In the riding of Durham, I am just recently going through a lot of calls and anguish about the very same issue facing a very large corporation, in both cases General Motors. I'm reading a release by Chris Buckley, who is the president of the CAW, Canadian Auto Workers, Local 222—this is from August, this past summer—about the announcement of General Motors slashing 1,000 jobs, and it could be as many as 1,200 jobs. Mr. Buckley goes on to say he was shocked—and I understand he is shocked. Imagine how those individuals, those families, are shocked, especially when this takes effect on January 1. Merry Christmas. Mr. Buckley goes on to say that the “layoffs will have a trickle-down effect in the community, impacting about 7,500 other jobs linked to GM.” That's in the hospitality and other sectors. Thank you very much, Dalton McGuinty, for no plan—7,500 families; probably as many as 10,000 individuals affected by the plight of the economy.

A real person in the news this week locally in Durham—it's dated November 30, from the business section of this week. It reads, “Trish McAuliffe”—she is pictured here, a young person—“shuffles through newspaper job advertisements, looking for her next step of employment.” The article goes on to say, “... the high Canadian dollar hurting exports, lack of future production, the downsizing of shifts and plants in Oshawa—the couple,” that's Mr. and Mrs. McAuliffe—“will be permanently laid off by the end of the week.” She goes on, describing her future as “bleak”. Thank you, Dalton McGuinty, Merry Christmas.

He seems to have no plan. If you look at the fundamentals in the economy, the conference board and all five top banks have said Ontario's GDP growth is going to slip by 0.6% or 1.6%, which means billions of dollars of lost revenue; that the province is going to be 10th in Canada in terms of productivity and prosperity.

I have another article here, and this is worthwhile. This is about my constituents and the work that is going on in the community to protect the vulnerable economy that we have in manufacturing—over 150,000 jobs lost. This article is in the same paper that I just quoted before, November 30, the business week section. It reads, “Action Centre Opens for Lear Layoffs” today.

“Facing their last day of work” today “some 350 workers at Lear Whitby are now facing the pressing question: What's next?” What's the plan, Premier McGuinty? They go on to say:

“According to Heather McMillan, action centre co-ordinator, the average age of those laid-off from Lear is 39, meaning there are few retirees among the group.” These are families—39. Imagine where they would be. I can just imagine the demise and the hopelessness of feeling. So it is about employment.

I commend Mr. Miller for saying, first, that there is a fiduciary responsibility of employers to comply with the Employment Standards Act that exists today with respect to severance, hours of work, entitlement to overtime. That is not the dispute here. What we don't need is more bureaucracy; we need the Ministry of Labour, under the new minister, to simply do their job. Mr. Duguid is the new minister. He's young, potentially inexperienced, and I'm not sure he has the full gravitas of Mr. Miller's Bill 6 here. But it all comes down to the plight of the economy, the weakness in the manufacturing sector, and no plan by Dalton McGuinty. It's getting worse, not better. The evidence I've just read from my riding—and Ms. Scott, from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock has said the same thing, and Mr. Shurman, has said the same thing. The evidence is on the table.

I'm putting to you, the Premier: What plan do you have for the province of Ontario, which is now almost dead last in this country? It's discouraging to the families I've cited here to think that it takes a brand new member, Mr. Miller, to come up with at least some idea that says, “Enforce the legislation that exists today.”

I'm disappointed, as usual. There's no plan by this government.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the few seconds left to me, I want to congratulate my new companion from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and also say a remark about our new member from Thornhill. He talked about cradle-to-grave social services. Yes, that's exactly what we stand for in the New Democratic Party, and we're proud of it. Look at Sweden, where they actually provide that as well as a vibrant manufacturing community.

What they're saying is, “Banks first, workers last.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank my esteemed colleagues, but back to business. The government claims they're going to help the people of Ontario create jobs, attract business, stimulate the economy. Are they now saying that they don't care about the thousands of Ontarians who are facing financial ruin? Are they now saying that they don't care about the people who create the wealth for these owners? Is there no responsibility to the people who have spent their whole lives in these industries?

The erosion of our base industries is happening—foreign-owned companies all over this country and this province, flourishing in their own countries. If things are

bad in Ontario, these companies are going to pull out and they're going to go back to their native countries and they are going to leave people out of work here. That's going to happen.

I'll give you an example. My colleagues mentioned that they were concerned about the burden on business. I'll tell you about the company that I worked at—Stelco in Hamilton. Stelco in Hamilton was in trouble. In our humble opinion, the company was undervalued at \$150 million. It was bought by Tricap and Appaloosa, financial institutions. They bought it for \$150 million. They brought up a CEO from the States, a Mr. Mott, to take over the operations, and nothing was done or changed in that company as far as new investment, new equipment—nothing. In 18 months they sold that company to US Steel for \$1.1 billion, a 740% profit for Appaloosa and Tricap. Who suffered? The people in Hamilton, the people who were laid off, the people who were forced into early retirement because of threats of closure.

These are the things that are going on our province that my colleagues on the other side are ignoring. You need to think about the people of this province—the little guy. That's what the NDP stands for—the little guy.

With all due respect, I'm extremely disappointed in the response of the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Orders of the day.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE
MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. DiNovo, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all the honourable members. It's a pleasure to stand and speak about a phenomenal campaign, the campaign for a \$10 minimum wage. At the pleasure of the House, I'd like to outline a little bit of the history of that campaign.

It started, really, in 1989, when all parties in our federal government decided that they wanted to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Of course, that was a phenomenal disaster and failure. Here we are, in 2007, with heightened child poverty. But the phoenix that grew from those ashes was a group called Campaign 2000. They are still very much active. They were the ones who initially, as far as I could find out, put forward this idea of a living, \$10-an-hour minimum wage.

I want to say—and I'm going to repeat this many times in the next 10 minutes—that the reason for \$10 an hour is that this is the poverty line. That is to say that if you are earning a wage that is less than \$10 an hour, you are earning a wage in poverty. The McGuinty government has put forward a staged increase of minimum wage, at every stage of that increase—we're now only at \$8 an hour—the person earning that amount of money is earning it in poverty.

1100

This is a government that says they want to do something about poverty. Here's a simple act of political will that would make a huge difference, and that is to bring the minimum wage up to the level of poverty. This would affect 257,000 across our province who are making minimum wage; that's only \$8 right now. It would also further affect almost a million people who are earning \$10 an hour or under. They also would be affected. There, you would automatically and almost immediately raise those families out of poverty.

From the start of Campaign 2000 and then when I was elected, I came to this Legislature knowing that I wanted to do something about those that I'd worked with in ministry, those hard-working families who are using food banks, unable to pay the rent at the end of the month and still working full-time, sometimes two jobs. I had the luck and good fortune, as I've had this time, to introduce a private member's bill very soon after I was elected. I went to our leader Howard Hampton and said, "I want to introduce a bill for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage," and he said, like a good leader, "Go for it." I went for it.

Not only did I go for it, but Toronto and York Region Labour Council took up the campaign under the direction of John Cartwright, and the Ontario Federation of Labour took up the campaign under Wayne Samuelson and others. We took that campaign across Ontario. Fifteen thousand e-mails came into this Legislature, every single one of them demanding a \$10 an hour minimum wage now. That happened as well as significant polling across this province—as well, I might point out, a by-election loss for the McGuinty government in York South-Weston, in part because of the \$10-an-hour minimum wage campaign.

Then, and only then, did we see this government move. Certainly, they were not speaking about the minimum wage back last year in October, but they were speaking about it in the new year. Why? Because of the loss. Why? Because of the polling. Why? Because of the phenomenal e-mail campaign and the campaign around Ontario to build support for this.

So that's a little bit of the history. Then, of course, we all know what happened. They brought in this incremental increase: \$8 now, going up next year, going up the next year after that, and then finally \$10.25, three years from now. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to point out that in eight days, this government gave themselves a 25% pay increase—eight days for the government and for the cabinet committee that sits looking at poverty, and three years for the poorest members of the working families of this province. So I contrast one with the other.

Certainly, we're looking at facts here, facts about poverty that are not mine alone. I'm going to read from the Ontario Federation of Labour's fact sheet about the minimum wage campaign:

"A single parent working full-time at minimum wage in Ontario would have an income \$6,676 dollars below the poverty line.

"Today's minimum wagers receive 20% less in real wages (adjusted for inflation) than they did 30 years ago."

I remember my father in the 1970s speaking about soup lines, talking about kitchens opening up, talking about people sleeping on floors of churches, and I said that that could never happen in a place like Ontario. Well, it certainly is happening and this is one of the reasons why.

"If minimum wages increased at the same rate as Canada's gross domestic product ... the minimum wage would be \$12.44 per hour.

"The campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would enable a single person working full-time in a large urban center to reach the poverty line"—as I've already said.

Contrast this, of course, with our CEOs, who are making record incomes. The average CEO of a major corporation in this country now makes \$9 million a year. "Start the clock at midnight New Year's Eve and compare Canada's best-paid CEOs to the average minimum wage earner. By the afternoon of January 2 the CEO has made as much as a full year's wages for a minimum wage earner." Again, that's not from our research department, that's from the Ontario Federation of Labour.

One of the arguments I know I'm going to hear from this assembly is about incremental increases in the minimum wage—always, I remind this assembly, keeping those wage-earners below the poverty line. What are the arguments? You always hear it's going to hurt small business. I was a small business owner. I paid a \$10 minimum wage back in the 1980s. Certainly, the minimum wage campaign saw phenomenal support from small business owners across this province.

The problem for small business owners is not the wages they pay; it's the taxes they pay. That's why I introduced a resolution in the last session to reform the business education tax. This government talks about it, but it still hasn't walked about it. That business education tax has still not been reformed. That's what TABIA and other small business organizations are asking for: tax reform.

So \$10 an hour is not an issue of small business; it's an issue of the big box stores. It's an issue of the McBusinesses, those businesses that are not home-grown, that come into our province, that pay sub-standard wages to workers, minimum wages to workers, and then take the profits outside this jurisdiction. This is forcing them to reinvest. In fact, it's good for the economy.

Other jurisdictions where they have raised the minimum wage have shown this and proven this. Santa Fe, for example, in the States raised their minimum wage 65% in one day. Did their business or economy suffer?

No. In fact, it improved. We have a petri dish around this in the States. Washington State next to Idaho: Washington pays the highest minimum wage in the States, Idaho the lowest. Guess which economy is growing and vibrant? Washington's, not Idaho's. So yes, minimum wage does affect the economy, but not in the ways that the opposition has brought forward. It actually improves the economy, because those who make minimum wage do not take vacations in the south. They do not drive cars out to the malls, because they don't have cars. They spend their money at local small business in their communities.

To increase the minimum wage across the world has been shown to help the economy. Where is minimum wage higher than it is here? In many, many places in the developing world. In the United Kingdom, it's almost C\$11; France, C\$11; Australia, C\$11; Ireland—there's a jurisdiction this government should look at if they're serious about the poverty issue; there's a jurisdiction that halved and then quartered their poverty rate. How did they do it? In part by raising the minimum wage. In Los Angeles, a worker can earn up to an \$11 minimum wage. In Santa Fe, as I've already said, it's US\$9.50 an hour. And guess what? Even in Canada, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia all have higher minimum wages than we do in Ontario.

We in Ontario, as the United Way has so clearly and graphically shown, are now the poverty province in Canada, and Toronto is the poverty capital of Canada. How do we address this? We don't need another cabinet committee. What we do need is action. One of the actions we need right away is an immediate increase to the minimum wage to \$10 an hour.

We could talk about poverty in the more general aspect. There's material poverty, and then there is spiritual poverty—I might say spiritual bankruptcy. We have in the McGuinty government a spiritually bankrupt government. This is a government that is poor; this is a government that refuses to act on a simple request from anti-poverty organizations across this province. This is how we asked them to act: We asked them for an immediate raise to a \$10 minimum wage now, indexed to the consumer price index so that those who are working make the poverty line and are not below it.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Again, it's my pleasure to speak on this bill, introduced by the member from Parkdale-High Park.

The McGuinty government is making a real difference in the lives of Ontario's lowest-paid and most vulnerable workers. We have been phasing in the minimum wage increases over the last four years. We have balanced the needs of Ontario's low-income workers with the need of Ontario's businesses to be competitive.

1110

When I was doing research to speak this morning, I found that many economists agree with our position that the minimum wage has to be phased in gradually. Now, I

don't think it takes a sophisticated economist or other professional people to come to this conclusion. During the last campaign, there was a volunteer on my campaign, Sumeet Dhir, a grade 11 student. He really put it in a good way when explaining our stand on the minimum wage issue. He explained to one of my constituents what the impact would be on a cup of coffee, on a meal at McDonald's. If you raise the minimum wage immediately by 20%, 25%, that's going to raise the cost of a meal, the cost of a cup of coffee. That really hit home, and I said that this is not a really complicated issue and think we have it right by slowly phasing in the minimum wage.

I don't know where the NDP has been for the last four years. They forget to mention that the minimum wage was frozen for nine years; not one single increase for the nine years before our government took office. We've increased the minimum wage every year, an increase of 17% since 2003.

I also want to mention that these jobs at restaurants, which generally pay minimum wage or a little bit above minimum wage, provide good experience for new immigrants. I remember my family, a lot of whom immigrated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, earning the minimum wage at that time—\$1.65, \$3.25; I don't know the exact amount. But that was a foot in the door to gain the Canadian experience that employers demand of new immigrants.

It's crucial that we phase in the minimum wage gradually. I don't see the sense of increasing the minimum wage one day and then issuing a pink slip the next day. That's essentially what this is about; that's essentially what would happen.

I think that maybe the NDP should take a page out of their counterpart's book in Manitoba, where they have decided to gradually increase the minimum wage. As a matter of fact, the member conveniently and selfishly leaves out the other 12 territories and provinces, with whom we are in line or even have a higher minimum wage than. Saskatchewan is at \$7.95. She only mentions Nunavut as one territory that has a minimum wage higher than Ontario. That's one out of so many. I'll mention Prince Edward Island—their minimum wage is \$7.50; Nova Scotia, \$7.60; Newfoundland, \$7. So we are in line, and we do have a very competitive minimum wage.

The way we're facilitating and increasing the minimum wage is the right way to go. Not just economists, as I said before, but normal people understand that. It's another poor policy that the NDP have put together. Like I said before, it's handing out a pay raise one day and giving these same people a pink slip the next. It doesn't make sense. It's for these reasons that I will not be supporting this bill.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. On the surface, the call for an immediate rise in the minimum wage to \$10 sounds, perhaps, fair. I'm sure that every one of us experiences daily circumstances within our own communities where individuals are living in poverty. The working poor are finding it more and more difficult every day to make ends meet.

However, I do not support this bill and will not, and I want to set my reasoning forward for the consideration of members. The reality is that there are businesses every day—and we tend to speak about businesses in the context of some of these debates as the evil ones, those who would want to oppress the workers of this province. Seldom is there consideration given to the fact that every day, people get up in the morning and they go to open the doors of the businesses in which they have invested every single penny of their earnings or life savings. Every single day, there are employers who do so not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of keeping others employed in their communities, and that's becoming more and more difficult as well.

The simplistic solution is not to simply say, "We will increase the minimum wage overnight and that will solve all the problems." In fact, it may well create additional problems for many others, as warned, for example, by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. It states this, and I want to read this into the record: "Immediate increase of minimum wage to \$10 an hour would significantly impact the business owners in areas such as agriculture, retail, restaurant and food services, tourism and hospitality, forcing many to lay off staff." What we don't want to do is give the province of Ontario medicine that will kill the very people it was intended to help.

I think what is needed is a very balanced approach. Quite frankly, I think the staggered implementation of an increase in the minimum wage is in fact the right thing to do. I don't defend this government very often; I have serious disagreements with their approach to managing the affairs of this province. But in this particular case, not only do I believe that a staged implementation is the appropriate way to deal with this, but I would also suggest that where the government failed was to more broadly consult with stakeholders so that we can have broader support for the rollout of this implementation.

I have to take this opportunity, while I think of it. While I disagree very much with this government many times, and I don't defend it, the comment that the member made in her debate about the spiritual bankruptcy of the government, and implying—government is the people who sit here, government is not some innate body, and I would question, what is the greater sin? Is it to be spiritually bankrupt or to be self-righteous? I think what we need to do as we have our debates here is to recognize, particularly in private members' business, that we're all here—none of us has given our lives to the calling of public service for any other reason but that we want to do what is right. We may disagree in terms of how we get there, we may disagree on the policy approach, but I don't think we should be going in the direction of making a judgment call on the motivation of the people who sit here. I think the degree to which we can at least find common ground on what the intent is, we can have a much more deliberate debate in terms of how we get there.

I want to speak very briefly to one of those sectors that the chamber of commerce mentioned, and that is the

agriculture sector, just to show members what the effect of the proposed policy is on one narrow sector of the agriculture industry, the greenhouse industry.

1120

We had representatives here last night. I think the member probably accepted her three poinsettias from the industry. Here's what that industry is facing. Ontario's greenhouse industry provides over 20,000 jobs, with a total annual payroll of \$285 million. The increase in the minimum wage immediately to \$10 for this sector will cost them an estimated \$40 million in additional payroll. Labour is the most significant component of that industry's financial statements. Forty percent of the total operating structure of that industry is payroll. If the member's proposal were to be implemented as she proposes, this industry would face not only layoffs, but I can tell you that what they'd face is the shutting down of many small businesses across the province. There may be those who say, "That's fine; that's business." No. Every shutdown of a business means that you create unemployment; not underpayment, not underemployment, but unemployment for many thousands of individuals who rely on that income.

This is only one example of one industry. The other is tourism. As a former Minister of Tourism, I can tell you that as I crossed the province—I'm sure it's the same today; in fact, the pressures are even greater today in many respects than they were a few years ago. The tourism industry and the hospitality industry are pleading with the government, and would plead with the member, not to accelerate the minimum wage because they cannot sustain that impact on their industry, given the fragile state of their industry.

What should be done? Broader consultation, I believe; staged implementation, I believe. I also believe—the member referred to it—that the government should be taking much more seriously lightening the tax burden on those businesses, not only small businesses, but small, medium and large businesses. We are one of the most highly taxed jurisdictions in the G8. That's where the relief should come from.

I believe that many businesses—as the member said herself, she was in business and she paid \$10, which was above the minimum wage, long before there was a requirement. My experience, and I'm sure that of other members as well, is that most businesses in our community are paying their employees beyond the minimum wage. The minimum wage is a backstop. But for some industries, it is survival. Because of the competitive implications of a global economy and a dollar that continues to fluctuate, nobody seems to know from one day to the next the competitive factors their businesses are facing.

In conclusion, I want to simply say that I think we are all on side with the member in terms of wanting to ensure that people in our communities can, in fact, earn a wage under which they can sustain themselves and their families—that is the objective—but I don't believe this proposal is how we're going to get there.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm rising today to speak in favour of this motion. That will probably not come as

much of a surprise to members on the government side, nor the members from the former government on the opposition side. A \$10 minimum wage is an idea whose time has come. It is an idea that has been floated for a long time, and it is one of the cornerstones of those who believe we can eradicate poverty.

If you want to eradicate poverty, you have to be able to allow people the means to do so. You cannot eradicate poverty at \$8 per hour, as the present minimum wage is. Simply do the math. If you work 40 hours a week, you make \$320; if you work 50 weeks a year, you make \$16,000. It's pretty simple: \$16,000 leaves you about \$5,000, \$6,000 or \$8,000 below the poverty line, depending on where you live in this great province of ours. So you ask people to go out there, put in a hard day and a decent day's work, and live in poverty.

There are some who think that's okay because, as the example was made, small business needs to survive, or as the example was made by my friend from Brampton West, this is an opportunity for immigrants to get their first job. Quite frankly, I reject both of those arguments. I reject those arguments because I have spoken to my constituents. Perhaps my riding is not as rich or as well off as some of the ridings of those who have already stood in their place to speak. I know that the people who have spoken to me, whether they be students struggling to get an education, whether they be new immigrants, most especially those who are women—because the majority of people who are working at the minimum wage belong to those three categories: they're young, they're new immigrants or they are women—are the people who are being forced by this government and by our Legislature to live in poverty.

If you look at where the poverty exists, and I'm speaking quite specifically about the city which I know best, the United Way says that there are 13 pockets of poverty, and one of the most persistent is in my riding. It's a place called Crescent Town. It is largely made up of young people, new immigrants, visible minorities, and women. That's who lives there, and they are poor. They constantly ask me, when I go there, to try to do something. The keenest thing that they liked in the last election was our call for a \$10 minimum wage. These are not rich people. These are people who are looking to give a hard and honest day's work but want something for themselves; they want to be lifted out of poverty by doing so.

I also have spent some time in Jane-Finch. I had an opportunity, as some of those who were in the House the last time know, to live there for nearly a week. I lived with people in Jane-Finch in public housing. It was not unique to me, because I grew up in public housing. But what was very telling is that those people who are living in poverty wanted much more—the young people who hungered for a job, who hungered for something to do, who hungered to fix up their community and live in decent surroundings, and those people looking for a decent job, a job that will lift them out of poverty, that will pay more than \$10 an hour. They are not looking to work at a place that relegates them to continuing and

ongoing poverty, a place from which they are trying to escape.

I heard the argument about small business, and yes, I am sure that there are some small businesses who would feel a cash crunch having to raise the minimum wage from \$8 to \$10. But it is not the small businesses who are telling me that this is going to be difficult. Wal-Mart Canada is telling me this is going to be difficult. McDonald's is also telling me this is going to be difficult. As the finance critic for the NDP, I can tell you that you can go on to Standard and Poor's, you can go on to the Toronto Stock Exchange or to the American stock exchange in New York and the Fortune 500, and you'll find both of those corporations. Some of the largest corporations in the world want me to continue \$8 an hour because that's what they want to pay their workers. Well, I have no time for that. I have no time for the wealthiest corporations in the entire world pressuring this government, pressuring this Legislature, and talking about keeping it at \$8 an hour. If you want to know who can afford to pay it, they can. I have no sympathy whatsoever with their arguments, and I have no sympathy with a government that continues to listen to them.

