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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 19 March 2008

Mercredi 19 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 mars 2008

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEONATAL CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: Today is Prematurity Awareness Day. It is dedicated to the children who are born pre-term, or prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy, and their families. Thousands of pre-term babies each year are admitted to neonatal intensive care units across Ontario and are entrusted to the expert care of neonatologists, who ensure they receive the highest level of care possible.

Joining us in the House today are Lauren and Sam Pezzullo, of Newmarket. On July 5, 2003, Lauren gave birth to her premature baby son, Linden, weighing 3.3 pounds. Lauren and her husband, Sam, stood vigil as Linden went from one medical crisis to another, including 16 lumbar punctures, three blood transfusions, respiratory distress syndrome and a brain bleed. Lauren and Sam were asked several times if they wanted Linden's life support turned off, but they would not give up their vigil.

Today, their son, Linden, is a happy and healthy five-year-old. To help other parents with premature babies, Lauren and Sam established the Linden Fund, a charity that raises money to buy equipment for neonatal intensive care units across Canada. A number of volunteers of the Linden Fund are with us today as well.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature and all Ontarians, I express our gratitude to Lauren and Sam Pezzullo and the many volunteers who make the work of the Linden Fund possible. I ask all members to welcome them and encourage them in their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

Mr. Jim Brownell: As a former educator, a father and grandfather, and as representative of the good people of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I believe that there is no more important function that we play in society than the provision of security and opportunity to our youth. In fact, the way a society treats its youth says a great deal about how it operates as a whole.

This is certainly the case in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, where the Cornwall Youth Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary of excellent service to the youth of my riding. To meet the growing needs in our community, the centre has recently transitioned to the Boys and Girls Club of Cornwall/Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

The mission of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life. This has long been the goal of the former Cornwall Youth Centre's board of directors. President Lucien Lalonde and the entire board are to be commended for their unparalleled work over the years. In particular, I would also like to commend board member and Cornwall Chief of Police Dan Parkinson, who has worked tirelessly to create a positive relationship between local youth and police services. Our youth are our future, and in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the future continues to grow as our entire community works to provide a safe environment for our children and opportunities for them to learn and mature. I commend the new Boys and Girls Club of Cornwall/SDG.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, I reintroduced my private member's bill, Bill 38. This bill, if passed, would compel the province to share its gas tax revenue with all municipalities. That is what the federal government does now, because it recognizes what we in rural Ontario have always held: that our roads and bridges are our public transportation system.

The McGuinty Liberals continue to insist that rural Ontario municipalities don't deserve their fair share of the gas tax collected from them. In fact, there's no question that rural citizens pay a far larger per capita share of the gas tax, because without public transportation a vehicle is a must. For the most part, families with two working parents require two vehicles just to get back and forth from work. It is patently unfair for this government to continue to penalize the hard-working people of my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as well as all rural people, with their approach to sharing revenue.

This initiative has received broad support from municipalities across the province. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus has identified it as one of their top

priorities. If the Premier is determined to be unfair to municipalities, just because the federal Conservatives are treating them fairly, then I say: Stop playing your childish games. Stop inhaling the fumes of Toronto traffic for a while and come up and visit us in good old Renfrew county. Perhaps the fresh air will clear your head.

EVENTS IN TIBET

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise in the House today on behalf of the over 3,000 Tibetan Canadians who live in Parkdale–High Park. As members have witnessed on international news, over 100 Tibetans have been killed in their homeland simply for demanding democracy and some degree of autonomy. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has called for an opportunity to have a dialogue with the Chinese government, and even that modest request has been denied.

Along with Tibetan Canadians, we call for an immediate withdrawal of all armed forces and martial law from Tibet; we call for the removal of restrictions on movement and communication; we call for the release of political prisoners arrested during the demonstration; and we call for unimpeded access to Tibet for foreign journalists and United Nations representatives.

My resolution, already tabled, is a sister resolution to one tabled in Ottawa urging the Chinese government to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As the founding member of a non-partisan Ontario Friends of Tibet, set up with other members of this Legislature, I add my voice to the thousands of Tibetans who pray for a free Tibet.