I shop every week at No Frills. That might surprise some of you. There's a wonderful man named Mr. Dickie who owns the local No Frills.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is that where you buy all the candy?

Mr. Michael Prue: I buy some of my candy there.

He came up to me and he told me that he is very supportive of a \$10 minimum wage. He, in fact, pays his employees more than \$10 an hour, and he told me the financial difficulty he has because the government keeps it at \$8. Just down the street, one block away, Wal-Mart has just opened up a new superstore right in Scarborough, and they've hired people at \$8 an hour, and they have cut all of their prices below his. Although No Frills is a pretty cheap place to shop—that's why I shop there—you can go to Wal-Mart and get it for less. He is very angry at this because he does not want to cut the wages of his employees down to \$8 an hour so that he can compete. He wants them to pay a fair wage so that the people who work in that store don't have to go to the food bank, because that's what Wal-Mart does: Wal-Mart calls the people out and says, you know, "We're giving you a job, but here is also the address of the local food bank." It's part of their hiring policy. They tell them flat out, "What we're going to pay you isn't enough to live on." So the people in that grocery store at Wal-Mart who get \$8 an hour can't even afford to shop there. That's the reality.

1130

This government needs to do three things—and I told the new minister in a congratulations letter I sent to her that the time for study has passed. She needs to do three things immediately. If she does those three things, you can continue to study and do whatever you want.

The first one, and the most important, is to increase the minimum wage and make it a living wage. And that, to my mind, is \$10 now.

The second thing is that you need to increase Ontario Works and ODSP so that people are no longer living in poverty. Forty per cent of the people on ODSP and OW are children, but those on ODSP—and just separate that out for a minute—are people who doctors and the government agree are unable and not likely to ever work. We are continuing to leave them in unmitigated and terrible poverty throughout their entire lives because, through medical faults, none of which is their own, they cannot work. I haven't heard anything about that.

I told her, as well, to end the clawback. If ever there was a disgraceful policy of this government and the previous one, it is that one. It is the most disgraceful policy I think that has ever come out of this Legislature. For the government not to end that clawback, to continue to take the money from those poor children, is reprehensible.

I told her that after she's done those three things, she can study what she wants and this government can study what she wants because half of what will undoubtedly be recommended will already have been done.

You can study about building some affordable housing. I heard the minister the other day say that they've built 6,000 units of affordable housing. We had to go through freedom of information to find out how many were actually built, those that are under \$700 a month in rent. That is, somebody who is actually making more than \$10 an hour would pay up to \$700. How many were actually built? Two hundred and eighty-five is the answer. So the affordable housing is not affordable—not to people who earn \$8 an hour, not to people on Ontario Works and not to people on ODSP. You've built 285. That needs to be done, but study it if you need to study it.

By all means, study the dental plan, because I think you'll find that the one you've come forward with isn't enough.

In the meantime, I'm asking you to do this: I'm asking you to do what is decent, do what is right, do what is honest and allow people who work hard to earn enough money to survive. And for the edification of the member from Brampton West, I think all of those new immigrants, whom he spoke so highly of and whom I speak so highly of, would be very pleased to get a new job that paid them enough, that they in fact came to a land where they were valued and where they earned enough to feed their families.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to make a few remarks on the private member's bill that's been brought forward by the member for Parkdale-High Park.

First of all, I want to recognize the mayor of Peterborough, Paul Ayotte. In the 2006 municipal campaign, one of his key planks was to put together a poverty task force in the municipality of Peterborough. Mr. Ayotte was elected and shortly after his inauguration he brought forward this task force that's been looking at a number of alternatives to address this very serious problem that we have in communities right across Ontario and indeed in my riding in Peterborough.

I would also like to compliment my colleague the member from London North Centre. All poverty groups in the province of Ontario recognize her leadership previously as the parliamentary assistant when she went around the province and put together a number of facts and suggestions. Now she's the new Minister for Children and Youth Services, a real bright light on this file, not only in Ontario but throughout Canada. She's put together a dynamic cabinet team that will be looking very closely at a number of positive suggestions that we'll be able to implement very quickly to address this issue.

In fact, as a government, over the last four years we've increased the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$8 an hour, and indeed, we've put a framework in place to move it up over the next three years to \$10.25 an hour.

It's interesting—and I listened very carefully to the third party—that indeed many anti-poverty advocates suggest that the spiral of poverty in Ontario actually started in 1993 with the Hampton-Rae government when they froze ODSP rates in 1993, compounded—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, these are the facts—compounded by eight years of the slash-and-burn policies of the current official opposition. Those are the facts, and when you read the facts, four members, one excluded—the member from Welland, of course, got booted out of cabinet, so I can't put the blame on him—but the three other members who are currently still members of that caucus indeed rubber-stamped that decision to freeze ODSP rates in 1993. Frankly, it would be refreshing if they would stand up once in a while and apologize for that decision that was made in 1993.

That's history, and we'll move on to what we're doing. One of the key initiatives that we brought forward in our budget of spring 2007 was the Ontario child benefit. What's really interesting is that the opposition party, the third party, of course voted against that budget. But when they were asked during the campaign if they would get rid of the Ontario child benefit, no, sir. They intended to keep it in place because we know, as the late June Callwood said before her untimely death, that the Ontario child benefit is the most progressive piece of legislation and program brought in in Ontario in the last 40 years. We're proud to stand by that as it increases significantly over the next number of years, coupled with the increase in the minimum wage, coupled with the dental program we're going to bring in for low-income families. Our colleague, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, over the next little while, will be bringing forth the details of that program.

Let's look at the profile of who is receiving the minimum wage currently in Ontario: 74% are 24 years of age and younger; 54% are between the ages of 15 to 19; 37% between these ages are in school and living with their parents; 16% are between the ages of 20 and 24; 30% are 25 years of age and older; and 5% are 55 years of age and over.

I heard the member from Newmarket–Aurora talk about the hospitality industry. When we break this down

even further, we find that 30% work in the accommodation and food services sector and 34% work in the retail trade sector. Combined, 64% of minimum wage earners are in those two categories. We know that with the appreciation of the dollar, these two sectors certainly have had margins now that are very thin, and we have to recognize that a sudden dramatic increase of the minimum wage would have really serious, devastating impacts on those two particular areas.

When I have the opportunity to talk to both business and labour groups in my riding, they are fairly consistent that we're going to phase this in on an incremental basis over the next three years to \$10.25. That allows the business community to do the appropriate planning, to start to factor it into their business plans for the next three years. While some of them don't accept that, they do at least know that on an incremental basis, in March of the next three years, the minimum wage will be increased to \$10.25.

But you just can't take that policy in isolation. As a government, we're moving forward on a number of fronts, through the cabinet committee meeting, to really address poverty head-on. I would appreciate the third party—I'm sure they will be supporting the Premier of this province when we champion Ontario to look at some fundamental reform of the EI insurance fund here in Canada, which has accumulated today to some \$54 billion. We know that the current situation discriminates against Ontario, and we look forward to them standing up and supporting our Premier as we go to Ottawa to get a better deal.

1140

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to join this debate, and I congratulate Ms. Cheri DiNovo, from Parkdale–High Park, for bringing forward this legislation. Although I probably support it—the \$10 minimum wage came up, of course, after faith-based schools and 20 other issues, at all-candidate meetings in my riding, and to be consistent, I told people who attended those meetings, the local media and the public that we all want to see people earn a fair wage. But I do worry about the implementation of an immediate increase from \$8 to \$10 in the minimum wage, and so I somewhat agree with the approach the Liberal government is taking in terms of phasing it in.

My family ran small businesses all my life. We owned a tavern in Loretto, Ontario, and a general store, and my father owned appliance stores in Alliston and Newmarket and Barrie prior to that. We certainly know what it's like to meet a payroll and to have the bank knocking on the door when you can't meet your payroll, and we certainly know what it's like to be in small business.

When Mr. Sorbara was finance minister and this issue first came forward from the NDP in a forceful way, I did tend to agree with his comments. Our first jobs as kids in Alliston—you could either work in the Alliston Dairy Queen or the Alliston IGA, and I worked in the Alliston IGA for four and a half years. Back in those days, all our mailboxes fit on one wall in the local post office, and I think we had 850 people actually registered in the town

of Alliston, and now, in the whole area of New Tecumseth, there are some 22,000. So a lot has changed in the last 30 years.

But I note that Mr. Sorbara said that most of the people on minimum wage tend to be either new Canadians or students. In fact, I pulled Morley Gunderson's February 2007 report out of the library, and he points out exactly that: First of all, a very small percentage of the workforce is actually on minimum wage, and again, they tend to be students and new Canadians, people trying to get their foot in the door, maybe the first time, into the Ontario—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Entry-level wages.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Entry-level wages. Thank you very much, I say to my colleague from Halton.

Fifty per cent of minimum wage workers are teens or youths who live with their parents and 31.4% are couples. But in that group, almost 70% have spouses who are employed in jobs above the minimum wage.

Canadian evidence suggests that a 10% increase in the minimum wage is likely to reduce the employment of teens by 3% to 6%, and there's further evidence that if you did an increase as large as what is proposed by the honourable member, you might see reductions between 7.5% and 15% in teen employment.

Again, my worry would be that if we did such a large jump—over a 25% increase—jobs would immediately be lost, and that would be unfortunate. The greatest dignity you can give a human being is the opportunity for employment. That's what I believe, and I spent my years in university studying those issues.

Finally, I think John Tory had a good suggestion, which he indicated both in this House and in an op-ed piece or letter to the editor in the Toronto papers a few months back: We should really set up an independent commission, bring social activists, students, large and small employers and government together, and try to take this whole issue out of the political arena. It seems to me, in my 17 years here, that it comes up every year. It's a political football. The government is always on the defensive whenever the issue comes up. There is not a lot of science that goes into it. I note that this would bring Ontario to among the top, if not the top, minimum wages in the country, which would make us uncompetitive, once again at a time of huge job losses, including 1,000 manufacturing job losses in my riding of Simcoe-Grey and the Collingwood area over the last 18 months.

I don't want to see more people out of work, and I want to see opportunities for young people to have jobs. I'm the critic for training, colleges and universities, and certainly, in meeting with students on a regular basis, they don't have the employment opportunities I had when I went to the University of Toronto. I was employed here. I started as a driver for a cabinet minister, and worked at two of the libraries at the university. I was a bar bouncer at the local pub at the university. There were tons and tons of jobs for students back in the mid-1980s, and they don't have those same opportunities, and tuition fees have gone through the roof since then. So I

just say to the honorable member that I appreciate her passion for this issue and her party's passion for it, but you need to bring in some common sense.

I also represent an agricultural community where this would be devastating if it came in overnight and the agricultural wage was adjusted accordingly. They just had a celebration for Jamaican workers in my riding, who do a lot of the work. They had a recognition celebration for them at Blue Mountain recently. Certainly, while I'm sure they'd all like a higher wage, they also appreciate the jobs. They come here from other countries to help us out in our agricultural sector.

With that, I wish the honorable member good luck and congratulate her on her re-election.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague Ms. Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale-High Park, and her Bill 7, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour—now. When you work full-time at minimum wage, you make \$16,000 a year. If we give you an increase to ten bucks an hour, you will make \$20,000 a year. You'll be barely above poverty.

People will have you believe that it is students living at home who work for those wages. This is not the case. Sure, there are students, but they are students who work to pay for their tuition. There are young families with children who work for those wages and there are new immigrants working for those wages. But they are mainly women and they are women with families working for \$16,000 to \$20,000 a year, if they're lucky enough to work full-time.

I'm proud to say that the city of Greater Sudbury passed a unanimous motion to call on this government for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage right now. I'd like to thank Councillor Claude Berthiaume, who brought that forward to our municipality. I'm also proud to say that 52 other municipalities in Ontario have passed motions asking for an increase of the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now. How can 52 municipalities in Ontario, United Ways and the Association of Ontario Health Centres all have it wrong?

People will have you believe that doom and gloom will happen. This is working on our ignorance. The research papers are there. The economists who have lived through an increase of the same magnitude, about a 25% increase in minimum wage, have shown that this is not the case. The doom and gloom, the loss of jobs, the massive layoffs—none of this happened. What really happens is that you lift a poor family out of poverty. This is something that this government should do.

I would also like to correct my colleague there, Jeff Leal, who thinks that the government is not clawing back the national child benefit. I say that you should talk to a few families on OW, Ontario Works, or on ODSP. They know that the clawback is happening because they lose that money every month.

Je suis fière d'être ici aujourd'hui pour appuyer ma collègue, M^{me} Cheri DiNovo, qui essaie de modifier la loi pour faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de

l'heure tout de suite. Une famille qui travaille au salaire minimum en ce moment fait 16 000 \$ par année. À 10 \$ de l'heure, ça va augmenter à 20 000 \$ par année. Les gens voudraient nous faire croire que ceux qui travaillent au salaire minimum sont les étudiants qui veulent se payer des gâteries, mais ce n'est pas ça du tout. La vraie réalité, c'est que oui, ce sont des étudiants qui essaient de payer leurs études, mais aussi ce sont des jeunes familles avec des enfants, des nouveaux arrivants en Ontario, mais surtout ce sont des femmes avec des enfants qui vivent dans la pauvreté.

Si on augmente le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure, ces gens-là, leur vie va changer. Je suis très fière de la ville de Sudbury, qui a passé une proposition de façon unanime pour faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure maintenant. Saviez-vous qu'il y a également 52 municipalités en Ontario qui ont passé la même proposition, qui demande au gouvernement de faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure maintenant?

Comment ça se fait qu'il y a 52 municipalités qui demandent ça, que Centraide demande la même chose, que l'Association des centres de santé de l'Ontario demande la même chose? C'est parce que la recherche a été faite. Le désastre, le cataclysme, les pertes d'emplois massives—tout ça, ce sont des tactiques pour nous faire peur. Ce qui va vraiment arriver—les économistes ont fait leur travail—c'est qu'on va sortir les gens de la pauvreté. Ça, c'est quelque chose que le gouvernement doit faire tout de suite.

1150

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to say I'm happy to join in this debate on the bill moved by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Most of us have just gotten out of an election campaign, and all of us have had the opportunity to speak to our constituents and the small businesses in our area. I just want to share with you some of the thoughts that these businesses have passed on to me. A lot of the small businesses said that they don't support the request by the NDP for an immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$10, for the one reason that it would immediately create a domino effect in their business. The person who is making minimum wage today going to \$10 would mean that the person who is making \$10 would have to go to \$12, etc.

What that would mean to them is an immediate change in their profit margin and they would have to look at price increases for all the things they deal with. I think none of us have really considered that effect on business. At the end of the road, what you will see is that a business will actually terminate the employment of some of their employees and we would have higher unemployment.

Many years ago when I worked in the private sector, I was preached upon many times that money is not a motivator. It is a temporary motivator. So that when you get something, it only lasts for so long.

I will share with you an experience that I had in the recent election. I was in a debate at a high school during

the last election and the NDP candidate harped on the issue of the \$10 minimum wage. There was a complete roar from the students in the school, and I thought, I'm in trouble because all the students support this particular issue. Unfortunately, when the student vote took place on election day and the results came out, I came out ahead of the NDP candidate. I was totally surprised.

About a week later, I met with some of the students in my office because they were asking me to come back to the school. I did ask the question, "There was this huge uproar when the NDP candidate raised the issue of the \$10 minimum wage. Can you tell me why it is the vote might have gone the way it did?" I was actually told by every one of the five students meeting with me, "Mr. Balkissoon, we support your government because we believe you have presented to us in the entire debate a very balanced approach to running government and business and the people, education and housing and daycare. This is why many of us students supported your position."

So I say our government has embarked on an incremental way of increasing the minimum wage. We believe it's the best way to do it. We also believe that the minimum wage is not the issue facing poverty; it's a much more complex problem. Our government, through the Minister of Children and Youth Services, has a cabinet committee that is going to deal with this complex issue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all of the honourable members for all of your input. I want to address a few issues.

First and foremost, the jury is in. Over 20 studies have been done, and these are not computer model studies. These are studies of actual jurisdictional experiences where the minimum wage has been raised—in some cases, as in Santa Fe, where they raised it 65% overnight, raised substantially, more in fact than we're asking for with this bill. All of those studies show that it does not lead to unemployment; it does not lead to increased bankruptcies. In fact, it leads to a healthier economy. Again, I talked about a number of jurisdictions. The United Kingdom: They clearly didn't suffer. Ireland did not suffer when they raised their minimum wage to about C\$11 an hour. And there are others. We could go on—Australia, another one as well.

We live here in Toronto, in Ontario, in the most expensive city in Canada. So the fact that we could be trailblazers in terms of a living wage—that doesn't upset me, that encourages me. Thirty-three per cent of our food bank users are working poor, working families. One in six children in Ontario live in poverty, one in four families in Toronto live in poverty, and one in two families headed by a single parent live in poverty. This is the backdrop for this discussion. We are not having this discussion in a vacuum; we are having this discussion in the face of those who work 40 hours a week and then have to use a food bank and can't pay their rent at the end of the month. These are the people, polls have shown in our own province, who overwhelmingly favour a raise to the \$10 minimum wage immediately. And that's not enough; that's just the beginning.

As to the member who talked about an incremental increase, I wish we had put that into effect when we raised our own salaries 25% in this House in eight days. We're asking for the same consideration for the poorest families among us, the same consideration you showed yourselves to the poorest working families in this province.

Let me be very clear: If this bill is defeated this day, the McGuinty government is immediately condemning 257,000 to continue to live in poverty—those who make \$8 right now—and up to another million who make under \$10 or \$10 on the nose. That's who they're condemning to poverty with this action.

So I ask you again, please support this bill. Break ranks. Be the one who stands for justice and against the common. Do the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for private members' public business having expired, we shall now deal with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Miller.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(WAGE SECURITY), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(SÉCURITÉ SALARIALE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to committee—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member has asked that consent be given to send the bill to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE
MINIMUM)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Gélinas, France	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Hampton, Howard	Miller, Paul	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Hardeman, Ernie	Ramsay, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Shurman, Peter
Delaney, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 33.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd just remind all the visitors and guests here in the Legislature today that you are welcome to observe, but I ask that you not partake in applause or cheering. That is left for the 106 members on the floor. If it does persist, I would have to clear the chamber. So I welcome everybody—it's a pleasure to have you here—but we need to make sure we follow the standing orders.

The floor is yours.

**ONTARIO LANDOWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of my constituents, I extend congratulations on your election to the Speaker's chair.

I would like to welcome and extend my appreciation to the many members of the Ontario Landowners Asso-

ciation who have travelled from across this province to attend today's proceedings. They started as a group of four people around a kitchen table in Lanark county. They are now a province-wide association 20 chapters strong.

The OLA promotes the principles of democracy, natural justice and strong local government, and represents the interests of the rural community. These people are the heart and soul of Ontario. Their honesty, determination, self reliance and independent lifestyles represent the true heritage and our unique culture here in Ontario. They also know that the true role of government is to prevent injustice, not to create it. It is an organization I know well, made up of farmers, loggers and small business operators; people who earn a living from their lands and who are the foundation of their communities.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming the people of rural Ontario into their House here at Queen's Park.

HOLIDAY SEASON IN ETOBICOKE-LAKESHORE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Winter is definitely in the air in Ontario, and with the start of winter comes the rush of the holiday season. But in spite of this busy time of year, my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore has not slowed down at all. In fact, it's working just as hard as always to make sure that the holiday season is enjoyed by all.

I want to take the opportunity today to thank the many organizations and volunteers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore that work hard all year long, and especially at this time of year, to bring the festive season to our neighbourhoods.

First of all, I want to thank, under the leadership of Liz Porritt and her team, our annual Etobicoke Santa Claus parade on the Lakeshore, again a great success last weekend. Thousands came out to enjoy the day by taking part in the parade or watching along the parade route, and everyone enjoyed a day of music by local bands, decorative floats, of course, and the grand finale of Santa Claus, affectionately known as Ho-Ho around my house.

As well, our local BIAs and residents' associations are always very active in bringing the joy of the season to us, including the Kingsway BIA, which presented the cavalcade of lights. As well as the Mimico BIA and the Mimico Residents Association hosted a tree lighting at Storefront Humber, under the leadership of Bob Polden and his team. Tonight, we will see the Village of Islington BIA's tree lighting ceremony at Dundas and Burnhamthorpe.

The holiday season in our community is extremely successful because of the hard work of dedicated community groups and volunteers. On behalf of my community, I say thank you and happy holidays.

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES AWARD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Over the years I have always maintained that great things are happening in Oshawa.

Today I'd like to pay a special tribute to the community of Oshawa for recently receiving an international award of recognition. Just last week, the city of Oshawa achieved a gold award at the 2007 International Awards for Liveable Communities in a review held in London, England. Municipalities which receive this award are recognized as being in the top 15% of sustainable and liveable communities worldwide. In addition, Oshawa placed third in its population category for cities of 75,000 to 200,000 people. The delegation from Oshawa presented before a renowned international panel along with 50 other countries.

The Liveable Communities Awards are backed by the United Nations Environment Programme and focus on the enhancement of the environment and the quality of life in the community. The panel's criteria consisted of community sustainability, healthy lifestyles, environmental practices, heritage, landscape enhancement and planning for the future. I am proud that our community of Oshawa is able to stand out on the world stage and be recognized for its dedication to these practices and its vision for the future.

This truly is a testament to the prudent people of Oshawa, community leaders and associates. I am proud and honoured to be able to work together with such resourceful partners to build a sustainable community for present and future generations. Congratulations once again to His Worship Mayor John Gray, city council and to our great city of Oshawa for achieving such a prestigious award.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure it would shock people to know that the McGuinty government is breaching Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. The Ministry of the Environment has failed to meet crucial deadlines for responding to concerns about industrial smog in Hamilton.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Environment Hamilton in partnership with north Hamilton residents, the government's failure to follow the rules is not going unchecked. This dedicated group used the Environmental Bill of Rights to ask the ministry to review provincial operating certificates for the ArcelorMittal KOBM melt shop. By law, provincial ministries have 60 days to respond to applications for reviews made under the Environmental Bill of Rights; the ministry's deadline for responding to this complaint was September 4. Here it is, three months later, still no compliance.

This is very frustrating for the people of Hamilton who care very deeply about the environment and deserve strong government support and action to clean up the ongoing air quality problems. It should send a disturbing signal to the entire province that this government is asleep at the switch on environmental files. I would like to commend Lynda Lukasik, Lorna Moreau, Environment Hamilton and all the residents who, like me, are

committed to pushing the McGuinty government to the wall for environmental action on our concerns.

Hamilton has been rained on by greasy soot. Its waterways were poisoned a toxic chemical fire that this government refuses to investigate. The damaging industrial air pollution is thick while the powers that be turn their backs. I implore the government to finally act.

BRAMPTON HOSPITAL

Mr. Vic Dhillon: On October 28 of this year, a long-awaited dream of Bramptonians became a reality, and that was the opening of Brampton Civic Hospital. Hospitals are the cornerstones of communities, and no community understands that better than Brampton.

Building a brand-new hospital is rare for any community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those involved, including the Osler board, Osler staff, physicians, nurses, volunteers, foundation members, Minister Smitherman, my colleagues in Brampton, members of the LHIN and, last but not least, the community for all their hard work and support throughout the years. Together we did what we dreamt we could do, and I could not be prouder.

But our work is not done. Our government recognizes that the health care needs of Brampton and Peel are growing, and that is why this government, this minister and all of my colleagues in Brampton have been and will be committed to the redevelopment process of Peel Memorial Hospital. My colleagues from Brampton and I will work hard with this government and the minister, but we can't do it alone. That is why I would like to encourage all Brampton residents to participate in the Central West LHIN's public consultation process for Peel Memorial Hospital. Your direct participation in this process will help shape the programs and services in both hospitals that will ultimately result in better health care for all of us.

I would like to once again thank the community, its stakeholders and the minister for their ongoing leadership and commitment to health care in Brampton.

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FAMILY FRIENDLY REFORMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No one in this place, regardless of gender or political affiliation, should have to choose between being an effective representative in this place and being a good parent. Unfortunately, that choice is often before the members of this assembly.

This place was created over 200 years ago, long before women had the right to vote, long before men took on greater parenting roles, and long before the diversity of this great province was reflected in this Legislature. That's why I have been relentless in calling for family friendly reforms at Queen's Park. Our families make sacrifices for the Ontario of tomorrow, as much as we do. It's time we recognize that.

All corners of this House have advanced ideas: reducing evening sittings, bringing a daycare and a prayer room on-site, and creating a spousal association.

My dad was a politician for three decades before he died. He taught me a very valuable lesson. He said, "You'll inherit a constituency, and it's your job to make it a better place than when you received it." That holds true for 107 members in this Legislative Assembly, who are blessed to hold a seat in the 39th Parliament. While it means that we must make our communities a better place, it also places a duty on us to modernize this Legislature, while respecting its traditions. We are the stewards of this House, and I urge all members to support this resolution later today.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Over the past few weeks, I had the opportunity to meet with trustees and staff from the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board to discuss the progress we have made in our education system and the challenges that we face in the future.

As a former educator, I know first-hand about the importance of investing in education in order to create a highly skilled society. That is why I rise today to commend our government on the new investments in education announced in the throne speech.

In my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, households with young children will benefit from our government's plan to work toward full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Full-day learning will ensure that hard-working parents have access to quality child care for their children at an earlier age.

Our government is also willing to continue to improve the funding formula and invest an additional \$3.1 billion annually in our schools.

I would like to congratulate the trustees and staff at the Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board for choosing to work with our government in a spirit of co-operation and mutual respect. I look forward to working with both school boards to ensure that we have the best possible education system.

QUILT OF BELONGING

Mr. Jim Brownell: As many of you know, I take great pride in the ethnic diversity of my largely rural riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Today, I would like to speak about an art project that was produced in my riding that perfectly symbolizes this cultural mix so characteristic of both Ontario and Canada.

It is called the Quilt of Belonging, and it is a tapestry that was started after a local group of artists, under the leadership of Esther Bryan, learned that there is at least one person from every country in the world living in Canada. The tapestry contains almost 300 beautifully embroidered blocks, each weaving the story of the cultural or ethnic group it represents.

With the help of hundreds of staff and volunteers from across Canada, the tapestry took five years to complete—truly a labour of love. I had the opportunity to view this masterpiece last spring in my riding, and I can tell you that it is magnificent.

After a brilliant launch at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa-Hull, the Quilt of Belonging has toured the country and is now being enjoyed by people around the world. The people of Houston, Texas, were so impressed that their mayor, Bill White, proclaimed October 31 of this year Quilt of Belonging Day in that city.

The piece has touched many on its tour so far, with its ability to bring to life both our own heritage and that of our fellow citizens. It celebrates the cultural richness of the riding, the province and the country.

When the Quilt of Belonging finally settles after its tour, I encourage you to enjoy this remarkable piece that is original to Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry but is destined to become a cultural touchstone for all Ontarians.

HANUKKAH

Mr. David Zimmer: Today is the second day of Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah commemorates the religious and military victory of the Jewish people against the Assyrian oppressors some 2,000 years ago. At that time, Jews in Judea, now Israel, were forbidden to practise their religion under Assyrian occupation. Although vastly outnumbered, the Jewish people, led by Judah Maccabee and his four brothers, rose up and fought against King Antiochus and his army. After three years of fighting, the Maccabeus reclaimed the holy temple in Jerusalem.

Tradition holds that when the Maccabeus entered the holy temple, they found only enough oil to light the menorah, the most important object in the temple, for one day. However, when the Maccabeus lit the menorah, it burned not for one day, but for eight days. Today, Jews around the world continue to celebrate this miracle through prayers and the lighting of the menorah on eight consecutive days. The light of the menorah has come to symbolize freedom, religious tolerance and peace, something all of us in Ontario value.

On behalf of the Ontario government, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Jewish community of Ontario a very happy Hanukkah celebration.

WEARING OF T-SHIRTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This afternoon, we are privileged to have members of the Ontario Landowners' Association in the galleries. I rise today to seek unanimous consent of this House that those present be permitted to wear their distinctive shirts that signify their membership in this very important organization. I seek unanimous consent that they be permitted to do so today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hillier is seeking unanimous consent of the House for his guests to wear their T-shirts. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce my mother-in-law and father-in-law, who are in the west gallery. My mother-in-law is celebrating her birthday today, so could we welcome them to the House?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, and happy birthday to you.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to wear white ribbons for the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton Mountain seeks consent of the House to wear white ribbons. Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie on a point of order.

Mr. David Oraziotti: No, Speaker, not on a point of order; to introduce a bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Toronto–Davenport—no, Toronto–Danforth.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I too will get a T-shirt, Mr. Speaker—with my riding on it.

I rise to welcome Wolfe Erlichmann from Frontenac and Donna Dillman, on the 60th day of her hunger strike against a uranium mine in Frontenac. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome again.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like members to warmly welcome a group of people who are in the forefront of mitigating climate change. In fact, they are establishing the Climate Project–Canada, the Canadian arm of Al Gore's global Climate Project. They are Shelley Kath, Georgina Bencsik, Michael Homsie, Ric Cuthbertson and our very own George Chuvalo, who in his fight against drugs should also be congratulated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would agree with the member and thank him for introducing his guests.

A special welcome to George Chuvalo, a great Canadian and somebody that we can all be very proud of. Mr. Chuvalo, as we know, has been involved in a number of initiatives over the years. I've had the opportunity to meet him in the past. My mother grew up here in Toronto and he lived next door to my mother. His family didn't have a television in the 1950s. My mother's family had a television, and George Chuvalo used to come over and watch the fights with my grandfather. He remembered

that when I spoke with him earlier today. It's a real honour to have you here today, George.

Applause.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM SECOND-HAND SMOKE IN AUTOMOBILES ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES ENFANTS ET LES JEUNES CONTRE LA FUMÉE SECONDAIRE DANS LES AUTOMOBILES

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 11, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to protect children and youth from second-hand smoke in motor vehicles / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée afin de protéger les enfants et les jeunes contre la fumée secondaire dans les véhicules automobiles.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: The bill seeks to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking in vehicles when a person who is less than 16 years of age is present.

The objective is to protect children and youth from intense levels of second-hand smoke. Research shows that children are especially susceptible to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and are more likely to suffer from cancer, heart disease, asthma and a number of other respiratory illnesses. Each hour that a child is exposed to second-hand smoke in a car is equivalent to the child smoking a pack of cigarettes.

An Ipsos Reid poll today indicated that 80% of Ontarians support this type of legislation. I want to thank leading health care advocates in Ontario for being here today and for expressing their strong support for the bill. Hopefully, members of the Legislature will support it as well.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We've got a couple of guests that I'd like to introduce: first, a member of the 36th Parliament from the riding of Prince Edward–Lennox–South Hastings, Gary Fox.

Mr. Fox, welcome back to Queen's Park.

Also, we'd like to recognize His Worship Sam Sullivan, Mayor of Vancouver, who is here today. He's been in Toronto to promote the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and the 2010 Paralympics.

Your Worship, welcome to Queen's Park.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by the ministry? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today we mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. All across our province and across Canada, people are mourning the tragic and senseless loss of 14 young women who were killed simply because they were women.

It is also a day of awareness to highlight the struggle of women and girls who are living with violence right now. Although it has been almost 20 years since this horrific tragedy, we know that violence is still very much a part of women's lives.

According to the latest Statistics Canada survey, seven per cent of Ontario women reported having experienced violence at the hands of their spouses in the previous five years. As well, more than one third of Canadian women report having had at least one experience of sexual assault since the age of 16.

This is simply unacceptable. Preventing violence against women requires families, friends and neighbours, governments, and communities working together to eliminate this problem. We all have a responsibility in preventing violence against women.

The McGuinty government is doing its part. Last month was Woman Abuse Prevention Month, and our government reaffirmed its commitment to preventing violence against women. Last year, our government spent \$190 million in violence against women services and prevention programs. This includes more than \$82 million in new funding under the domestic violence action plan. We're providing better community-based supports, implementing education and training strategies, strengthening our justice systems and providing better access for the francophone community.

For many people, it is not just understanding what they are seeing, but also knowing what to do to offer help to a person in need. With funding from our government, the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign is aiming to change people's attitudes so that everyone, whether family, friend or workmate, can recognize abuse and respond appropriately. The campaign, I'm happy to say, has been launched in more than 70 communities, with more launches planned in the coming year. I urge everyone to check out the website www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca to find more information on this very important program.

Of course, we know there is more to do. As the minister responsible for women's issues, I will continue to build on the domestic violence action plan in collaboration with our community partners. Our government has committed to increase funding to shelters, second-stage

housing, sexual assault centres and to develop a co-ordinated plan to target sexual violence.

Since 1991, the YWCA has also distributed rose buttons on December 6 to mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and to honour the 14 young women who were killed in Montreal.

The White Ribbon Campaign, established in 1991, is a symbol of men's opposition to men's violence against women. Each year around this time, men and boys are urged to wear a white ribbon for the campaign. I have rose buttons and white ribbons with me today, and I invite all members to wear them to demonstrate their commitment to ending violence against women.

We must be constant in our actions and diligent in our efforts year-round. The McGuinty government and its partners have worked hard to provide the supports that women need to be safe and secure. I can assure you that our government will continue to take action to prevent violence against women, to help make a better future for women and children—and men—in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to clarify, the previous statement was not a statement from the ministry. Rather, I would ask for unanimous consent for a member from each party to speak for up to five minutes regarding the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women—given that a government member has spoken, beginning with the official opposition and the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member has asked for unanimous consent for all members to speak for up to five minutes. Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to share my time with my colleague the honourable member from Dufferin-Caledon.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on this, the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Declared by Parliament in 1991, this day was selected because it was the day on which the terrible events occurred at the Université de Montréal's École Polytechnique. This is the 18th anniversary of the day that 14 young, intelligent women, full of life and promise for the future, were hunted down, separated from their male colleagues, and murdered, just because they were women. They were murdered by a young man who said he hated feminists and felt that women had deprived him of the place, both at the university and in society, that he felt he deserved.

It's important to take the time today for sober reflection: first, to remember the young women who died and their families who have had to carry on without them, never to see them graduate, marry, have children or have careers. We must support them and honour the memory of their daughters, sisters and friends by working diligently to end violence against women.

Secondly, it is a day to consider the huge ripple effect that violence against women has on our society, both socially and financially. Violence is a major factor in

women's health and well-being. The measurable health-related costs of violence against women in Canada exceed \$1.5 billion a year. These costs include short-term medical and dental treatment for injuries, long-term physical and psychological care, lost time at work, and use of transition homes and crisis centres.

The financial consequences are significant, but it should be remembered that they're only the tip of the iceberg when you think about the effect upon the children whose lives have been touched by violence against women.

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Think about May-Isles, Gillian Hadley and other women killed by their partners and the children who have been left motherless. Think about the children who witness violence against their mothers in their homes. A few chilling statistics: In 2004, 33% of all victims of spousal violence reported that children saw or heard violence in the home. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency and other emotional problems. Witnessing violence increases the chances that boys will grow up to act violently with girlfriends, wives and partners. For girls, it increases the chances that they will experience violence in their dating and/or marital relationships. In fact, Marc Lépine, the young man who killed the young women on December 6, 18 years ago, was himself a witness to violence against his mother at the hands of his father, and suffered physical abuse himself.

We need to do what we can to stop this cycle of violence against women with concrete, measurable solutions. My colleague the member from Durham has proposed a private member's bill that would give victims of domestic violence access to emergency intervention orders 24 hours a day. These orders would have the power to restrict someone who is threatening or harassing a former domestic partner from contacting the partner or their family. This is one example of a measure that could be adopted quickly by this Legislature that could make a real difference in saving a life.

I urge all members to support this bill and to consider other measures that we could take to prevent these needless tragedies. There's no better way to honour the memory of those 14 young women.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would also like to join my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa in marking the Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and with it share some good news with the House.

In my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, a shelter, Family Transition Place, has been running a very successful and highly sought-after program in our local schools to stop the cycle of violence. The violence prevention team, run by two incredibly driven young people, Tracy and Travis, runs programs in elementary and high schools throughout Dufferin and Caledon on empowerment, bullying and positive relationships. The proactive work that Family Transition Place is doing in our community and with our young people trying to stop the cycle of abuse before it begins is incredible.

The response in the schools has been tremendous. Family Transition Place is booking literally months ahead for the programs, because principals, teachers and students have seen how well it works.

On a day when we remember many tragic stories, it is important that we acknowledge how organizations such as Family Transition Place are making a difference in the lives of our children and in our community through such programs.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm honoured and privileged—I'm one of the few women in this chamber that's honoured and privileged to be able to speak about this and to this issue. I'll remind everyone here, men and women, who are lucky enough to be here and privileged enough to be here, that we speak on behalf of many who are brutalized.

And we're speaking about many: One in three women in Ontario have been assaulted. This is a startling and absolutely appalling statistic. There are others: For every second that we speak in this House, another woman in Ontario is being assaulted. Between 1995 and 2005, 231 women in Ontario were murdered by their partners or their former partners. Between January and November 2006, there were 24 women and 12 children murdered again by their partners or their former partners. Across Canada, 100,000 women and children use shelters to escape from abuse. This is a huge population move, and it has certainly caught the United Nations' attention.

I particularly want to remember with respect the family of Jocelyn Dulnuan, a young Filipino caregiver who was murdered in the home of the family that she worked for. We still don't have an answer for that crime. In fact, we in the New Democratic Party are calling for a public inquiry into her death, and also for immediate and random inspections of the homes where many young women act as caregivers.

The Step It Up campaign and others have rooted violence against women in the fact that women are still unequal. The seeds of inequality are sown, in part, here. The United Way has shown that poverty wears a woman's face in this province. It wears a woman's face in this city. We know that one in two single-parent families are living in poverty. They are the families of women without partners living in poverty. There are several aspects to this problem and there are several aspects to the solution. Let's start with the solution.

First of all, we need child care. We don't have child care in this province. Only one in 10 children has a space in child care; it costs on average over \$1,000. In Quebec, by contrast, you can get quality child care for \$7 a day.

Lack of housing keeps women unequal, lack of transitional housing keeps women unequal, and we have a lack of housing. We have over 75,000 households waiting in the GTA alone for housing, many of them women trying to escape from abusive households, who can't escape from abusive households because there is nowhere to go.

We remember women who were killed in Montreal. Let us not sow more seeds of violence for the next

generations to come. When we talk about remembering women, that's exactly what we're doing. We're bringing back all of those stories of those women murdered, those women abused, those women assaulted. We're bringing those stories back. Those women are with us now as we speak about this.

If we really want to honour their memories, if we really want to do something about it so that it doesn't happen again, then we have to act. Today I'm sad to report that one of the ways in which we could have acted was to pass a \$10 minimum wage bill now. A bill that would have affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of women across this province was defeated by the McGuinty government. It was defeated this morning. That is going to affect women's lives, that is going to keep inequality going and that's going to keep women who are in abusive situations in abusive situations. These are sad, sad times and we ask, instead of flowery words and sentiments from the government, for action.

I also want to mention the names of the women who are coming here today from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses to submit a petition to the House to demand more housing. They have 600 signatures. These are the women who will be joining us shortly: Ms. Linton, Ms. Pettiford, Ms. McFarlene, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Smith, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Afm, Ms. Turnbull and their executive director, Eileen Morrow. They will speak with one voice, and that voice is for a solution to violence against women, not just more sentiment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and all guests of the Legislature today to please rise as we observe a moment of silence for the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

RELEASE OF PSYCHIATRIC OFFENDER

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Health, of which he already has informal notice. It has to do with Mr. Jeffrey Arenburg. Mr. Arenburg is a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic who was found not criminally responsible for the 1995 murder of Brian Smith, a sportscaster with CJOH television in Ottawa.

Last year, Mr. Arenburg was given an absolute discharge from the province's mental health system, and last week he was arrested in Buffalo for the alleged assault of a US border guard. This has justifiably set off alarm bells in Ottawa.

Minister, can you assure people in Ottawa and other areas of the province that when Mr. Arenburg returns to Ontario, as he surely will, he will pose no threat to public safety?

1410

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the Ontario Review Board is actually set up under a federal statute, the Criminal Code. The composition of the board is dictated by a federal statute, the Criminal Code. The process when somebody is found not criminally responsible for an offence, which the statute defines as being “exempt from criminal responsibility,” is set out in the Criminal Code. The review process and the potential dispositions—an absolute discharge, a conditional discharge or continued detention in a hospital—are set out in the Criminal Code.

When the individual came before the review board for the hearing, the crown attorney took the position that the crown objected to an absolute discharge. The independent tribunal made a different decision.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don’t question the independence of the tribunal. They are Ontario order-in-council appointments to that board.

Media reports on this issue indicate that the review board, in its decision to give Mr. Arenburg an absolute discharge, suggested there was a 24% chance he would re-offend within 10 years. I’m not sure if that means once every four weeks or once every four years, but I do know that the risk-management tool used in these cases has a significant error rate.

Minister, do you believe it’s in the best interests of public safety to release someone without conditions or restrictions, someone responsible for a cold-blooded murder, when there is a 24% chance the individual will re-offend? Do you agree with that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, the crown who made representations before the review board took the position that such a disposition should not take place. The independent review board set up under the federal Criminal Code, exercising its own judgment, took a different position. That review board consists of the types of professionals that the federal government mandates through the Criminal Code.

It sounds like the Leader of the Opposition’s real objection is with the potential for an absolute discharge for someone found not criminally responsible for the type of acts he outlined, in which case his objection is to the Minister of Justice. You know where he is. You should contact him and call for an amendment to the Criminal Code.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It’s another example of the blame game that this government is so proficient in.

The reality is—and the minister may want to refer this to the Minister of Health—Mr. Arenburg is going to come back into Ontario, and it looks like all we can do is cross our fingers and hope he doesn’t re-offend. If the minister—and I’m talking about the Minister of Health, essentially—doesn’t have the legislative authority to act, I ask if he would consider, on an expedited basis, regulatory and/or legislative changes under the Mental Health Act that would give the province the ability through

community treatment orders to address public safety concerns and do it in a way that doesn’t infringe on individual rights. It should be possible and could potentially address the Arenburg situation and others that may come forward in the future. Will you do that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Attorney General and the crown will not comment on the process with respect to any individual or individual case. There are tools within our statutes, some of which we administer for the federal government through the Criminal Code, some of which are provincial statutes, that provide for protections. The police will investigate thoroughly, and the crown’s office will pursue where public safety is at issue.

But I repeat to the member, who obviously is in full voice today, that if he objects to the type of disposition that was made in this case, his real objection is with the form of the statute. It’s a federal statute. Pick up the phone and call the Minister of Justice.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Is he not here today?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment, please. He’s not here. Restart the clock, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the minister is not here, I will direct it to the Premier.

Premier, since the Minister of Finance is refusing our call to call in the Auditor General to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the Ontario Financing Authority’s irresponsible handling of public funds, will you please, then, advise the House what your minister is doing, first, to investigate how it came to be that the board of directors of the Ontario Financing Authority approved investing public funds in this high-risk paper; second, who was responsible for recommending that investment, given the clear direction of the Financial Administration Act that limits investments to those “that are advisable for the sound and efficient management of public money”; and finally, what steps will the government take to recover the losses suffered by Ontario taxpayers on this scheme, losses that could add up to more than \$200 million?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I, of course, can’t accept the characterization of this particular issue offered by the honourable member. I think the Minister of Finance has spoken to this issue on a number of occasions now. He has indicated that this is the kind of investment that has been made in the past by several governments of different political stripes.

He may not have indicated that during the course of the past four years the Ontario Financing Authority has achieved \$474 million in returns over and above the benchmarks set out for them. So while it is perfectly true that there will be some loss in this particular case, during the four previous years they were ahead \$474 million.

I think it's also fair to say, as the honourable member seeks to lay blame at the feet of the Ontario Financing Authority, that hundreds if not thousands of corporations and organizations throughout North America have been affected by this particular issue. We here in Ontario have been touched by it, and we will do our very best to ensure it does not happen again.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would hope that the Premier and the Minister of Finance take their fiduciary responsibility seriously.