SIBLEY SKI TOUR

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm very pleased to inform the House that earlier this month Thunder Bay's legendary Sleeping Giant Provincial Park hosted the 31st annual Sibley Ski Tour, and it was a resounding success. As you may be aware, the Sibley Ski Tour is the largest cross-country skiing event in the Thunder Bay region and this year drew over 800 registered participants. It also attracts visitors from all over the region and provides many economic benefits to our local communities.

The Sibley Ski Tour is open to everyone. Young and old, beginners and advanced, skiers come together for an exciting day of fun and recreation. This year, three groomed distances were offered for both classic and skate techniques: the 10-kilometre family event, the 20-kilometre tour, and the 50-kilometre—

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: He didn't have his 90 seconds.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Somebody's got to start the clock. Now I've got a minute, 35 seconds left.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. I had just glanced at the clock and I saw the zeros. Please continue and complete your statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: No problem. I'd like to take a moment to recognize this year's winners. Stephen Hart and Brook Latimer won their respective men's and women's 50-kilometre races. Luke Viljakainen and Lisa Patterson won their respective 20-kilometre races, and David Ek and Manon Magnan won their respective 10-kilometre races.

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Hundreds of volunteers come together every year to make Sibley a success. I wish to specifically acknowledge Sibley's key organizer, Diane Ambro. This was Diane's 17th and final tour, and I think she deserves special recognition for her hard work, for making the ski tour one of Thunder Bay's premier sporting events. Taking over for Diane next year is Peter Gallagher. I am confident, knowing Peter, that he will do a great job.

I am proud that we in Thunder Bay host such a fantastic event. I'd like to encourage all my honourable colleagues, and Ontarians, to visit Sleeping Giant Provincial Park to see its spectacular scenery and to ski the best trails in the northwest.

EVENTS IN TIBET

Mr. Randy Hillier: I always stand for freedom, justice and democracy. In the past, I have spoken for those who cannot be heard. I rise today, a voice for those silenced half a world away.

The people of Tibet do not enjoy our freedoms. Freedoms we take for granted are met with violence and the wrath of the Communist Chinese government. Over 50 years ago, China used deadly force invading Tibet. They use deadly force today to maintain their rule.

The history of the Moscow Olympics comes to mind. Then, as now, a cruel government masquerades behind the games for legitimacy. It is inconsistent to participate in an activity of civility and sportsmanship while China openly oppresses the people of Tibet. The Moscow boycott lessened Soviet prestige and muted Soviet propaganda.

As free people, we must encourage the free world to act. Canada must freeze aid, suspend student exchange programs and expedite refugee claims—and boycott the China Olympics unless the Chinese army withdraws from Tibet immediately.

I ask all free Canadians to join with me and lend your voice to those in Tibet.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to share with my colleagues, and with all Ontarians, what the McGuinty government is doing to ensure a strong and sustainable future for rural Ontario. I wish to highlight one component of our rural plan in particular, and that is the rural economic development program, otherwise known as RED.

The RED program is an economic development initiative that helps communities remove barriers to

development and economic growth. Since October 2003, 145 projects have been approved, with a provincial investment of \$47 million, generating approximately \$479 million in new economic activity in rural Ontario.

I know that the Conservative Party believes it speaks for rural Ontario, but the fact of the matter is that the concept of a rural economic development program didn't even make the 2007 Conservative platform. The truth is that the McGuinty government has a proud record of investing in rural Ontario, and we have no signs of stopping. In fact, we plan to increase our annual investment in the RED program by 50%.

The RED program is just one of the many facets of this government's plan for rural Ontario. We understand what rural Ontario communities need, and we'll continue to work with them for a great future in rural Ontario.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm happy to stand in the House today to have the opportunity to speak about the good work our government is doing in terms of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. In my riding alone, we have received over \$16 million in much-needed funding: \$11.5 million for the city of Brantford and \$4.5 million for the county of Brant. This funding is extremely important to our local economy and to our citizens' quality of life. The grant will assist our municipality with their delivery of the social programs, support areas with limited property assessment, address challenges faced by rural communities and respond to the policing costs of those very rural communities.