The minister points out that he's not alone in this, but he is alone in not admitting responsibility, and he is very much alone in not asking for accountability from those responsible. I'll give you an example.

In the Yukon, the Auditor General has been called in to investigate. In New York state, the Attorney General has subpoenaed companies on Wall Street to get to the bottom of the scandal. Private firms here in Canada are suing their investment advisers. In Quebec, the head of the Caisse de dépôt et placements was called before a parliamentary committee to justify their involvement in this investment game of craps. So I ask the Premier: If in fact he calls as justification the fact that others in other jurisdictions and institutions find themselves in the same place, why does he not also ask for the same degree of accountability for those responsible?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The financial statements presented by the Ontario Financing Authority were in fact reviewed by the Provincial Auditor, and he offers this opinion:

"In my opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Ontario Financing Authority as of March 31, 2007, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles."

Of course, the auditor has it within his purview to decide whether or not he wants to lend special interest to this at the time of his next issue of public accounts.

Again I say, this is the type of investment that has been embraced by a number of different governments of political stripes. Many of us have now found ourselves caught up in that. When I say that—including those that were referenced by the member—Alberta was caught up by this, CPR was caught up by this, Canada Mortgage and Housing, Canada Post, the city of Hamilton, Toronto Hydro, the Ontario teachers' pension fund, Toronto Pearson International Airport—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier misses the point. The issue is not who else is in the same mess; the issue is, how is this government handling the irresponsible investment of public funds? It's not up to the auditor to determine whether or not the investments were made consistent when he is reviewing financial statements; it is up to the auditor now to present us with a report on whether or not the government and its agencies have followed the act that prescribes, "When the Minister of Finance con-

siders it advisable for the sound and efficient management of public money, then certain investments can be made."

I say to the Premier, clearly these investments would not and should never have been considered for investment by the province of Ontario on behalf of taxpayers. I would ask one more time, Premier: Why would we not collectively want the Auditor General to table a report on this issue?

1420

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, if the Auditor General chooses of his own accord to take a particular interest in this, he is, of course, free to do so. The honourable member says that those responsible for this within Ontario Financing Authority lack judgment. He's also saying, of course, that those at Caisse de dépôt lack judgment, those in Alberta lack judgment, those at Canadian Pacific Railway lack judgment, those at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. lack judgment, those people working at Canada Post lack judgment, those folks at the city of Hamilton, Toronto Hydro, Société générale de financement du Québec, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Toronto Pearson International Airport, Sun-Times Media Group, Air Canada lack judgment, and hundreds, if not thousands, of organizations and corporations throughout North America and, indeed, Europe—because this has had global consequences—have all failed to show good judgment. I'm going to raise another possibility, given the impact of this particular issue: I think that people did use good judgment, but something happened that they didn't anticipate. I think it's now time for us to find a way to ensure that this kind of thing doesn't happen on a going-forward basis.

EMPLOYEE WAGE PROTECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Premier: Does the Premier think it's acceptable for companies to cheat workers out of hard-earned wages, severance pay and vacation pay when they close a factory or mill? If the Premier doesn't think it is acceptable, will he commit that McGuinty government members of the general government committee will schedule Bill 6, the employee wage protection act, for committee hearings and debate and refer Bill 6 back to this House for third reading as soon as possible?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know I speak for every member of this Legislature when we say that there is more that can and should be done when it comes to protecting workers in those cases where a business fails. I commend the member for the work he's doing in this regard. I know this is not a passing interest; he has expressed real concern for this issue for a long time.

The federal government, however, has recently introduced a bill aimed at protecting employee wages. We do support that federal bill. We hope it will soon become law. We'll wait to see whether it is going to be amended or will receive passage as it stands. So the step we are taking at this point in time is to look at the federal

legislation and see what we can do working in concert with the federal government.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier would know that this is an urgent issue, that there are workers all over this province who are facing situations where the mill has closed or the factory has closed and they're not being paid severance pay, they're not being paid vacation pay, they're not even being paid wages they've already worked for. I'm simply asking the Premier this: Can the Premier assure former workers from GenFast in Brantford, Amcan in Hamilton, Collins and Aikman in Mississauga, Mahle in Gananoque, Fincor in Toronto, Hartford Fibre in Kingston—workers who have been left high and dry by their employers—that the McGuinty government members will allow for committee debate and third reading debate of Bill 6, the employee wage protection act? You can wait for the federal legislation, or you can do something now. Which is it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think, in fairness to us on this side of House, this is a matter that was just recently addressed in this Legislature. It came in on fairly short notice. I have yet myself to have the opportunity to speak with our Minister of Labour about this. There may be considerable merit in this particular proposal. I say to the leader of the NDP that I appreciate the intervention he makes here today. What we are doing at this point in time is that we are clearly focused on the legislation that's working its way through the House of Commons. Beyond that, I will say, and provide my assurance to the member and leader of the NDP, that we will take a close look at the proposal that has been submitted and which I gather was aired earlier today in this very House.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, on short notice this Legislature dealt with fairness to military personnel, people who are called up as reservists, people who are called up as militia. There was no trouble dealing with that. This concerns workers who have already done the work, but their employer isn't paying them their vacation pay, isn't paying them for work already done, isn't paying them for severance pay which they're legally entitled to.

Members of this Legislature passed a bill on second reading today. My question is this: We're not interested in delay. Will you respect the wishes of a majority of the members of this Legislature and commit to bringing the bill forward for committee hearings as soon as possible and back to the Legislature for third reading as soon as possible? If it's good for members of the militia, if it's good for members of the Armed Forces reserve, why isn't it good enough for workers who have been cheated out of their severance pay, their vacation pay and—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm not sure what more I can say to the leader of the NDP here and now. I'm not familiar myself with the substance of the proposal, but I am convinced that it has been brought forward out of the best of intentions and with the utmost sincerity. We need to see how this can be or whether it should, in fact, be reconciled with what is happening in the House of Commons.

I can say that I think there is more that we can do together to protect our workers. The federal government has responsibility for bankruptcy legislation. We have been largely focused, in this province, by way of progress in terms of providing supports to those workers through retraining and the like in the event of an unfortunate job loss.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: But again, what I say to the leader of the NDP and his colleague who introduced this bill today, where it received passage on second reading, I believe, is that we will take a very close look at it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The Premier says, what more could he say. A simple yes will send it to committee immediately and we'll debate it.

But I want to ask again about the tragic death of Harnek Sidhu, because citizens in Brampton are raising questions about the McGuinty Liberals' profit-driven corporate consortium hospital and the level of care or, should I say, the lack of an adequate level of care that patients are experiencing at that hospital, where unreasonably long wait times are certainly the case in the emergency room. Is it the position of the McGuinty government that when something like this happens in a much-advertised, brand new hospital that it's simply an internal hospital matter and the McGuinty government doesn't believe it's worthy of some attention from the government itself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say, as I've had the chance to do on previous occasions, that we express sympathy in any circumstance where Ontarians have lost a loved one. I realize, of course, that those are trying circumstances, indeed.

The honourable member would create the idea, but it's not one that is very real, that we've not been attentive to the situation in Brampton. Nearly \$900 million of investment is very substantial evidence of our commitment to Brampton, not to mention that since the new hospital has come into operation, several hundred additional employees, nurses—almost 200 alone—are providing care in that environment.

We believe in community-based governance. It is at the heart of the principle of a publicly funded health care system here in Ontario. Accordingly, we think it's important that, in participation with the local community, the Brampton hospital and the community of people who run it be involved in conversation with their community, as has occurred this week, as we all strive to enhance the quality of performance in Ontario's health care system.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The more non-answers I receive from members of the McGuinty government, the more it seems to me there is evidence that we need an inquiry. The head of the hospital corporation says the hospital only cost \$550 million to construct. The Minister

of Health says \$900 million. The Minister of Health says that literally 200 new employees have been hired. The head of the hospital corporation says they are understaffed. The reality for Gurdip Dugga, suffering severe appendicitis, is that he had to wait 12 hours in emergency before being seen by a doctor and another 12 hours before he received the emergency surgery that everyone recognized he desperately needed.

Too many other patients have received similar inadequate care. How can the Premier and the McGuinty government be so certain that this situation has nothing to do with the fact that this is a profit-driven corporate-consortium hospital where much of the money is being diverted to corporate profits, not to patient care?

Hon. George Smitherman: Here we go again: the honourable member, one of the very rare breed of Ontarians who has the capacity, through all of the compensation and settlements that he's received, to pay cash on the barrel for his home and not to have a mortgage. His ongoing suggestion that somehow a funding mechanism of how we pay for a substantial investment, my figures including equipment and technology—this is the difference that the member seeks to depend upon in asking these questions.

Brampton hospital is a public hospital. We're proud of it. It's publicly funded, it's publicly controlled and it's publicly accountable. On the matter of public accountability, with the Brampton community, this is the responsibility of the relationship between that hospital, its community-based board of governors and the community. We have seen witness this week of the work that they're doing in the community. We applaud it and we call for them to continue as we all work together to build even better health services for the good people of Brampton.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government can misuse the term "public" over and over again. The fact is, everyone who agrees—even Conservatives agree that this is a profit-driven corporate-consortium hospital where literally hundreds of millions of dollars are being diverted to corporate costs, corporate consultants, corporate accountants and corporate profits. At the same time, patients who depend upon this hospital in Brampton are not getting an adequate level of care. Hundreds of people have come forward since the opening of the hospital with complaints about the lack of quality of care.

I say to the Premier: Don't you think it's wise to investigate your profit-driven corporate-consortium hospitals before you pour billions of dollars more into these projects, which will certainly benefit Bay Street in its search for profits but, as patients in Brampton are saying, are somewhat inadequate in terms of patient care?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that on behalf of the more than 300,000 women and men who daily dedicate themselves to the task of health care delivery in the province of Ontario, it's a highly suspect approach on the part of the honourable member to try and turn the doctors and nurses and those who provide care in that environment into some corporate-driven private entity.

This is an outrageous suggestion. It is only that honourable member who hides behind a long-ago capital plan that saw no hospitals built. Why doesn't he stand up and fess up that under the model that he is a proponent of with respect to the construction of hospitals, not only as in the case of Thunder Bay did the hospitals run double their proposed cost, but none were built? On their watch, none were built.

On our watch, the largest single renewal of health care infrastructure in the history of the province of Ontario; 100 projects more to do, and working with the good people of Brampton in support of their public hospital.

1430

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd ask all members to welcome a former member of this House, the representative from York East in the 35th Parliament, Mr. Gary Malkowski, and a number of his students. Welcome, Gary, and to the students today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier today. The Canadian Institute for Health Information released statistics comparing mortality rates in hospitals across the country. The reality is that you are more likely to die in a hospital in Ontario than anywhere else in the country. We've heard recently about the 12-hour wait and subsequent death of Mr. Harnek Sidhu at Brampton Civic Hospital.

During the election, the Liberals promised to spend 100 million taxpayer dollars in growth funding for hospitals in Ontario's fastest-growing communities, notably the GTA and the 905, but not a word in the throne speech. Ontarians are pumping tens of billions of their hard-earned dollars annually into government coffers, including \$2.6 billion in health tax premiums.

Will the Premier confirm this promised expenditure and explain to the people of Ontario why they are more likely to die in a hospital in southern Ontario than they are in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick or Alberta, despite the billions being spent on health care in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will refer the question, but let me just take the opportunity to congratulate the member on his election and thank him for the question.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member's pessimism, I think, is poorly placed. I do think that it's an outrageous statement that he's made. The University Health Network, one of the largest hospitals that we have in the whole country—just as one example of the many that were in those results—demonstrates that Ontario hospitals are performing well.

At the heart of it, we believe fundamentally that transparency around these matters is the strongest thing that patients have going for them. I want to just say to the honourable member that you will continue to see presentation of important information about what's going on

in hospitals, information that we're going to make sure is public, information that your party did not make public.

But what I find curious, especially from the honourable member, is that he repeated in his question his party's commitment to take \$3 billion out of health care. So perhaps in his supplementary question the honourable member can express how it is, on the one hand, that you want to see investment, when on the other hand you're still in favour of an elimination of \$3 billion in health care funding.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It amazes me that after four full years of government, this government is still unable to take responsibility for its own indecisiveness. Ontarians are literally sick and dying from this government's lack of action, and are tired of its excuses.

When can the people of Ontario expect the Premier to assure Ontarians that the likelihood of dying in a hospital will be less than in provinces like New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta?

Hon. George Smitherman: Our review of the data would indicate that it is principally Ontario hospitals that were involved in that presentation of information, with Ontario hospitals having the highest degree of participation in the selection of data from CIHI. We think that the release of the information, the transparency, is powerful for patients, and it will stimulate the appropriate decisions to make sure that those numbers which are coming down come down even further.

The real problem that is inherent in the honourable member's question, as he seeks to characterize our party in a negative light, is how you can, in good conscience, ask such a question, when only one or two months ago you were a proponent of a \$3-billion cut to health care in the province of Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Today, we've remembered women who are victims of violence, but very often women and children have to stay at home with their abusers because of a lack of transitional or supportive housing of any sort. I'm asking you, Minister, if you will finally take this opportunity to come across with your promises for affordable housing.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think I'll refer that to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm very pleased to answer the honourable member. We have signed an agreement with the previous federal government called the affordable housing program. It's a strategy that's going to help 63,000 households in the province of Ontario, including 18,000 housing units, and 35,000 families are going to be helped with rent supplements. And the rent bank, which is an initiative I give credit to my predecessor for, has helped prevent 10,700 evictions. Of these units, 500 units are for victims of domestic violence.

We have more work to do, but I'm proud of the record of accomplishment to date. I look forward to working

with the member and all members to ensure that all fellow Ontarians have affordable housing at their disposal.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Through a freedom-of-information act request, we discovered that this ministry has, in fact, provided under 300—around 285 units—that actually rent for \$700 or under. That's what we consider affordable housing. They promised 20,000.

The reason I directed this to the minister for women's issues is because this is a women's issue. Today, when we commemorate the victims of violence, we are aware that women are the major face of poverty in this province and they're the ones that need the housing. So where is that housing, Mr. Minister?

1440

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to report to the honourable member that we have committed to 15,000 affordable housing units. To date, 3,066 are occupied under the rental and supportive plan, 596 under the home ownership, and 234 under the northern program. Under construction, as we speak now, are an additional 2,167 under the rental and supportive plan, 14 under the home ownership, and 167 under the northern plan.

Also, to date, we have provided 2,414 housing allowances under the HARS plan. Under the strong communities rent supplement plan, 3,000 of our fellow citizens are being helped; the city of Toronto housing allowance plan, 400; under the rent supplement plan of my colleague the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 1,600. And the ROOF program, which starts in effect on January 1, will help upwards of 20,000 people in the province of Ontario.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, the supply-managed sector of our agriculture industry has proven itself as an effective way of ensuring farmers earn a stable, profitable income. Yesterday, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario were at Queen's Park and I met with them. They impressed upon me the importance of maintaining the system of supply management that we currently have in the province.

I often meet with local representatives in my riding from the supply-management sector. During our meetings, these groups have repeated the call for both the provincial and the federal levels of government to continue defending the interests of those farmers dependent on supply management. Can you please tell this House today what our government is doing to protect the interests of the supply-managed producers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: An excellent question from a member who has a very vested interest in ensuring that the supply-managed industry thrives in the province of Ontario. Because of her good advocacy, our government has made it very clear on many occasions. I can say that as recently as two weeks ago, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture met in

this city, and I was again able to very clearly present Ontario's case that we believe that at the World Trade Organization talks that are continuing in Geneva, Canada must continue to strongly advocate—in fact, not waiver in its commitment to—supply management.

A week ago in this House, our statement from the government, our Premier, made it very clear. We understand that supply management is so very important within our rural communities and we will do all we can to ensure that it remains intact as we know it today.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I can tell you from the riding of Huron–Bruce that it's very reassuring to see that this government is strongly defending the interests of the farmers. What is troubling to me is the position taken on the issue by the Ontario Landowners Association. According to one of the association's discussion papers, this organization wants supply-managed sectors to "become optional." This is very troubling to our Ontario poultry and dairy farmers, and to the rural communities that depend on them. Supply management is what enables the poultry and dairy farmers in my riding to succeed. Can you reassure the supply-managed farmers in my riding that this government will protect their livelihoods?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Many members in this Legislature know that we have on many, many occasions met with farmers from the supply-managed sector and other sectors, other farm leadership. They've made it very clear, first of all, that an optional supply-management program would simply not work; it would fail. And we don't want supply management to fail.

We have met with chicken farmers, with egg producers, with turkey farmers and with dairy farmers. They've made it very clear that they expect their government to defend their interests. I believe we have made it very clear on this side of the House that we are with them. We are with the farmers on the concession road and we will support supply management.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Would the Premier please inform the House why it is taking his government so long to approve a needed computed tomography, or CT scanner for the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I know that the enthusiasm for this in the local community has been enhanced by the fact that our government has made the broadest expansions in access to MRI and CT in the history of the province of Ontario, and the good folks in Fergus appropriately want on that bandwagon.

The ministry—as the honourable member knows—with the local health integration network and the hospital, is just working to ensure that the operation of said equipment would not cause the hospital to be in an unbalanced circumstance. I'm very, very supportive of it, and I look forward to being able to share with the honourable

member the progress towards yet another CT scan being installed in rural Ontario. In Northumberland Hills Hospital the other day, we celebrated the grand opening of a brand new MRI, and we want to continue to advance access to diagnostic services.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In this instance, the hospital submitted its proposal to the ministry in February. I wrote the minister in support of the project when I was asked to do so in June, and I also wrote the minister the very morning after the election eight weeks ago, asking the minister to approve it. The local health integration network in Waterloo–Wellington, I'm told, is supportive of the project, and I want to inform the House that the Georgetown Hospital is shortly going to be submitting a proposal for a CT scanner as well.

I would ask the minister, would he not today inform the House and inform our community that he is going to definitely approve that CT scanner that we need in Fergus immediately?

Hon. George Smitherman: I can tell the people, the honourable member's constituents and those who are interested in that service, that an important hurdle has been cleared, when, on October 10 the people of Ontario didn't invite your party to govern and cut \$3 billion out of health care spending.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the minister responsible for infrastructure renewal. Minister, the extension of Highway 407 eastward to Highways 35 and 115 is an important development and economic stimulus for Oshawa and the region of Durham.

Less than two weeks ago, I was pleased to hear that the federal government announced a completion date of 2012 for the extension of the highway. Can you clearly certify the completion date for Highway 407 through the region of Durham to Highways 35 and 115?

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question. Also, it's my first opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the chair, Speaker.

This government is determined to expand transit and highway access by increasing mobility of people and goods, reducing congestion and improving infrastructure. This is not simply going to help the region of Durham and the entire GTA, but also the province of Ontario compete for economic growth and global investment. One of the ways that we plan on doing this is investing in Ontario through something called FLOW: a \$4.5-billion investment by all three levels of government in public transit and highway infrastructure programs for the GTA.

As a part of this program, the Highway 407 east extension project was identified for completion in 2013. The government is working diligently to complete the Highway 407 east environmental assessment study to this end. A preliminary technical recommended route has been selected for both the highway and the transit way purposes. The new east-west transportation corridor extends Highway 407 easterly to 35/115 and two north-

south links connecting Highway 401 to the proposed Highway 407. I will be pleased to give additional information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: For all those who didn't hear it, I believe the minister inferred that the completion date was 2013. My understanding is that the federal Minister of Finance specifically stated in the local papers that it would be completed by 2012. Upon meeting with them, I understand that a predecessor, a previous Minister of Transportation, signed agreements with the federal government stating that the completion date would be 2012. This is a very important piece of infrastructure for our community and for the development, in reducing gridlock and traffic congestion through the region along with economic stimulus.

Minister, can you tell us where the difficulty is or what we need to do to speed up that process to ensure a 2012 completion date?

1450

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the agreement with the federal government has a completion date of 2013. You can take that back to your member and let him know that he was not correct in informing the people of Durham of that fact. But I can tell you that we have begun a round of public information—it was recently held in Durham region. The technically recommended route was presented to obtain input and feedback from the public; a hallmark of this government is this kind of consultation and co-operation with local communities. We're working hard to achieve our target date for completing construction without comprising—and this is very important—the provincial or federal environmental assessments and the improved terms of reference for the study. I look forward to that. If the member is speaking to his federal colleague, he could ask him to speed up the flow of dollars that were previously committed by the federal government.

I know the mayor of Mississauga—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. What is the McGuinty government doing to prevent big-box, for-profit daycare businesses from setting up shop in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that the question we will always ask is, what is best—

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

I remind the minister to speak through the Chair, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will always ask the question, what is best for the child? Our focus is quality, and providing parents with affordable, high-quality child care is what we do and what we will continue to do. A parent needs to know, when they drop their child off at a

licensed child care centre, that their child is in a high-quality learning environment with well-trained staff, whether it's a for-profit or a not-for-profit centre.

We're raising the bar on quality by establishing the College of Early Childhood Educators, the first of its kind in Canada. We've expanded the availability of child care through the creation of more than 22,000 new child care spaces, and we do have unannounced inspections whenever they occur.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister isn't aware that 123 Busy Beavers Learning Centres is an offshoot of ABC e-Learning Corp., a global corporate concern that has undermined not-for-profit child care programs wherever they set up shop. The company has advertised for start-up as it prepares to open for business in Ontario; I have a copy of the ads for their start-up. Everyone knows, and this minister should too, because in her research papers from the last minister the evidence has been clearly outlined that, in fact, not-for-profit child care not only comes at a better quality but is much more affordable. Why is the minister not taking action to stop big-box commercial daycare corporations from operating in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One of the very first meetings I had as a new minister was with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. I listened to their concerns, and my message to them is the same as the message I have for the member opposite: We will not compromise on quality standards that we set for our child care centres. All child care operators that come to Ontario, no matter where they come from or whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit, must be prepared to meet our standards if they wish to do—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The coalition asked for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton Centre will come to order. You just ask the question—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For-profit and not-for-profit has remained relatively unchanged in this province throughout our expansion. Close to 80% of the licensed child care spaces in Ontario are not-for-profit.

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: My question is for the Minister of Health. This question is of particular interest to me not only on behalf of my constituents, as MPP for the great riding of Etobicoke North, but also as a physician with an abiding interest in the health care sector. Yesterday, media began to report that there is a continent-wide shortage of radioisotopes that are required for various diagnostic procedures. Would the Minister of Health be able to tell this House what the government is actually doing to address this shortage and the impact on patients?

Hon. George Smitherman: The challenges from Chalk River really have had global implications, and of course we're taking all steps with a view towards doing the very best for our patients in the circumstances. Provincial leadership on this is being exerted by Dr. Bob

Bell, the CEO of the University Health Network which, of course, includes Princess Margaret Hospital and Cancer Care Ontario. The efforts of those groups is to ensure that cases are prioritized appropriately across the province of Ontario, and there are protocols that are established for this. Cancer Care Ontario is writing to make sure that everybody is again familiarized with them as we seek to use the resources that we have available to prioritize those.

Earlier today I had a conversation with the federal minister, Tony Clement. His efforts are focused on the shorthand of identifying alternate supply, as there are some opportunities to replace the isotopes which are now in short supply, and getting Chalk River back on line as soon as possible. We'll continue to work with all players to try and enhance the circumstances for our patients.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I appreciate that information from the minister. As you know, many Ontarians have heard reports in the media that the shortage will have an impact on magnetic resonance imaging, or MRIs, and on computed tomography, or CT, wait times as doctors refer these patients and seek alternatives. Would the minister be able to tell this House how the government will deal with any potential impact on MRI and CT scanning wait times?

Hon. George Smitherman: In difficult circumstances everyone is called upon to be as resourceful as possible. If that means that an MRI or a CT can play a role that is alternate, then we'll look for all opportunity to be able to do that. Over the last number of years we've enhanced access to MRI and CT by more than 100%. So indeed, there is much more capacity deployed today in the province of Ontario.

If it does come to additional capacity being required, we'll work with all health care providers to enhance the MRI and CT capacity that might be available, but always within a context which seeks to prioritize the circumstances, to make sure that the resources that are available are made most available to the patients with the greatest need. We thank, especially in these times, our clinicians who have to make those challenging decisions on the front line, always with their patients in mind.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. The people of rural Ontario and our economy are suffering attack after attack from the McGuinty government. Excessive and costly regulations, red tape and disrespect for democracy have become the stock-in-trade of your government. From mills to markets to mines, the people of my riding and of rural Ontario are suffering at the hands of your government.

Premier, your legislation allows prospectors and government agents to trespass on and destroy private property. Your ministers dismissed the unanimous will of our local communities. Your legislation deprives people of due process. The people in this gallery and myself ask you, will you end this injustice? Will you show respect

for the people of rural Ontario? And will you move to protect their properties and their livelihoods by entrenching property rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say first of all that I welcome the member, congratulate him upon his election and offer him my very best wishes as he assumes his responsibilities. I think it will quickly become apparent that we have a significantly different perspective on the province, on our values and on our responsibilities. I happen to believe this is the greatest province in the best country in the world, and I start with that as my foundation.

The member champions an anti-government movement. I'll speak for a moment just in my capacity as an Ontario citizen. I count on my government to build, staff and maintain my schools so my kids can go there because I can't do that on my own. I count on my government to build, staff and maintain hospitals because my family can't do that on its own. I count on my government to protect our air and protect our water because I can't do that on my own. I count on my government to strengthen this economy because I can't do this on my own. I believe in government.

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Mr. Randy Hillier: I ask the Premier to read pages five and six of his throne speech, where you state that you have a plan for jobs, "good, high-paying jobs" that "put food on our ... tables."

Now, look around at the Liberal reality; look to the galleries and look into the faces of rural Ontario, and there you will see: Earl Saar, who lost his sawmill to the MOE; Gary Nicols, who is losing his business to the MNR; Bob Mackie, whose archery business was targeted by the NAC; Dave Honey, a juice grape farmer, squeezed out while OMAFRA watches; Bert Weery, who is fighting to keep his farm from the hands of the Attorney General; and Mr. Arnold Geisburger, whose crime was to cut firewood.

Will you make your throne speech meaningful by entrenching property rights in this House?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just cannot share such a negative perspective, embraced by a man who is so young to be so negative.

We have continued to work hand in hand with all Ontarians, including those who are blessed with the privilege of living in beautiful rural Ontario. We have worked hand in hand to improve the quality of their schools, hand in hand to improve the quality of their health care. These are things, people, of universal interest to all Ontarians. We worked hand in hand to strengthen their economy, for example, with our RED program. We worked hand in hand as well to protect the quality of the environment. We have learned a lot from Ontario farmers in particular. Apart from our First Nations, they are the original stewards of our land.

My pledge to rural Ontarians is that we will continue to work with them, hand in hand, to not only maintain but to enhance the special quality of life that is only to be found in rural Ontario.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. On Tuesday, the Premier admitted that the Mining Act of Ontario is flawed, regressive legislation and that it needs fixing. He admitted that First Nations have not been properly consulted and accommodated by the McGuinty government before it gave mining exploration permits to mining companies.

Given that the Premier now admits that constitutionally required consultation and accommodation of First Nations has not happened under the Mining Act, does the Premier agree that Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation should be financially compensated by the McGuinty government for a mining exploration permit that was given under a flawed and regressive Mining Act that needs to be fixed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Broadly speaking, I say to the leader of the third party, the government of Ontario is in discussions and will be entering into discussions about its ongoing duty to consult First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in the province of Ontario.

With respect to the Mining Act, there obviously is going to be consultation and co-operation that takes place with respect to a look at the Mining Act, which the Premier already referred to. I've had discussions with Grand Chief Toulouse. I've had discussions with a number of grand chiefs and a number of chiefs with respect to how that's going to proceed, and they're very interested in that, because we do need to have greater certainty in that regard.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully; I did not find an answer to the question.

The Premier admits that the Mining Act that you have been granting mining exploration permits under is flawed, regressive legislation that needs fixing. Yet the McGuinty government gave a mining exploration permit to Platinex, and the judge who was involved in the court case said that there was not adequate consultation, that the government of Ontario did not meet its constitutional duty, and yet Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, which is an impoverished community, was forced to go to court. They didn't start the court action; they were forced to go to court to try to defend their rights, something which has cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars which they do not have.

If the Premier admits that the act under which this permit was given is flawed and regressive legislation that needs to be fixed, then doesn't it stand to reason that you should be compensating the First Nation that had to go to court because of your mistake?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I know the member knows that the government has already committed to supporting reasonable consultation costs to the First Nation, up to \$150,000. In fact, there have been discussions and that funding has been provided so that in fact they can retain whom they wish to get that advice.

More broadly speaking, the government of Ontario, the McGuinty government, is committed to resolving these issues without having these disputes and disagreements on particular consultations and particular exploration go to court. I'm in agreement with the leader of the third party if he says that we need to be resolving these things not by injunction but rather by discussion. And that is exactly what we are doing and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

LAKE SIMCOE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Lake Simcoe is the heart and soul of many communities. Over 325,000 Ontarians live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, including many from the northern part of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. These people depend on the life of the lake for the health and well-being of the communities. Thousands more spend their vacations with their loved ones at cottages on Simcoe's shores. Six communities rely on Lake Simcoe as a source of drinking water. Simcoe is the largest inland coldwater lake in the province. It lies in a significant agricultural area and important tourist destination. But there are pressures threatening Lake Simcoe. Phosphorous inputs into the lake have a serious impact on aquatic life and the overall quality of the lake. Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy Lake Simcoe for years to come?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member very much for her question and congratulate her on her election. I know that she will do a great job for the residents of her riding.

This government is committed to creating a stronger protection for Lake Simcoe, as outlined by the Premier this summer in one of our platform commitments. We are taking action now to address phosphorous from all sources that enter into the lake. We are proposing strict interim limits on municipal and industrial sewage discharges and stronger requirements for storm management facilities.

We're going to invest in research and provide supporting information on reduced phosphorous discharged from both urban and agricultural as well as other sources. This investment will also help promote awareness of what people can do around their homes and workplaces to reduce their phosphorous footprint on Lake Simcoe.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is great news that our government is acting now to protect the lake. The people and communities around Lake Simcoe know that we must begin living in harmony with the lake and work toward sustainable communities in order to protect it for generations to come. What is our government doing to work toward a long-term plan to protect Lake Simcoe?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we're going to draw on the experts from all communities around the lake, including farmers, business, environmentalists, scientists, First Nations, citizens groups and, of course,

the local conservation authority. We will build on the science and work that's already been done by many individuals, including the province, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, municipalities and the communities. We're going to set up a science advisory committee to ensure that the legislation and long-term protection strategies are based on good, solid science.

We're also setting up a broad-based, multi-stakeholder advisory committee. We're obviously going to consult with the First Nations, with historical and current cultural, economic and social heritage links to Lake Simcoe, and we're going to release a discussion paper within the next couple of months and develop a broad public consultation plan to gather input from all the people who are interested in the health of Lake Simcoe. The lake simply has to be protected for future generations.

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PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

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

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

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

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 800,000 Ontarians are living with diabetes and only 10% of this number are people living with type 1 diabetes. Currently insulin pumps are only available to people living with type 1 diabetes and only until they are 18; diabetes is a lifelong disease. An insulin pump assists people in maintaining and controlling blood sugar levels in order to reduce the number of acute complications and the severity of chronic complications

caused by inadequately managed diabetes. An insulin pump is \$5,000 plus \$150 per year for the disposable supplies for persons who are not covered or under 18 years of age. Canadian research indicates that, for every dollar invested in helping Ontarians manage their diabetes appropriately, the government would save \$4 when not having to treat the serious diabetes complications that can develop for inadequately managed diabetes.

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

"Be it resolved that insulin pump coverage should be available for all Ontarians living with diabetes, as the insulin pump improves both blood sugar management and quality of life for persons living with diabetes."

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

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

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

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

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

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with this petition, and I have signed it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition here provided by members of the Step It Up! Campaign: Shanique Linton, Maylee Pettiford, Carol McFarlene, Tanya Taylor, Shenel Smith, Cadean Lewis, Zaman Afm and Alexandra Turnbull. They are petitioning to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, a group of concerned citizens, demand the production of more affordable housing (geared to income) units to accommodate our rapidly growing population and most importantly decrease the waiting time specifically for abused women and their children who are first priority as per the Ontario housing act.

“These women and their children have lived through abuse not only in the physical sense, but also emotionally, mentally, psychologically and financially, crushing their spirits and leaving scars that never fully heal. Many of the women and their families who survived abuse are forced to return to their unsafe living conditions. The cost of living is continuously rising and the women cannot afford to live independently in a market rental unit and the waiting time for an adequate and affording housing unit is much too long.

“Again, we demand that this issue be addressed in order to help and allow abused women and their families live a life that is free from violence by making their transition from shelters to homes as smoothly and as expeditiously as possible so that they may truly begin to heal;

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

“To create more affordable (geared to income) housing units which will decrease the waiting time for women and their children escaping abusive and potentially life-threatening situations.”

I agree with this, I have signed it and send it to the table by way of page Chris.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I still receive petitions from Consumer Federation Canada. It has to do with the crime of identity theft and it's addressed to the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

“Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

“Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

“(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN numbers and credit card numbers.

“(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

“(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reason.

“(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate.”

Mr. Speaker, since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it and send it to you.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

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

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised to make the needs of students a priority for his government and that students deserve to have a bright future with a good education; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised not to give up on students or Ontario's public school system;

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

“That the provincial government work with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board to establish an evening bus route from St. Joan of Arc High School in Barrie to the outlying communities. This would allow students to participate in extracurricular activities and help them to fulfill their potential, secure a bright future and receive the best educational experience possible, as promised to them by the Premier.”

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

“Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams.”

I'm delighted to sign this petition, and I'm sending it through page Chris.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

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

“Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

“Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

“Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

“Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

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

“That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul’s ... school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul’s can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve.”

As I said before, my mother taught in this school for over 33 years and I attended this school from kindergarten to grade 8. I certainly agree and will sign this petition.

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HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson: I’ve got a bit of a backlog, Mr. Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

“Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

“Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe–Grey.”

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Are there any further petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing February 1, 2008, and ending July 31, 2008.

Payments for the period from February 1, 2008, to March 31, 2008, to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply for the 2007-08 fiscal year, and payments for the period from April 1, 2008, to July 31, 2008, to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 11. Debate?

The member for Durham—no, excuse me, Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It’s always good to know where you’re from. Thank you.

I’m a little surprised that the government doesn’t want to lead off the debate on this. Of course, given the potential financial crises that this province is under, I can understand them avoiding any comment on the subject. The most recent disaster to hit the government is their loss of a quarter of a billion dollars of taxpayers’ money, a quarter of a billion—that’s with a “B”—down the drain, gone, because this government tried to get a little extra interest.

I can remember back in the 1970s when a trust company was going bankrupt and the holders, the members of that trust company came to the Ontario government and said, “You should pay us because this trust company went bankrupt.” The trust company was paying about one per cent more interest than other trust companies were. Well, that one per cent of interest that they were paying in other trust companies went to pay for insurance against exactly such an eventuality. Those companies went bankrupt; the people lost their money, which was very sad, and the Ontario government has done exactly the same thing in this case. They have tried to get a little extra return because they’ve been putting Ontario taxpayers’ dollars at risk through asset-backed paper. That has caused the loss of a quarter of a million dollars to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Now the spin doctors are hard at work on this issue. The spin doctors are saying, “We didn’t really lose a quarter billion dollars. We really replaced that money with something else.” The fact of the matter, the bottom line, how people will come to understand this issue, is that if you had \$1,000 and you lost \$250 but gained \$250 someplace else, you’ve still lost the \$250. It’s still gone. If you hadn’t lost that money, you would’ve had lots more money, but that money is gone. The taxpayers of Ontario lost that money and it’s a shame that high-risk investments like that are being taken on by this government.

Other governments before them have invested in these vehicles, that’s true, but at a time when there wasn’t high risk involved in the marketplace. That high risk is a thing that has come to pass in the last few years, and a prudent government would have gotten out of those investment vehicles when the high risk of those elements began to show themselves in the marketplace. That’s too bad, because a quarter of a billion dollars is a lot of money. It’s a lot of money in anybody’s vocabulary, and this government should be held accountable for that.

They should bring in the auditor on this issue. They should do a review on this issue. They should find out why they lost that money. They should find out why the investment people didn't get out of these kinds of investments when they had a chance to. And they should do a due diligence as to their fiduciary responsibilities in the area of looking after someone else's money. I always think that it's easy to look after your own money; the real responsibility comes when are you looking after somebody else's money, and that should never be ignored.

But it's somewhat typical of the government because they don't really have great planning going forward. For instance, Dalton McGuinty was down in Windsor the other day talking to the mayor. There are huge problems in Windsor; it's one of the hardest hit cities in Ontario. They have lost a huge number of jobs and there is no plan for the local economy, there is no plan going forward to enhance the border crossing area there. The people on the other side of the border in Michigan and the city of Detroit are trying to go ahead with a private sector expansion to the bridge so that we can move trucks across that bridge. It's a billion dollars a day in export trade. It is a huge bonus to Ontario's economy, and yet Ontario is dragging its feet. There was no mention of it in the throne speech. There was no mention of it by this government. We're not going ahead with this area.

We've all heard the stories of the 12 stoplights between Toronto and Miami or Toronto and Dallas, Texas: There are 12 stoplights and they're all in Windsor. It's a shame that a country and a province that depend on export markets and export trade to the degree that Ontario does still have this roadblock going through the middle of Windsor, which doesn't enhance the city of Windsor either. It is a detrimental effect with all of those trucks going through downtown Windsor in what looks like a constant line of trucks going down the main street.

The policies of this government of high taxes and really excessive regulation—in almost every area of industry you see excessive regulation that holds back manufacturers, holds back businesses and seems to say to them that you really don't want them in business here. Just the other day I was speaking to a manufacturer who was talking about moving a large stamping machine. Well, once you move a large stamping machine—the regulation came in about a year and a half ago—you have to rewrite the book on how to operate that machine, and you have to do it in just the right way that the Workers' Compensation Board wants you to do it. You can have that done by an outside group and it will cost you about \$10,000.

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That's like saying to a manufacturer who is going to move his stamping mill, "Listen, we really don't want you in business here, because here is \$10,000 you have to spend just because are you moving a machine from one side of your shop to another side of your shop, because the flow pattern within your business is changing." That manufacturer was in the process of revamping all his companies. He's in the business of stamping out shelving

for retail stores. That shelving, in a year and a half or two years from now, is going to be coming from China. It's the kind of thing that the Chinese do extremely well and they do extremely cheaply. It's too bad we will lose that plant or that production simply because he keeps getting messages with higher and higher taxes, more and more regulations that "We don't really want you in this province. You're not where we want to be. You're not where we want to go." If you send that message to manufacturers time after time after time, they get the message. If we look at that message, if we look at how that message has been received—and I could read pages and pages of them. If there's any doubt as to what has been happening in Ontario, just in the month of November where I think it was 2,400 more manufacturing jobs that disappeared in the province, whether it be the GenFast company in Brantford, whether it be Beta Brands in London, whether it be Collins and Aikman in Ganoque, whether it be the Collins and Aikman plant in Toronto, Accuride in London, Weyerhaeuser in Kenora, and it goes on and on. It goes on and on and on, month after month, year after year, and we're being told that these job losses are going to be increasing.

Now, the government talks about their job creation record. The Liberals tell us that under their tutelage, the economy of Ontario has increased the number of jobs in Ontario by 422,800. That's in the period from October 2003 to October 2007. They take great credit for this. Over half of those jobs have been created in the public sector. The taxpayers of Ontario are paying the salaries of over half those jobs created. Now, in comparison to what might be expected under a government that was friendly to industry, friendly to manufacturers, friendly to people who are out there putting their money on the line and taking risks with it, from June 1995 to June 1999, the same period of time and during the first four years of the Harris mandate, there was a total of 536,600 jobs created: over 110,000 more jobs in our first four years of mandate than in your first four years of mandate.

But one of the telling statistics in those job creations was that during our first four years of mandate, we created 156,600 new manufacturing jobs. This government in their first mandate saw 130,500 manufacturing jobs flee this province because they weren't in a friendly environment. They weren't in an environment that said, "We want you. We like you. We need you." Those jobs are gone. You probably realize that when a job goes, it's far more difficult to get it back than it was to get that job originally. When a company leaves Ontario, they leave with a bad taste in their mouth. And those stories go around the world, that Ontario is not the friendly place that it once was. That affects jobs. That affects people who work in Welland; it affects people who work in plants in Thorold and around the country. It affects people who work in Windsor. It has affected Windsor perhaps more than any other city in the province.

What has this government done? You know, originally, last year, the Premier talked about this being a small contraction in our job market. Well, apparently the small contraction has finally blossomed into a problem, as Mr.

McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, has now appointed the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane to exam the demise of the manufacturing industry in Ontario. Apparently, he recognizes this as more than a small contraction. Apparently, he now recognizes it as a real problem: 175,000 families in Ontario who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector. Each one of them could tell him this was a problem, and they could have told him it was a problem a long time ago. But now he has appointed Mr. Ramsay to this job of having a look at the problem that we are facing in the manufacturing industry, and he says that Mr. Ramsay is extremely well suited because of his work as Minister of Natural Resources in dealing with industry in the north that is under pressure.

Well, under Mr. Ramsay's tutelage in the Ministry of Natural Resources, 14 different sawmills closed. A record number in Ontario have closed under the tutelage of that minister. In his term of office as minister 48 pulp and paper mills have closed or temporarily shut down. A huge percentage of the capacity of our industry has been decimated.

This minister, as a reward for his activity as Minister of Natural Resources, has now been put in charge of looking at the manufacturing industry. As I said earlier this week, I have great fear and trepidation for the future of this industry. I think it's in a lot of trouble. I don't think that this government is taking any action at all, or doing the right things to get to take that action, in the foreseeable future.

So I leave the comments to other members of our caucus, I'm sure, who will pick this up.

Hon. David Caplan: More?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes, there will be more jobs gone. There will be more jobs lost and gone from a government that believes in high taxes, high regulation and an uncompetitive marketplace. That's what the problem is in this issue and that's where you have failed. You failed in the last term, and you will fail in this term, because you don't understand the problem, you don't know what manufacturers need. You should be ashamed of yourself for trying to smooth over these huge problems that you're completely ignoring.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've got to say, it's a pleasure to be back. I miss this chamber when we're not sitting and when the House is not operating. I almost said "functioning," but far be it from me to go that far. It's exciting. Here we are. This is a new Parliament. There's new faces, many old faces—that is to say, not old, but people who are returning.

I, for one, am very proud of the two additions to the New Democratic Party caucus. Paul Miller—I'm sorry, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek—today showed himself to be everything that the voters wanted in a representative, in a member. That's terrific. The member for Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, is I think a very important complement, addition, to not just the NDP caucus here, but to this Parliament.

You should know Welland, the city of Welland. Now, there's the riding of Welland, which includes south

St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne and the historic lakeside community of the township of Wainfleet. But the city of Welland, in fact, has two representatives in the provincial Legislature. I, of course, am proud to have been an MPP representing that community amongst others for a few years now, but I was pleased—not that we didn't hope for our own partisan success in that riding—to see that Sophia Aggelonitis has joined us from Hamilton Mountain.

Why I say that is because, you see, she's the second Welland representative. She grew up in Welland; she's a Wellander at heart. When you see some of the things that she's going to do in the next four years, and listen to some of the things she's going to say, I think you'll be able to tell that. I say that in a most complimentary way.

Her folks, Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis, run the Fireside Restaurant down on Southworth St., down towards Ontario Road. It's been there for decades. These are hard-working people, incredibly hard-working people. Sunday morning breakfast at the Fireside is packed. It's line-up time—it is. It's a breakfast with real potatoes and real bacon served with a friendly, generous spirit. But as well, don't miss lunch and dinner throughout the rest of the week.

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I remember back to lawyering days, because the lawyers and judges tend, at least in smaller-town Ontario—I suspect in big cities like Toronto, too—to find little hangouts. For years, it was the Reeta Hotel on East Main Street, until that got torn down. The Fireside was one of those places where you'd run into more than a few lawyers and judges during the course of the week having lunch or either Saturday or Sunday morning breakfast. I just want to say that Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis, I'm sure, are extremely proud, as they should be, and I'm looking forward to the chance to see them and acknowledge them here in this Legislature when they come to see their daughter do what she is going to be doing as a member of this Legislative Assembly.

There have been tough times for Ontarians, haven't they? Tough times, mean times, hard times, vicious times. We're rapidly reaching the 200,000 mark in terms of good manufacturing and resource sector jobs lost. Whether it's the white goods, the appliance industry in Hamilton which has been devastated—it's disappeared; it's not there anymore; it's gone. The last washing machine, last freezer was built there a couple of years ago now, and it's not coming back. Or if it's the electronics industry, which at one point was so prevalent here in the province. I remember as a kid the Sylvania tube factory down in Dunnville, right on the main drag of Dunnville, Sylvania CRT—cathode ray tubes—back in the 1950s, for the very earliest of televisions. That industry is gone.

Down where I come from, the forge and foundry industry employed a whole lot of people, hard-working people—because you have to work hard if you're working in the forge or foundry industry. You know that, don't you? And you do it at great risk, sometimes. I don't

say it lightly. You walk around town and you get some signals as to who worked in the forge and the foundry; they're the fellas with a digit or two missing. Even today, in a climate where one presumes that the technology for creating safe use of dangerous machinery is as well-developed as it could possibly be, there are still tragic injuries imposed upon workers and deaths.

The industry is rapidly disappearing. As a matter of fact, Howard Hampton is joining me tomorrow down in Port Colborne at the Port Colborne Drop Forge picket line, where those steelworkers have been forced on strike, forced on strike, forced on strike because the company is demanding that they relinquish their pension plans. Management is calling upon these hard-working folks to surrender their defined benefit pensions and to somehow join the ranks of the 401K-ers from the United States of America with a self-financed pension plan.

A self-financed pension plan works real good if you're a 401K-er and you're making \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000 a year. It's not hard to finance your own pension, is it? It's not hard for the Four Seasons set, the Yorkville set, the BMW, the Mercedes set to build their own pension plans, self-finance them to create private pension plans. It's not hard at all when \$10,000, \$20,000 dollars is but pocket change. You blow that on a weekend at the resort.

I know these folks at the Port Colborne Drop Forge are working at hard, dangerous jobs. These are important jobs, incredibly important jobs, because they're value-added manufacturing jobs, wealth-creation jobs. With all due respect to the casino industry, casinos don't create wealth; they don't add value. They separate people from their wealth; they redistribute it. They don't create wealth. With all due respect to the service sector, in large part, it's not wealth creation, it's wealth redistribution.

Tourism—and again, I know people down where I come from, down where my colleague from Hamilton Mountain grew up. The tourist industry is increasingly important for people who have lost their jobs in the industrial sector. But you don't create wealth, you don't add value in the tourist industry. Inevitably, workers down in Niagara, like they are across the province, are being forced into lower- and lower-wage economies. They're going to be joining those workers at the Port Colborne Drop Forge. They're Steelworkers, members of the United Steelworkers of America. This is a novel experience for them, to be on a picket line. For decades, there was never any need for one. But you've never had management calling upon hard-working workers to forfeit their pension rates, their dental benefits, those very fundamental things.

You see, nobody ever gave workers nothing. Everything that workers have acquired in this province, across this country, throughout the western world has been the result of their struggle—an often bloody struggle, an often deadly struggle. Huge costs have been paid by generations of workers. Everything that workers have acquired—be it pensions, be it benefits, be it enhanced workplace safety, be it some prospect of retiring with

some dignity—was won by workers in their struggle on the ground and at huge costs to those workers.

We don't need governments like the Liberals here in Ontario, with a Premier who wrings his hands and says, "I feel their pain," when he is confronted with the reality of hundreds of thousands of workers being driven from their jobs. We need a Premier who is prepared to understand the crisis that exists in this province and is prepared to promote, advance and pass legislation that protects those workers, not further punishes them. That's why we were proud to support Bill 6 this morning, as did the rest of the Legislative Assembly. There was unanimous support for Bill 6 today. That's what the vote record is: unanimous support for Bill 6, Paul Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

That, in and of itself, is a good thing. But, you see, it's no longer a private member's bill. Once a bill passes second reading, it effectively becomes, for all intents and purposes, a government bill. In other words, the government controls its destiny. Mr. Miller, the member who's the sponsor and author of the bill, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, has no power whatsoever to advance that bill any further, none whatsoever. It's entirely in the Premier's office's hands. It's just like the fate of so many government backbenchers: It's entirely in the hands of the Premier. Merit has nothing to do with it. There are government backbenchers here who have impressed me, impressed their constituents and impressed the general public with skill and talent. Some have demonstrated outstanding speaking ability in the Legislature. But though they've won the hearts and minds of their electorate and of the huge public that watches them on their television sets, somehow they haven't won the favour of the Premier's office—not because they've done anything wrong, by God. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville was as faithful, obedient and capable a backbench servant as any government could have. What is his reward? Oblivion.

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One looks somewhere way up in the back, way in the back, there. I think that's him—he's a good man—way in the back, while others of far less talent—in his view, I'm sure—are in cabinet. Is there justice? I supposed not. But after all, we're talking about the Premier's office. We're not talking about the good judgment of a critical mass of people; we're talking about the Premier's office. We're not talking about a meritocracy; we're talking about the Premier's office.

And just as the fate of so many Liberal backbenchers is in the hands of those in the Premier's office, the fate of good legislation like Bill 6 is in the hands of the Premier's office. Will the Premier's office nurture that legislation? Will it nurture that policy? Will it cultivate it and help it to become a reality, so that workers in this province have some comfort from the devastation of a company that shuts down and then runs away or shuts down with no assets? Will the Premier let that policy blossom? No. He'll crush it and deny workers in this province the modest comfort they would receive from an employee wage protection plan.

Are there government members who are dismissive of the proposal because, oh well, there are new jobs, there's a new economy? Let me tell you this, my friends: When you're 50 or 55 years old—about the same age as more than a few people here—and you chose an industrial workplace career, you may not have gotten your grade 13 or even your grade 12, because back in the days when you started your working life, grade 10 was considered an acceptable academic background. It doesn't mean you're not bright; it doesn't mean you're not talented; it doesn't mean you're not skilled; it doesn't mean you don't have a lot of potential. But when you've got grade 10 and you've been working in a mill all your life as part of the labour pool and you lose your job, the slide from a high-wage working middle-class lifestyle to the despair of poverty can be very rapid and steep.

If you're eligible for EI—and, Lord knows, fewer and fewer people are in this province because Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin raided the EI fund—that'll expire in no more than a year's time. You'll use up some modest savings. If you have some equity in the house, because, after all, at that age you've been financing a kid's, or two or three kids', college or university education, and more than a few working people have mortgaged the house once again even though it had all been paid off—I'm not talking about Rosedale mansions; I'm not talking about big monster homes down along the Lake Ontario shore in Mimico where members of Parliament want to build four-storey garages for their homeless Porsches; I'm not talking about those places with the big three-storey columns like those antebellum homes down in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. I'm talking about little Insulbrick houses, little two- or two-and-a-half bedrooms—1,000 square feet on a good day, and many times even less; a wartime house in Welland, 653 square feet. Do you know how many families with four, five and six kids grew up in a 653-square-foot house? It's remarkable, but it's true—hard, hard, hard-working people.

So if you have any equity left, you borrow against the house to carry you through some hard, hard times. You look for work and you look for work and you look for work. You see, the problem is that the low-wage jobs—the retail-sector jobs and the tourist jobs—that used to be available to students aren't there for students anymore, because students are competing with their parents for those same jobs. You know that, don't you?

If you're a tradesperson—a machinist or a millwright; I was just telling somebody earlier today that in the industrial shutdowns down Niagara way, whether it's Ferranti-Packard up in the St. Catharines riding or E.G. Marsh down in what used to be Mr. Hudak's riding, now mine, or Atlas Steels, Union Carbide, Shaw Pipe—heck, the big frame factory, Hayes Dana Thorold. If you're a tradesperson making a good wage, working hard for it and earning what you deserve after a whole lot of years of experience acquiring a whole lot of skill and a whole lot of hands-on ability, making \$25 or maybe \$30 an hour, and you head up the industrial strip along the QEW south of Lake Erie, that same person is bidding for jobs at \$12, \$13, \$14, \$15 an hour.

It's a dramatic change in lifestyle, friends. Those kids you were helping to support while they were attending college and university? The support is over. Those mortgage payments aren't being made. Needless to say, you aren't buying cars, you aren't buying washing machines, you aren't buying snowmobiles and you aren't buying television sets. Pretty soon you lose your home, and then you compete in a relatively unregulated rental market for an apartment. Before you know it, you're behind on your rent and relatives have lent you everything they can lend you, and before you know it, there's simply nothing left.

The social cost is tremendous. Marriages break down. Kids are literally forced out of their home before their time because they know the pressure that's on the family. Incidence of drug abuse and alcoholism escalates. It is a very desperate Ontario out there that has received no acknowledgement, never mind support, from the McGuinty Liberals—Niagara and Hamilton.

If you travel west along the 401, the Siemens plant is gone. Do you remember it? How many of us have driven past it—it seems like a million times—the big Siemens plant? The auto parts sector: gone, over, finished. Keep going further west toward Windsor—I know my colleagues in Windsor understand the despair in those auto communities. You've got the St. Thomas Ford plant at risk—another big whack of employees. These folks, the St. Thomas Ford workers, are spread out over a huge geographic area. You've got auto assembly lines of all the Big Three at risk everywhere you go in the province of Ontario. And there is a ripple effect. Just as one understands that for every auto job there are four, five, six or seven other jobs, every time you lose an auto job, you lose four, five, six or seven other jobs. That's the reality of it.

The minimum wage here at Queen's Park is six-digit—it is—and that paycheque comes whether you show up or not; that paycheque comes whether you're late or on time; that paycheque comes whether you're paying attention or you're not paying attention. It does. In how many jobs in the world can you roll over and tell your bed partner—I'm going to be so politically correct—"Honey, call in and have them cancel my 9 o'clock appointment, because I don't feel like going to the office for 9 this morning. Tell them I'm meeting with the Premier or something; that will impress them"? It will; it will dazzle them, right? In how many jobs in the world can you roll over and say, "Honey, call the office and tell them I won't be in for 9 o'clock," or "Honey, tell them to cancel my appointments today. Tell them I had to do an emergency trip to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister, because I'm oh, so important"? No steelworker was ever able to tell his or her spouse or bed partner that; no bricklayer, no carpenter, no pipe maker, no farmer. It's one in the few jobs in the world you can do that in, here at Queen's Park—minimum wage, six digits.

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New Democrats are absolutely committed to holding this government to account and to pursuing an agenda that's going to save the jobs that are left and restore the

jobs that are gone, and pursuing an agenda that's going to provide comfort and support for working women and men rather than putting them under the gun, because the workers of this province deserve no less. I'm looking forward to being a part of that. Thank you kindly.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to speak on interim supply tonight and happy to rise in this House. Congratulations, sir, to you on your elevation to that esteemed Chair.

I will speak about interim supply and a bit about our government's record. I do want to take the chance to address the comments made by, I think, the member from Halton and the member from Welland and try to respond to a little bit about what they said and put it into—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, things in Windsor—there's a prominent Conservative there who set up a website that's calling for a leadership review in the Conservative Party. Mr. Kouvalis, I think his name is. He has mentioned a number of potential leadership candidates. I see by the absence of many Tories that a number of them are out campaigning, or perhaps trying to support their leader, or perhaps trying to undo the damage they did with their commitment on private schools. I know Mr. Klees was a big supporter of that. He must have been very disappointed. I know that the party is doing a lot of internal searching. I congratulate those members of the Conservative Party in Windsor, all four of them, who are leading the charge. So yes, I would like to speak a little bit about Windsor tonight.

To the member from Welland, who speaks so eloquently and passionately about the working men and women of this province: I'm proud the CAW supported our party in the last election, the union that represents most of the workers you referred to. I am proud that the building trades supported this party and not your party in the most recent election. I am proud that the firefighters and many other working men and women supported this party. I am proud that in the great labour centres of this province—Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, to name but a few—the people of those great communities returned Liberals because they reject your rhetoric. They know that you talk a good game but forget to remind those people that this member was a member of a government that opened up and stripped collective agreements. He would prefer not to think about that and he would prefer not to talk about the 1,300 people a month who lost their jobs when he was part of a government. He doesn't want to speak about that.

So I'm glad to have had the opportunity, at least briefly, to address some of their concerns. What I would like to talk more about is some of the government's agenda, some of what we've achieved, some of what we've outlined in our speech from the throne and how we intend to make sure that the people of this province—all the people of this province—see the benefit of the growth that we have experienced overall, recognizing the real

challenges facing so many sectors of our economy, particularly manufacturing, forestry, agriculture and tourism. It is absolutely essential that all of us work together to make sure that every Ontarian shares in the bounty that is this great province. The Premier often says that when we are rowing together, when we are working together, we can move forward. So it's important to pass this motion.

Let me just talk about some of the technical aspects of it for those listening. This motion allows the government to spend money. It allows us to pay public servants. It allows us to fund nursing homes, universities and our municipalities. It allows us to meet our obligations. It's a cornerstone of how our parliamentary democracy works. It's rooted in a great British tradition that sees the expenditure of all money accountable to the Legislative Assembly, or the Parliament as the case would be in a national government. So this is an important afternoon, and I'm pleased to rise and speak about supply.

When I say it gives the government the ability to spend money, it gives the government the ability to meet its obligations, to meet its mandate and to affirm its commitments to the people. Let's talk about where we were some four years ago, where we are and where we hope to be over the next four years, given the great privilege, as the Premier always says, that the people of this province have bestowed upon those of us on this side to govern, upon all of us to serve in this great institution.

When we came to office in 2003, there was a \$5.5-billion deficit. That was in spite of the fact that the previous government, the Conservative government, the Tory government, had said we had a balanced budget. They said that; they advertised it.

Hon. David Caplan: At Magna.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me: They delivered that budget at Magna. They didn't even come into the House as we are here today to face the Legislature—complete contempt of the Legislature. I see two of the three members opposite were there, voted for that budget, voted for the \$5.5 billion and then tried to pretend through the election—but the people of Ontario saw through that. They saw through the kind of empty rhetoric we heard earlier when we talk about the economy.

There are challenges, and I am proud of some of our government's initiatives to address the challenges. I'm also proud of the fact that in many ways our economy is performing well, and that's what makes it such a difficult issue to grapple with. That's probably why the federal Conservative government has done nothing for our manufacturing sector. They gave broad-based corporate tax cuts again. Well, if you're not making money, you're not paying taxes, so you're not going to benefit. Yet they refuse to participate, for instance, in the \$500-million automotive strategy that levered \$7 billion in new investment in this province.

The member from Welland, who was rejected by the CAW, who was rejected by so many organized labour groups—his opinions and views on the economy were

rejected and his party's views were rejected by the people of Ontario—did cite those cases where people have lost their jobs. That is something that all of us take very seriously, but we also have to remember investments by companies like Toyota, upgrades where we now have had \$7 billion in new investment in Ontario in the various product lines at all of the Big Three right across the province.

Where would we have been if we didn't have that fund? Where would we have been? I'll remind members of the House and the public listening in, that the member from Welland–Thorold voted against it. He voted against assistance to automotive assemblers, the original equipment manufacturers. He voted against assistance for parts plants. The very ones he talks about closing, he voted against providing assistance to those plants. He voted against the employment and retraining initiatives that were contained in our 2006 and 2007 budgets. He voted against that.

You know what's really troubling? Do you know that an unemployed worker in Windsor today has to work more hours than an unemployed worker in Fort McMurray, Alberta, to qualify for employment insurance? Not once has that member from Welland–Thorold talked about that. We certainly haven't heard from the Conservatives on that. We haven't heard from them.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You should have made that speech a month ago, Dwight.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did make that speech, I say to you with respect, and that's why we're on this side of the House and you're on that side of the House. I'll say that the people of Ontario affirmed their commitment, and they believe that the Ontario Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty get it and represent their best interests, sir, and that's why we're here and you're over there.

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When we came to office, there were a number of deficits, over and above the financial deficit. We had a deficit in education. I think the figure was 25 million student days lost—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Twenty-six million.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Twenty-six million school days lost to strikes under the Conservative government; not one day lost under this government. I am proud of this government's investments in public schools and in publicly funded education. And we carry on. The Minister of Education yesterday introduced the trans fat bill. I only wish they had had that when I was in school. It's an important public health initiative and one that all of us should take very seriously. That record continues and will continue to grow.

On health care, 39 hospitals closed; no ability to measure wait times; no ability to account for the expenditure of hard-earned tax dollars. This government implemented those changes. This government has been investing in public health care. This government is protecting public health care. This government is building hospitals, hiring nurses, training more doctors and addressing the very real needs of the people of this province. I think that too

contributed to the re-election of this government and the choice of Dalton McGuinty to be Ontario's Premier for another four years.

And there's more to do. As long as one family is involuntarily out of work, we're not going to rest. We're going to make the kinds of investments that will keep our manufacturing sector competitive, that will help our forestry sector—\$1.1 billion to the forestry sector, I might add.

Some members of the House allege that we're not doing enough, we're not doing as much as other jurisdictions, that the losses here have been greater than anywhere else, and that's simply not the case. The value of the dollar has had a huge impact. We're very concerned about the state of the US economy. Some 86% of our exports go to the United States. That's an extremely important market. But let me tell the member opposite, who says it's always someone else, you know what? Growth in Ontario in the first two quarters exceeded the private sector estimates and that is because of someone else. That is because of the hard-working men and women and the business people who invest in this province and work hard, and that's why we've had the growth we've had, in spite of all the predictions. When you compare us to other jurisdictions of comparable economic makeup, where the resource and manufacturing sectors are as big a part of the entire economy as they are in Ontario, what you find is an economy that has proven remarkably resilient in the face of these very real challenges.

Some of the members opposite like to talk about Ontario's growth relative to other provinces and say, first of all, that it's the worst in Canada, which isn't true and, second of all, that it's all the fault of the province. They never go on to the paragraph after the number. It's not us saying the Canadian dollar, the price of oil and the state of the US economy; it's the economists in the private sector who are saying it. In fact, our credit agencies reaffirm their faith in the way Ontario manages its finances every year. So members of this House and the general public can have confidence as we move interim supply tonight that their money is prudently managed. They are invested properly in public health, public education and it's paying real dividends.

Interjection: The things that we need.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The things we need, the priorities that the people of this province have.

The people of Ontario rejected a private school funding model. They did; they rejected it clearly and unequivocally in the last election. The people of Windsor rejected that. Yes, I was delighted to hear the member opposite was in Windsor. It's unfortunate his leader never found his way there during the last election. It's unfortunate that their party voted against the assistance to our community, whether it was through the municipality, through Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, all of whom participated in the manufacturing incentives that we offered, or whether it was voting against the cut in the business education tax that's saving our employers \$540

million. They voted against that. They didn't come to town. It's nice that the member got there after the election, and, like I say, it's kind of interesting that that website that we've read so much about in recent times started up in Windsor.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about Volkswagen, the new investment—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's right: the Volkswagen van. That was assisted by the automotive fund as well.

There are challenges; there's no doubt. I saw it as I went door to door. I saw it in the faces of families, good people, hard-working people, people who are hurting. Our unemployment rate is the highest in the country right now—the highest.

But they voted for us, and they voted for us because they know that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have their interests at heart and have the right ideas to get us through this. We're going to stand up for Ontario. It's unfortunate that members opposite won't.

I think it was the member for Halton who talked about his visit to Windsor. If he'd listened carefully, he would have heard people saying, "Why is it that somebody in Windsor has to work a lot longer to qualify for employment insurance than somebody working in Fort McMurray, Alberta?" Why is that? It's not right. It's wrong.

Why is it that Ontario is not going to get a fair number of seats in the federal House? Why aren't you doing anything about that? Why aren't the federal Conservatives dealing with that?

Why would the federal Conservatives—I presume supported by their provincial brethren—want to increase the tax on electricity, increase the tax on natural gas, all the things that are essential to manufacturing?

The member's got a strange and quizzical look in her eye. The federal Conservatives want to harmonize the PST and GST. I heard Mr. Flaherty—and I presume that you support him. You're all Conservatives, after all. I know there are some divisions in that party these days, but I presume that you support him. He sat right here in this House with three of the four of you who are here today. I presume you support that. I presume you want to raise those taxes. I presume that's what you're going to do: support them in that.

I wish they'd come to the table on the automotive investment strategy and the manufacturing investment strategy, but they won't. They've said no. They give broad-based tax cuts to companies that are making money, but what about the companies that aren't making money? What about the companies that are marginal, that need that investment?

In 1981, Larry Grossman, a great member of this assembly, was part of a Conservative government that at the time supported a loan guarantee to Chrysler Corp., which operated in my community and operated in Brampton. They supported that. That loan guarantee was opposed by some, but they supported that, along with the then-federal government of the day and the government of the United States of the day, and that saved Chrysler

Corp. The loans were never taken out, the guarantee was repaid four years ahead of schedule, and there are still thousands of people working in that company today. That is an example of the sort of thing we wish the federal Conservatives in Ottawa would do. Just do what Progressive Conservatives like Larry Grossman and Bill Davis did the last time the auto sector saw such a huge downturn. Don't say no to Ontario.

I say to my friends opposite as we debate supply: Stand up for Ontario. Stand up for our ability to provide health care. Stand up for our ability to provide publicly funded education. Stand up. Stand up for fairness. We on this side of the House are proud Canadians, all of us, every one of us. It's good to see so many new Canadians on our benches, some elected for the first time and some have been here a little longer. I'm very proud of that, proud to be part of a party that would attract so many people of so many diverse backgrounds, not only to its party membership, but to seats in this Legislature. When I hear the accents in our caucus and when I speak to the parts of the world that these people come from, that really fills me with a lot of pride. Stand up for this province, which is such a great part of the country, because they may not understand on the Conservative benches, and they certainly don't understand it in Ottawa, but if Ontario's not strong, then Canada's not strong. A federal government in Ottawa ought to pay closer attention to our great province.

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I see my colleague the Minister of Energy sitting next to me. I want to speak for a couple of moments because part of supply is the Ministry of Energy, a portfolio that is particularly warm to me. I see another former energy minister, Minister Cansfield—now the Minister of Natural Resources—sitting here.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Very warm for everyone.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Nobody wants to stay there too long. The decisions we have been taking over the course of the last three years are the sorts of decisions that should have been taken five, six, seven, eight years ago. They should have been, but they weren't. That's the mess we were left with.

I see my friend Mr. Tabuns. I remember that before he joined this Legislature, he wrote me a very nice letter in his capacity as executive director of Greenpeace Canada. He applauded us for taking off the price cap. He said it was the right thing to do. He said it was the proper thing to do because it's a conservation initiative. And the Tories opposite still want a price cap. They'd rather have small taxpayers subsidize big corporations. That makes sense. I understand that, but you know what? The price of electricity is down in Ontario since we took office. It's down. You can go on the website every day and have a look at it. The delivered price of electricity is down. We've got more power online; we've got more being built and developed. We've gone from last to first in terms of non-hydro renewable energy in Canada. We're building the largest solar farm in the world, under a unique program called standard offer, which is helping

our farmers and small communities to sell power into the grid and make money for themselves—save money for themselves in the first instance and make money by selling us their surplus—and helping us develop and move away from the carbon-based economy to the green economy.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Tabuns is a true environmentalist, and I have a great deal of respect for his points of view. I wish that he could convince his leader, Mr. Hampton, to stop going to northern Ontario and telling them, “We’ll keep the coal plants open,” and going to southern Ontario and saying, “We’re going to close the coal plants.” I wish he could do that. I wish he would convince Mr. Hampton that the worst thing you can do for energy conservation is a price cap. You knew that when you were the executive director of Greenpeace. You did. You wrote to me. I’ve got the letter. I’ve got it framed.

That’s another thing. Our conservation efforts are working; peak demand was down. According to the chief conservation officer, yes, economic circumstances have changed, but our net power consumption is down. It’s working. It’s working when you go to every store now and you see the LED Christmas lights that are for sale. They last six, seven years, they use a lot less energy, they can work indoors and outdoors, and they really do save. They do. Our government—again, the NDP voted against this—provided funding to distribute energy-efficient lights.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Maybe Peter wasn’t here. I know he supports that in his heart. I know that. He is a good environmentalist, there’s no question about that. One cannot question the absolute integrity of the member on those issues.

We did have to make some difficult decisions around moving forward. We provided a 20-year plan that will see us invest some \$40 billion, current dollars, in a variety of power initiatives and conservation initiatives.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A balanced approach.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A very balanced approach. I can’t think of a better member than the member for Scarborough—Agincourt to implement that plan, to take it to the next level. I’m delighted he has the chance to do that.

It’s important that we move forward. It’s important that we have the debate and the discussion. We have said yes to nuclear power. Today, 50% of the lights in this chamber are run by nuclear power. For those of you watching on television, half of the power servicing your television comes from nuclear plants.

The NDP talk about jobs and manufacturing, but they have no plan for energy other than some whimsical idea where we just forget about reliability. Interestingly, when the NDP were in office, they got rid of all conservation programs. They didn’t build any new renewable power in Ontario. They didn’t do any of it, and we’re paying the price for that right now.

But, thankfully, Dalton McGuinty had the foresight to say, “Look, we’ve got to do better on renewables. We’ve got to move away from the carbon-based economy”—and we are.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Our power’s got to be reliable.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And our power has to be reliable. That is an important part of the future.

During the election, Mr. Tory said he’d do more nuclear and he’d do it faster. He didn’t say where he’d put them; he didn’t say how he’d convince the federal government—who are the regulator, by the way—to speed up the process. He didn’t say how he’d do that. I realize now there are probably differing opinions on that side about any number of issues and about that circumstance—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That would have been an interesting dinner, wouldn’t it, in Rosedale.

But let me say this: No government moved more quickly, more prudently and more expeditiously to ensure a safe, reliable and affordable supply of electricity for Ontario than this government and our Premier.

I see my colleague, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, sitting here in the House with us today. I want to reflect on infrastructure for a few moments. I want to talk about ReNew Ontario, a huge plan. We’re seeing roads and sewers and bridges, particularly in rural Ontario, being rebuilt.

Let’s talk about Move Ontario 2020. Mr. Howard Hampton opposed that. Mr. Hampton and the NDP didn’t want to build the subway line. He said no first; then he got a little bit of heat from his Toronto members. Then he went up to Thunder Bay and said, “Yes, we do want to build it because we know the cars for the track may come from here.” He did say that. But our investments in public transit in the greater Toronto area are about the future. They’re about economic performance, and the money is well spent. Whether we’re helping Mississauga, Brampton, York region, Hamilton or Barrie, Ontario, all of that money is extremely well spent.

I think about our highways. We drive home every weekend to Windsor. On the QEW, long-awaited road-work is being done—widened. The 401 at London, at Windsor—six-laning of the 401 from Tilbury to Windsor is halfway completed and will be completed next year. The Deputy Chair, who has now left the chair—Highway 3, which should have been built years ago, is being built, widened, in his riding. You go up the 401 and you see the projects happening because this government—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What are some of the other ones?

Interjection: Highway 404, Highway 407.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: Highway 404, 407. The investments are being made, and do you know what’s good about these investments? Not only are they the right thing to do in terms of our infrastructure, but they create jobs. They create jobs. So this government is about investing in publicly funded education, public health care and

public infrastructure. The high school projects, the new schools—maybe some of my colleagues in a further part of the debate will talk about this. For the first time in 40 years, we're having a new high school built in my community—for the first time in 40 years. There are nine school projects in Essex county, and I'm really familiar with that. They're happening everywhere. They're happening all across the province. The Minister of Education can tell the House about any number of those projects that are happening in all of our ridings. I think of rural Ontario and those communities whose schools we're keeping open because of commitments we made in the past, because we recognize, in a small town especially, that a school is the heart of that community and it can keep that community alive and healthy even when there are other challenges.

When I think of rural communities, I think of our farmers. I want to say to our farmers today, particularly pork farmers, beef, dairy farmers and the horticulture industry, the challenge in the dollar is really affecting them. The Minister of Agriculture has met with them; I've had the opportunity to speak with some of their representatives. As we have in the past, we will work with them to ensure that they're not alone, because as the Premier says, and we all around here on this side of the House say, when there's trouble on the family farm, there's trouble for all of us, and we're not going to leave our family farmers alone to fend for themselves in this climate—more than \$1 billion in the last four years.

The Conservative members opposite want to get rid of supply management. That's what they've said. I heard Mr. Hillier, a member of that caucus. I've seen the debate going on in the House of Commons. That's what Conservatives are about. I look forward to hearing Mr. Hillier's views on those matters. I know there's division over there; I know there's a lack of leadership. Leadership matters, I agree, and I know there's a lack of it over there. So what are you? Are you in favour of supply management or against it? I say Mr. Hillier is against it. You say you're in favour. Fair enough. I take you at your word, but you have to speak as a party, and you have to be consistent. Let me be unequivocal: This party supports supply management and we'll stand behind all of our farmers as we move forward.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, you know, there they go again. You can hear the dissension. You know that it's a tough issue for them over there. You do know that.

As we move forward, this government will continue to balance its budgets. Do you know what? Three budgets in a row now balanced. I can safely assure this House that we can continue to balance our budgets, make our commitments, invest in public health care, invest in public education, invest in a cleaner environment and do it in a prudent and fiscally responsible way so there will never be another \$5.5-billion deficit, as was left by the previous Conservative government. That prudence is what gives us the ability to respond to situations like the one our beef and hog farmers find themselves in. That is what gives us the ability to respond when people lose

their jobs, whether it's in an auto parts plant or another manufacturing outlet. That's what gave us the ability to respond in northern Ontario with \$1.1 billion for the forestry sector. It's that prudent fiscal management that allows us to do that. That is what has allowed us to accelerate the elimination of the capital tax to July 10, 2010. That is what has allowed us to reduce business education taxes by \$540 million: prudent financial management. Unlike the previous government, we didn't have to borrow the money to fund those tax cuts. We did it with prudent management. We did it after we invested in public health care; we did it after we invested in public education. Those great tenets, public health care and public education with prudent financial management, are the hallmarks of the McGuinty government and will continue to be for the next four years.

Interjection: Never sold a highway.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, we never sold—I shouldn't say "sold"; we never gave away a highway, the way the previous government did. There's a story. And the rates keep going up and up and up. We never did that.

We have a number of undertakings we're going to proceed with that we campaigned on.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Maybe we could keep the cross-floor debate down to a minimum. It's my first day on the job, and I don't want to get fired.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am enormously proud to serve on the cabinet committee on poverty in this province.

I had a chance to meet with Frances Lankin before the United Way report came out, and was fully briefed. I think we knew and understood a lot of it, but when you see the cold, hard reality that even in this great city, in this capital of our province, in this financial capital of our country, truly one of the great cities of the world, there are so many people not participating in that; when you see rural Ontario, whether it's in small towns or on farms, where poverty is still prevalent—small-city Ontario—I'm proud to be a part of a government that for the first time is going to set targets and move toward meeting those targets in a meaningful and realistic way. I'm proud of all we've done to date. I'm proud of the fact that we raised the minimum wage; I'm proud of the fact that we raised ODSP benefits.

There's more to do. But our Premier and his government, for the first time, looking at these issues at a systematic way, setting measurable targets to move toward—I'm proud of that, and I think all members of the Legislature should be proud of that. I look forward to working on that committee with my colleagues, both in cabinet and in caucus, over the coming four years.

The night is long. I am anxious to get on with approval of interim supply so I can get back to the ministry and start signing the cheques—this, again, is an important part of our parliamentary heritage, and let's not take that for granted. I remember that the last government did a budget outside the Legislature. They went to an auto parts manufacturer. Thank goodness we had a Speaker at

the time—a courageous Speaker—who understood the significance of this institution.

That's why I wanted to be here for this debate. Even though it can be viewed by those who don't follow it closely as a bit arcane, our system is a remarkable system. It's intricate and, in many ways, beautiful.

Somebody once said, "You don't want to see how either your sausages or your laws are made." But I can tell you that when you do your budget here in the House, it's fully transparent. That's why we passed the Fiscal Accountability and Transparency Act. We passed that so we can never have another hidden deficit like we did before the 2003 election.

One thing I should do—and I will do this more appropriately in my fall economic statement—is pay tribute to my predecessor, Greg Sorbara, not only a man of enormous character and integrity, but a friend, a mentor and someone who means a great deal to all of us on this side of the House. Let me thank him for the tremendous leadership he showed in this portfolio in the four years he was here and express the hope that if I can be even a quarter of the finance minister he was, I shall be a true success.

So we begin the next part of our plan. Supply gives us the ability to make our payments between now and, I believe, the end of July next year. The fall economic statement will bring the people of this province, and this House, up to date on where we're at and where we expect to be going. This coming spring, the budget will begin to provide financing to implement a number of our election undertakings. I look forward to working with all members of the House as we proceed down that path, as we continue to eliminate those deficits in public health care, as we continue to eliminate the deficits in public education, as we steward the province's finances in a way that will ensure balanced budgets moving forward and a fair and equitable distribution of taxes, and as we continue to stand up for Ontario. Whether it's in terms of the treatment of our workers under employment insurance or investments in the struggling parts of our economy or our struggle to make sure Ontario has a fair number of seats in the federal House of Commons, I look forward to that. I look forward to joining members of the opposition, and I most look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this side of the House as we proceed to implement all of the undertakings of the last election.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good to be here in this House. I've spent a week here so far, so I'm really one of the new kids on the block.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You're an old hand by now.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm an old hand by now.

An interesting week it has been and very much living up to what I'd heard in the preliminary period—before we sat but after the election—about what this place might be, which is an opportunity to dialogue and exchange ideas. I would like to say, for myself and on behalf of my three colleagues who are the new members to the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we want to be part of an effective opposition, and I might say, in response to some of the comments of the member opposite, a united

opposition which the Progressive Conservative caucus is at this point—and going forward.

I heard a new acronym over the over the course of the past week: non-bank ABCP. I thought to myself, what's that? Well good radio broadcaster that I was—and radio broadcasters are engaged in making complex concepts simple—I went to the books and found out that it was "non-bank-backed asset-based commercial paper." I challenge all but a few people in this province to figure it out what that is on their own. Basically, it's mortgages that are not backed by banks.

I got to thinking, as we debated this over the past couple of days, that possibly the people who make the decisions on behalf of the government as to where to park money, hard-earned taxpayer dollars, were sick the day that the sub-prime mortgage scandal blew up south of the border, because a lot of this money got parked there. People don't even know what sub-prime mortgages are. The bottom line is we get a higher interest rate for going into investments that are not as solid as just going into the bank and getting a basic small interest rate. The bottom line is we lose money; as Ontarians; we lose money. What we don't know at this point is, did we lose \$100 million or \$200 million or \$300 million? It's yet to be seen. The bottom line will be the bottom line.

But money does slip easily through the fingers of this government, as do, apparently, jobs. Who suffers in the end? Who suffers as a result of this? The people of Ontario. So in simple terms, the number is yet to be determined, but it's somewhere in the \$100-million range. Oh, it might be a writedown, we hear. A writedown, in simple terms, is you lose the money. So did the people of Ontario lose \$100 million, \$200 million or \$300 million? We don't know, but they lost a significant amount, we lost a significant amount, and that amount could have gone to fund programs, programs that were proposed or programs yet to be proposed that we will not be able to do.

I want to talk about that in the context of what's up for debate tonight by way of the interim supply motion, because an interim supply motion is really about nothing more than ensuring that funds are in place to pay government workers, among other things. And it is important to see to it on an individual level in our homes, on a governmental level or in a corporate environment that money does flow to the people who deserve to receive it, in this case the employees of the government.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could ensure that funds allocated were always in place for any stakeholder, and it's to that that I want to address my remarks tonight—because they aren't. In my riding of Thornhill, I had the occasion recently to visit a very amazing special-needs school, a school that happens to be struggling, indeed struggling for its own survival, and it's called Zareinu. Zareinu is an interesting organization, as I say, in my riding, but not operating only there. I visited it because I heard that it was extraordinary and in some financial difficulty. What it's about is children with special needs, and it covers a wide range—infants all the way to 21. That's a tall order and it's a huge task.

Special needs in this particular case would be defined as children with physical and developmental challenges. I've got to say that it broke my heart, despite the very great progress that they make in doing what they do, because they operate in circumstances that none of us would wish to see in our own individual lives, much less on behalf of children who are incapable by any stretch of the imagination of speaking for themselves and who come from families that have a big problem making happen what has to happen for a normal child, much less a child with developmental difficulties. They suffer from insufficient funding, they operate in borrowed space in the basement of a synagogue. I got shown around for a couple of hours by a fine gentleman who is paid to do his work, but I suspect nowhere near what he's worth, a man by the name of Randy Spiegel, who is the executive director there. He told me where the funding comes from, and we'll talk about that in a moment.

The funds basically are derived on a public basis from fundraising to the tune of a couple of million dollars, a very small grant of about half a million that comes from the local CCAC to meet the needs of a gargantuan budget, and the rest, of course, comes from parents who either can or, in many cases, cannot afford it. But the cost is gargantuan.

The philosophy of the organization is rather interesting and I'd like to share that with you. They state their philosophy as dealing with so-called special children as valuable members of the community who have a right to receive an adapted education, opportunities for improving life skills, communication strategies and respect for their individual strengths. In other words, treating children with special needs in the same way that any of us would want to be treated.

They believe that a family is an integral part of efforts and family input is treated with respect. They believe in encouraging parental participation, in planning individual programs—and I'll interject something here that I believe. I believe that this represents an investment that creates a return. They believe that every child has potential, and so do I. I defy any member of this House or anybody at large to suggest that every child doesn't have potential, even children who are greatly disadvantaged compared to the rest of us. They believe in a coordinated, co-operative effort to develop and provide therapies and learning strategies that will improve the quality of life for each child and each family. They advocate for acceptance of children with special needs in the community. That's their philosophy, and a good philosophy it is.

So these kids are mildly to, in some cases, very severely challenged. Some children that I saw required as much as four-on-one treatment, where you have a youngster who is being seen simultaneously by a speech therapist, a music therapist, an occupational therapist and a physiotherapist. That costs money. These experts work for below what they should be paid. I saw offices that use shower curtains as dividers to separate one hard-working specialist from another. You can imagine the disarray in which they sometimes find themselves when two people are trying to talk on the phone with virtually no privacy

at all. Some facilities in the basement of the building where they operate are used despite not being available by way of any agreement; the hosts just look the other way.

I'm a lucky person. I got to raise two boys who are now two men. I'm a lucky dad because my kids never needed a wonderful organization like Zareinu. They were not developmentally challenged and grew up to be fine young men. I'm proud of them. But there are kids, sadly, who are born with moderate to severe challenges, and organizations like Zareinu try the best they can to take care of them.

I've got to tell you, this is life changing for both the parents and the siblings of children who attend an organization like this. Can you imagine what happens in a family when one child needs this kind of attention? What happens to the other children who don't need that kind of attention? The answer to that question is, no, you cannot begin to imagine it. I can't; you can't. The impact is financial, it is social, it is psychological and, in a word, it's devastating. Families are literally torn apart. Priorities are totally changed.

1650

Why have I chosen to discuss this today in the context of a supply motion? Because we're talking about money that has to be allocated. In this particular case, we're talking about this same thing because, in 1999, a Conservative government allocated \$14.5 million annually to special-needs children in private schools much like this one; "special-needs dollars," they call it.

But this government—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For medical issues.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ah, but this is medical. But this government does not interpret the regulations with any technical latitude; it doesn't. So Zareinu and other organizations like it are sitting out there and suffering silently, and the kids and their families are being shortchanged. Only \$4.5 million annually is being spent. If you do the math on that, and you take it from 1999, since nobody has changed the line item, these kids are being shortchanged, and many like them around Ontario, to the tune of about \$10 million a year; eight years, \$80 million. Maybe it went into non-bank, asset-based commercial paper; I don't know. But the bottom line is, that money isn't there or at least it hasn't been there. The government has to understand that people are not numbers; they are faces. They're faces, and I've seen the faces.

I'd like to recall for you one little boy, a beautiful child, who in this House will remain nameless, with two siblings, I understand both totally normal. The parents have three children. This youngster is making progress, but at three years old I saw him in a walker. I noticed that he didn't talk either, but he does understand. I was able to get down on the floor and play with this young man. I'm happy to say, he's making progress because of this fabulous organization that just simply deserves more.

So when we consider supply motions, perhaps we also have to remember that elements of our population need their allocation too. They need supply. I'll repeat it once again: If you do the math, \$4.5 million out of \$14.5

million leaves \$10 million on the table year-by-year. You have but one organization in one riding of Thornhill that doesn't feel it's being shortchanged; as I say, they suffer in silence, but they are being shortchanged, and they're not unlike many organizations much like this across the province. We have to do something about that.

Our bureaucrats saved us \$80 million. Wow, \$80 million. Can you imagine what that could have done for Zareinu, for these kids and these families and for countless other facilities like this all over the province?

Yes, of course, we will approve the supply motion, but I wanted to call attention to fulfillment of our obligation as MPPs, government and opposition alike, to undertake what has been promised and not shortchange those in need.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak again in the House. I have to say that as much as I disagree with the Minister of Finance—he's a tough, partisan speaker. An interesting speech, but I caution him—through you, Speaker—because I was around when Bill Davis got re-elected in 1980 and I was around when David Peterson got re-elected in 1987. There's a tone in there that you can hear, a tone of almost an arrogance, a feeling that a mandate has been put down on the heads because of the great virtue of the Liberal Party. I have to say that a government that starts speaking that way is often a government that is in trouble.

My intention is not to go on at length about that today. My intention is to speak about climate change and the lack of action on the part of this government, the very wrong-headed, very irresponsible lack of action on the part of this government. As you know and as you're well aware, right now in Bali, Indonesia, people from around the world are trying to negotiate a new climate deal. That climate deal is essential to our future.

In 1990, David Suzuki was talking about the state of the world's climate. He said at that time that we have about 10 years to actually do the things that will make a difference and allow us to avoid climate change. I remember there was a lot of criticism of David Suzuki at the time, but David was right.

I was interviewed by Bill Cameron in 2002 about climate change, about the impact of global warming. Cameron said at that time, "Well, you know, David Suzuki in 1990 was saying we only have 10 years, and yet here we are in 2002 and the world's going on." But in fact, even at that time, in 2002, the impact of climate change was real, the impact of climate change was recognized by scientists, and the impact of climate change was recognized by responsible governments around the world.

Today in the *Globe and Mail*, many of those scientists who in the early 1990s, and in fact in the late 1980s, were saying that you have to act now to deal with the first round—and we've lost that one—are now saying there's a much higher level of urgency to dealing with this issue. Now we have 10, maybe 15, years to actually hit a peak with greenhouse gas emissions, and then we have to start

coming down or we will see significant disruptions in the natural world. When we see those significant disruptions, we will see significant disruptions in our human economy, in our society.

I know from the comments he has made in the House that the Premier of this province is fully aware of those issues. This past summer in June, the Premier made a speech talking about the reasons that we should take on the understanding we have to have to address this issue. We need to go back to his words and then look at his actions. His words were fairly straightforward. He started out by saying that, first of all, there are familiar scientific reasons for taking action. To quote him: "Species loss. Habitat destruction. Extreme weather events. The threat to our way of life, perhaps even our survival as humans."

I don't think the Premier could've talked about or addressed this much more strongly. When you talk about the threat to our way of life, you recognize that we have a fundamental problem coming at us. When you talk about our survival, you're talking about a fundamental problem coming at us.

So first of all, he made a very strong, logical argument for action, and then he talked about a deeper moral reason to take action. He said, "Climate change is a crisis that we caused together, and a responsibility we all share, together.

"To reject that responsibility would be careless, reckless, perhaps even sinful."

That's a pretty strong moral argument. There's no question that Premier McGuinty understands the moral scope of the issue before us.

He then wrapped up with an emotional argument. "And our job right now," he said, "is to fight climate change, to make waste and pollution obsolete so we can ensure our kids have all the opportunities we dream for them"—pretty classic structure: logic, morality, emotion.

In the face of this, in the face of a threat to our way of life, to the future of our children, what are we doing? What should we be doing? If you, Speaker, if people in this House believe that our way of life is threatened, should we not be systematically planning to respond to that threat? Should we not be setting budgets, bringing forward policies, assigning staff at a level commensurate with the problem? I believe we should. If you believe what the Premier had to say, certainly we should be. Having brought forward a plan like that, we should be acting quite urgently to implement it. It makes sense to me: major threat to our society, big events, move quickly, mobilize the province. Remember the scale of the threat.

1700

This summer, the Premier talked about what he was actually going to do. He promised a reduction of greenhouse gases to 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, a reduction by 15% by 2020, and then 80% by 2050. And what was fascinating to me was that none of these are targets that will be met within the term of this government—not one. All of these were set for the future, so the pages who are here will be around, will be employed, developing families, when all this stuff is coming down and hitting our society. We're not acting quickly and setting targets

within this term of government. That's set, at the earliest, for 2014—no targets before 2011.

The government set out the different measures: closing down Ontario's coal plants—that's about half of the program—15% from transit investments and working on initiatives with the federal government.

I have to say that the Minister of Finance, who was here a short while ago, could speak at length about his confidence in the ability of the federal Conservative government to deal with climate or other environmental issues. My guess is he would be as generous as I am with that irresponsible government, yet this finance minister hangs a significant part of what has to be done to preserve our way of life on a government in which he has no confidence.

Some 15% will result from policies soon to be announced around home audits and incentives for municipalities, and the remaining portion will come from research and innovation into new technologies. That's not a plan; that's a statement of intent. That's a very general statement of things we'd like to do when we have a rainy day and we get around to it; that's not a plan.

You, Speaker, and other members of this House have seen the integrated power supply plan for electricity. I disagree with that document. I think the thrust of it is wrong, but it's a plan. It has megawatts produced, it has timelines, it has elements, it has policies, it has people who are charged with implementing it. It's a significant plan.

That's my opinion, but others in the environmental movement who deal with climate change had similar commentary when they spoke out, when they did their analysis, this summer.

The Pembina Institute—very well respected—the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund put out a joint statement. The headline of their statement was: "The Ontario Climate Strategy: Reasonable Targets"—they're more generous than I would be—"But Where's the Plan to Get There?" In their comments: "The big question that remains is how the government actually plans to meet these targets" that I outlined to you earlier.

Prominently missing in action yesterday was any sort of overall plan to explain in detail how these targets would be achieved. I think that's pretty straightforward. There is no plan.

Those environmental groups went on to say that the phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation is the core of the strategy. Fair enough—the core of the strategy unveiled so far, providing just under half of the reduction. However, they go on to say that the coal phase-out strategy relies on the current Ontario Power Authority integrated power supply plan. It's varied a little bit, but is substantially the same now as it was when it was first brought out by the OPA. Unfortunately, at the foundation of the OPA's plan are some highly optimistic assumptions about the reliability of new and refurbished nuclear power plants. If the province's nuclear plants perform at their historic levels of reliability rather than the OPA's hopeful levels, it will be impossible to phase out coal by

2014 if the nuclear power plants behave anything like they've behaved in the last 40 or 50 years—40 years, I guess. So at the core of this wish list of action on climate change is a profoundly faulty assumption: The resting of this plan on a very weak reed, and that reed being high performance for Ontario's nuclear power fleet.

Beyond the coal phase-out, the Pembina Institute says that the plan suggested that 11% of the 2014 reduction target will come from federal measures to reduce emissions from industrial sources. Again, I'd like to have the Liberals in this House stand up and make it very clear to me that they have great confidence in the Harper government's commitment to environmental protection and that they have great confidence that Stephen Harper will really take on the climate issue. If you look at what's happening in Indonesia, where Canada is working with Japan and the United States to undermine progress, I don't think there are a lot of indications that you can give credibility to the Harper government on this issue. Pembina goes on: "Little detail has been provided in terms of actual policy measures to be implemented beyond these vague categories. Even less information is available about how the policy measures that have been identified have been translated into" greenhouse gas "reductions. There are also some very obvious gaps (e.g. the 17% to be accounted for by 'research and innovation')."

Very soon, it will be 2008, seven years to 2014. If you look at the development of the wind industry in this world, it took 20 years to really get the wind industry growing in a big way in the world. How do you expect in eight years to account for so much reduction in Ontario's production of greenhouse gases on research and innovation? We're talking about filler. They couldn't meet the target. They had to plug a number in. They had to put something in that sounded good and that's what they put in.

In 2005, I believe it was, this government passed the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, which gave this government the power to make sure that clotheslines could be used legally in Ontario without any restraint by covenant. And yet this government, which says it's going to take on one of the biggest problems facing our society, can't even deal with the clothesline issue. How on earth do you expect them to deal with the transformation to a post-carbon economy if you can't deal with clotheslines? What answer can this government give when it's had the power for two years and hasn't acted?

We come back to the reality of a Premier who knows that our way of life is under threat and can be destabilized, and has not put a plan on the table for our consideration. In speaking about his approach, he said he would bring forward tough measures for accountability and transparency. Has anyone seen any evidence of such tough measures? When the speech from the throne came forward, was there any commitment to that? Was there any commitment to his other promise, that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario would be reviewing regularly the actions of this government to see whether or not it was meeting its greenhouse gas targets? Nope.

In the speech from the throne, the government said, or the Lieutenant Governor read out for the government, “Your government will move forward with Ontario’s plan to combat climate change by working towards meeting Ontario’s goal of reducing the emissions that contribute to climate change by 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% below by 2020 and 80% below by 2050.”

1710

That’s quite a presumptuous statement. What plan? There is no plan. No comment on those measures around the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario; no comment on transparency and accountability.

When I was waiting for the Premier to come out of his speech in June when he talked about his climate plan, I was talking to some of the reporters who were there, and one of the reporters said to me, “What’s the reason this government’s climate plan, this Liberal climate plan, is so short?” The answer is, they ran out of envelope. It’s as simple as that and as straightforward as that. It’s a back-of-the-envelope issue for this government. It’s a marketing issue. So the question I have to ask you, Speaker, and all the members of the government party in the House tonight, is that if this is the way you deal with issues that are crucial to our way of life, how do you deal with the low-priority stuff? If this is the way you deal with something that could destabilize our society, what do you do about stuff you don’t care about?

Energy in this society is not just a problem because of climate. Just in the last few months the International Energy Agency and a number of large petroleum companies in the United States have come out and said that over the next few years—in the next decade or so—there’s going to be this gap between demand for oil and gas, and increasingly coal, and the ability to supply it. The historic experience with that, here in North America and around the world, is that when you have that big crunch on energy, you have economic disruption. We saw that in the early 1970s and we saw that in the early 1980s.

The world is changing. The old-energy world is moving on. We are not going to have the same availability of oil and gas in the future as we have had in the past. As some have said, the easy stuff has been accessed. The easy stuff has been taken. The time when we could just endlessly burn whatever we wanted to burn is now coming up against the time when the consequences of that pollution are having an impact on us. So we’re faced with a dilemma, a conundrum: We need energy to function, and yet it will be increasingly difficult to get at and increasingly problematic in its impact on our world as we use it.

This government, the McGuinty Liberal government, talks about the need to move to a post-carbon world, but it is welded to the old-energy paradigm. That shows most clearly in their electricity plan.

The Minister of Finance was talking earlier. He used to be a Minister of Energy. The current Minister of Energy is here, sitting in the Legislature. When you look at the electricity plan that they brought forward, this is a

plan with a nuclear core. That is profoundly problematic for the finances of this province and profoundly problematic for the environment of this province. It means that we’re going to be repeating the mistakes of the last century. Constant overruns: Again, Pembina Institute noted that the best-case experience with overruns on nuclear power since we started going nuclear in this province was the 40% overrun on building Pickering A. That was the best experience we had. The new nuclear power plant that’s being built in Finland is already way over budget and way behind schedule. That isn’t Ontario; it’s an endemic problem with this technology.

We here in Ontario are still carrying the stranded debt, the unpaid bills from nuclear power plants that failed before the end of their design life. They were supposed to last 40 years; they last 20 to 25 before they have to be substantially rebuilt. Nineteen billion dollars is a concrete collar around our electricity system. People will look at their bills at home. You see that debt retirement charge? Call it the dead nukes charge. That’s what that is.

When we look at going forward in this province, we’re looking at repeating the mistakes of the last half-century, knowing full well what happened. No surprises here. If you buy a car that’s a lemon, are you actually going to go out and buy another lemon? But we are. If this government has its way, if it is able to carry through to the end, we will buy another fleet of lemons, and that will have a big impact on our environment and our economy.

In fact, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario concluded just the other day that we, in this province, had made a fundamental mistake in not having a full environmental assessment on this nuclear-centred power plan that was brought forward. I saw him in the media studio. He spoke out. He was asked by reporters, “Should there be a full environmental assessment?” “No question.”

My time is short, but there’s a significant point that he made: The plans are based on a projection of growth and demand that is double our experience in the last 15 years. Set aside the nuclear power for a moment. If we dramatically overbuild generation capacity in the next 20 years, that alone will have a huge impact on our economy, on our environment, on our public accounts. We should listen, the Premier should listen, the Minister of Finance should listen, the Minister of Energy should listen to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, because he’s right.

We are making decisions that are similar to those that were made in the early 1980s, when some companies were trying to decide if they should go with personal computers or typewriters: “Boy, those personal computer are pricey. Typewriters are so reliable and we’re used to them.” Some people made a mistake, but a lot of people realized, as we should realize, that you have to move on to the new world. Sticking with nuclear and not doing everything we can to move away from carbon fuels is a mistake.

This government is not behaving responsibly. This government is not doing what has to be done to protect Ontario. This government has to change course.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you for your contribution to the debate. Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks by the Minister of Finance, who had a great deal to say about his stellar performance and the performance of his government. As he rushes back "to sign cheques," as he put it, what I'm disappointed in is that if he were nearly as enthusiastic about ensuring that he performs his function as a steward of public funds as he is about rushing back to his office "to sign cheques," then we may have had some answers in question period today, yesterday, the day before, when we put questions specifically to the Minister of Finance about what is really a scandalous situation in this province, that some \$200 million, if not more, of taxpayers' funds have been lost, and they've been lost because the government failed to exercise its responsibility as a steward of public funds.

It relates to an issue that my colleague from Thornhill referred to earlier, and that is the Ontario Financing Authority's willingness and somehow their decision to invest in essentially worthless paper, a high-risk instrument of investment on behalf of the taxpayers of this province, in contradiction of legislation that prescribes very clearly the responsibility of the Ontario Financing Authority, which is that any investment that is made on behalf of the taxpayers of this province must be made in keeping with sound financial management on behalf of the taxpayers.

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So we have a situation now, while the Minister of Finance is running back to his office to sign cheques, that there is some \$200 million less that he can sign cheques for that could have served our province very well. My colleague from Thornhill made reference to a visit he made to a school in Thornhill for students with learning disabilities. How often has it been in the last four years that we've implored the government to meet the needs of autistic children in this province? On the one hand, the government says that no child should be left behind, that every child should have an equal opportunity for an education in this province, but somehow children with autism and other children with special needs are left out of that definition of this government's "all." Now we have a situation where the government has \$200 million less to allocate, whether it be to children with autism or children with special needs or other needs in this province, because of a lack of oversight on the part of the Minister of Finance, whose responsibility it is to ensure that the fiscal management of this province is in fact in accordance with very clear legislative prescription.

What is most disconcerting is the fact that instead of holding the Ontario Financing Authority to task and holding them accountable for their actions, the minister sets up a screen and comes to their defence and deflects and refuses to, again, do what is only the practical, the accountable, the right thing for him to do. That is, if he doesn't want to follow through on seeking what the answers are, he should be calling in the Auditor General,

which we've been calling on him to do—and, by the way, other jurisdictions have done exactly that. Where these kinds of investments have taken place, whether it's in the private sector or the public sector, those in authority, responsible people in authority, have called in an Auditor General or there has been an internal review. This minister says, "No; be happy. All is well." But the taxpayers are short \$200 million. It's irresponsible. I just want to put the government on notice that we will not let this matter go.

It took the government three months to finally agree to bring in the Auditor General when the official opposition made it very clear that the then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration dealt inappropriately with some 30 million of taxpayers' dollars, the so-called Collegate affair. The Minister of Finance and the Premier continued to say that nothing inappropriate was done. Finally, after a great deal of pressure from this House, from both opposition parties, the government agreed to bring in the Auditor General, and what was the result? The result was that the Auditor General condemned the actions of the then minister, resulting in the resignation of the minister.

So I ask a simple question: Why would the Minister of Finance and the Premier not simply agree to have the Auditor General conduct his investigation, bring a report back to the Legislature, and if there was no inappropriate action, we would all know that? Let's clear the air. I'll tell you, if I was a member of the board of directors of the Ontario Financing Authority, I would want the Premier and the Minister of Finance to ask the Auditor General to do a report, and I'll tell you why: because I want my reputation cleared. I don't want to be seen as someone who failed the people of Ontario. I want the facts on the table. That is what I would want.

The question continues. When I have spoken with people over the last number of days, every day since this issue was raised in the House, the question that the average person has on the street is, "Why would they not want to have a report? Why would they just not get on with asking the Auditor General to table a report so that once and for all the matter is cleared up?" But no, they're not learning. They haven't learned from their mistakes. What are they hiding?

I submit to you, Speaker, that this government—and we saw the Minister of Finance. The arrogance with which he presented this afternoon is something to be seen. Arrogance comes before the fall. Yes, the government was re-elected, but that doesn't mean you no longer have to be accountable to the taxpayers. In fact, if anything, it should have humbled the government more so than ever to be granted the privilege of a second term and to go out of their way to be accountable to the taxpayers. The job of the official opposition is to hold the government accountable. We will do that on this particular issue.

Because today we are talking about supply motions and voting to give the government the authority to pay the bills of this government, now is the time when the government should be at its best in terms of accountability to taxpayers and in fact ensure that every action

they take instils confidence, not only on the part of taxpayers but on the part of every member of the Legislature in terms of how this government is conducting its business. They failed to do that. The minister failed to do that by his conduct this afternoon.

We'll hold him accountable. We believe that in the final analysis the Auditor General's report on this matter is the only way to clear the air. We'll continue to press the government to comply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate.

Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You look fine in the chair. As my first opportunity to debate in public in this session of the Legislature, I want to congratulate you and all of the other honourable members for their re-election to this place, and congratulate the McGuinty government for their re-election.

I know we're debating supply. There is no short supply of issues in my riding and that's what I intend to talk about for the time I've got on the clock.

Residents of Nepean–Carleton, who I thank dearly for re-electing me to this place in a very tough election personally for me—my dad passed away the first week. I guess you never really recover from that, but he instilled in me a sense of purpose. A few days after the election, my staff and I reassessed where we wanted to go and we outlined five priorities for my constituents. They were priorities that they told us about during a 30-day campaign and over the 18 months that they had me as their MPP after they elected me in March 2006. Those are two health-care related issues.

The first priority is getting a satellite health centre for the residents of south Nepean. In a fast-growing community like the city of Ottawa, and in particular south Nepean, where we've got one of the highest birth rates in Canada, a satellite health centre is of the utmost importance to my constituents. I'm pleased to be working with the Minister of Health's office on that. The Minister of Health himself has been very supportive of getting the satellite health centre built and in operation in south Nepean as soon as possible.

The second priority that I've outlined for my constituents is working on the foreign-trained credentials issue. It's one that I hope to work on in my riding with the citizenship and immigration minister and the Minister of Health, because there is a best practice in my community of Nepean–Carleton in the village of Manotick, where we've got a doctor who sits on the OMA. His name is Dr. Abdulla and he's been working with foreign-trained doctors in my riding to get them in the workforce. It's a best practice, one that I hope to share with you, Minister Chan, in the days to come and certainly with our critic, Mr. Klees, from Newmarket–Aurora, who is our citizenship and immigration critic.

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This issue came to light to me during the campaign when I was visiting a few of the mosques in my riding, as many of us were. I just asked a quick question: "How

many of you could be working in the medical field today with the credentials you had, whether it was in India or in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world?" Six people out of about 50 put up their hands, and I thought, "It would be great if we could work together to bring these folks into the workforce so that we can work on that doctor shortage we also have in Nepean–Carleton."

The third priority in the fast-growing community is one that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be very excited to hear about: the need for infrastructure improvements in my riding. As a fast-growing community, as I've mentioned a few times, there's a need for new roads, bridges and other infrastructure requirements. But I also have a large rural community where there are some rural water quality problems at Lynwood Gardens. I've been happy to work with the Minister of the Environment on solving that issue.

With respect to one of the critical infrastructure issues in my riding—and I've mentioned it in petitions this week: the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge and the need for that bridge to be built—presently, the city of Ottawa is asking for all three levels of government to commit to funding this \$105-million project. How important is that project? It will contribute to road widenings in a very fast-growing community. But more than that, it will link two communities which are so very close but are separated by the mighty Rideau River. I will be working on the \$35 million we're requesting from the province, and hopefully the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be able to step up to the plate and assist the city of Ottawa and the federal government, which has also come forward with their \$35 million.

Another issue that I hope to work on, and that I've already spoken to the Minister of Culture about, is preserving Dickinson Square. Many people here know the city of Ottawa. They know I reside in a part of the city of Ottawa. But what they don't realize is that the city of Ottawa is actually made up of parts of smaller communities and villages, and one of the great villages of this province is the village of Manotick. It was home to Ottawa's first mayor, Moss Kent Dickinson, and it was also home to Sir John A. Macdonald's first campaign office, if you can imagine that.

The city of Ottawa has made a commitment to make Dickinson Square a corporation, Mill Manotick Inc., which I fully support. I think it's wonderful that we would retain public ownership of such a natural resource and a great heritage site, not only for the city of Ottawa but for the entire country. It's one of those things we'll want to work with the province on so that we can see real results.

Finally, there are a few things that I worked on, and my fifth priority is wrapping up a few of these initiatives from the first 18 months that I was in office as the MPP for Nepean–Carleton. Two of them are actually building new schools, and I want to compliment the Minister of Education for putting up with me for 18 months and getting the Longfields/Davidson Heights school built. She knows how much I wanted that school in south

Nepean. That school now has been put out to tender for \$32 million. It's a secondary school that, in 2009, will start serving kids in my community from grades 7 to 10. I think there could be no finer example.

The other school I want built is Riverside South Catholic school. The fun thing about the Riverside South Catholic school is that last year—last June, I suppose it was—the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, put a halt on the building of the school. Do you want to know why? Why would the Department of Fisheries and Oceans be involved at all in Riverside South on a farmer's field? It's because they found some fish habitat on an old farmer's field because of a drainage ditch. We were almost at risk of losing that school, but we stood up. We worked to affirm it—all three levels of government, the officials elected at each level—and we resolved it. That school will start its construction this spring when the ground thaws.

The final thing is one of the things I'm most proud of. If I stop being an MPP, I can say, "We did it." That is the creation of the South Nepean Autism Centre. When we talk about supply in this case, when we talk about millions and billions of dollars, our eyes glaze over and we think, "What does that really mean?"

Last year, my colleague, a councillor at the city of Ottawa and my former New Democratic opponent in the city of Ottawa—we travelled to Belleville to try and get some money from the provincial government to start an autism centre. It was shot down; we didn't get the money. So we reassembled, and we actually did something that's so indicative of the people of Nepean-Carleton. We were self-reliant. We didn't decide that we needed a handout at all from the government of Ontario. Instead, we decided we would go to our community and create our own autism centre.

On October 2 of this year—actually four years to the day that the McGuinty Liberals broke their promise to kids with autism—we opened our very own South Nepean Autism Centre. Three women and lots of people in our community helped us to fundraise. We hit a fundraising target of \$38,000 in one night.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much.

Now we are serving 10 kids per session at this autism centre. That is what the power of positive connections can do, and that is what our role as members of provincial Parliament is.

To wrap up: a satellite health centre for my constituents; working with our colleagues here on the foreign-trained credential issue; ensuring that critical infrastructure in my community is built and improved. It's working on bringing new schools online and it's working to preserve Dickinson Square. That doesn't preclude any goals I may have as children and youth services critic here at the Legislative Assembly for the official oppo-

sition. I'll be working to try to put forward a children's bill of rights with respect to that.

I can tell you one other thing. There's one other priority. Poor old Stéphane Dion over at the federal Parliament can't make priorities but, holy smokes, I've got five local priorities. I've got one for my critic portfolio and I've got one here for all of the people who are sitting in their chairs right now. For every one of the 107 MPPs who sit in this place, I want to make this place family-friendly. I want you to work with me on that initiative because I'll tell you something—

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much. I want to work with all of you because we've got great friends here. It doesn't matter what corner you sit in. You've got Minister Fonseca over there who's got young kids. I want to make sure that his children and my children—Mr. Qaadri is over there with his kids, and they're beautiful. I saw them on the elevator. We want to make sure that this is a family-friendly place for all. My little girl's upstairs, but she stole a ball from one of the journalists, so I'm afraid to go back up there.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a gender issue, and it's not a partisan issue. It's an issue for each one of us. It means that the member from Guelph maybe will have a spousal association for her husband. It means that maybe we could have a gym for those of us who are here five months of the year. But most of all I think it means there might be a little bit more stability in this place because we'll be more reflective of the people we represent.

I'm out of time. I want to thank you very much for this opportunity. I want to have a spirited four years with my colleagues. Enjoy your evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing no further debate, Mr. Phillips has moved notice of motion number 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in the afternoon—to be determined.

Interjections.

Hon. David Caplan: That's what it says.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Hon. David Caplan: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 1739.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
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Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur general
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Brotten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
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–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldeep (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor–Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	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	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York–Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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