Early this year, the province took full responsibility for Ontario drug benefit program costs, removing this burden from the municipal property tax base of the riding of Brant. As a result, Brant's municipal social program costs will go down. By 2011, our government will also take full responsibility for the riding's Ontario disability support program costs.

No municipality in the province of Ontario will receive less money than they have from last year. The minister ensures me that OMPF funding will not be reduced in 2008. As a government, we can't do anything better than that in terms of working partnerships with our municipalities. We are building a strong provincial-municipal relationship and showing that we are serious about the people of Ontario and, in particular, of my riding of Brant. To the minister and to the Premier, on behalf of the people in my riding, I wish to thank you for the full support you are providing for us in the riding of Brant.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to clear up some misunderstandings about our government's approach to the economy. Unlike the federal finance minister and other federal Tories, we want to invest in communities like Brantford, Oakville, Oshawa and Windsor-Essex. These communities are full of great people, and

they have great potential. The McGuinty government has not turned and will not turn its back on these communities.

There seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of Progressive Conservatives here as well. They call for tax cuts, but if we do that, just like they did over a decade ago, we would be closing hospitals just like they did over a decade ago, cutting social programs just like they did and sending our public education system back into turmoil just like they did. The havoc that the Conservatives wreaked on this province still reverberates. The McGuinty government has had to pick up the pieces that were left behind by the Conservatives, and now Ontario is moving forward.

The fact is, there are over 450,000 more net new jobs than in 2003, when we took over. In January of this year, Ontario outpaced other provinces in manufacturing sales growth. Combined with Quebec, we contributed 97% of the gain in manufacturing sales in January of this year. I hope this clears things up. This government is doing what is right for the economy, doing what is right for the people of Ontario.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for us to wear the prematurity awareness ribbon provided to us by the members of the Linden Fund.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent to wear the ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today, the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 19, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

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. John O'Toole: Today in the Legislature, I urge the Minister of Transportation to take this issue very seriously. The intent of the legislation is to make our highways and byways safer in the province of Ontario. Many governments around the world have already recognized the connection between improving highway safety and the responsible use of technology while driving. The government must recognize the broader issue of driver distraction, and that the use of technology while driving is essentially dangerous and has been proven around the world. I urge the Minister of Transportation to work co-operatively. I would be happy to give him full credit for doing the right thing.

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MADRESA ASHRAFUL ULOOM
ACT, 2008

Mr. Qaadri moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Madresa Ashraful Uloom.

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): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

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 Minister of Transportation for a short statement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll await the statements by ministers.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to talk about another step in Ontario's plans for a cleaner environment and safer roads. This government has heard the public's concerns about speeding trucks on Ontario highways that pollute our environment and create unnecessary risk. The reality is that over one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector; 84% of this comes from road transportation.

Ontario has been studying a mandatory speed limiter program for commercial vehicles for the last 18 months. Our research shows significant environmental and safety benefits. Our government's legislation, if passed, would make speed limiters on large trucks mandatory. This built-in electronic device would cap the speed of trucks at 105 kilometres per hour. The vast majority of large trucks built within the last decade are already equipped with this technology. This legislation will require that these devices be activated on Ontario's roads.

Our proposal would help Ontario to achieve the goals set out in our Go Green action plan on climate change by decreasing fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Under this plan, we have set ambitious but achievable targets to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 6% below 1990 levels by the year 2014, 15% by the year 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

Speed limiters will deliver an estimated 1% to 3% of the greenhouse gas reductions needed to achieve Ontario's 2014 climate change targets. Speed limiters would join a number of important green initiatives already under way to help us meet these targets, including: the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses switch to cleaner technologies such as hybrid power; Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, the largest transit investment in Canadian history; and more recently, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

A recent Transport Canada study found that capping the speed of all large trucks operating in Ontario at a maximum of 105 kilometres per hour would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes. This is like taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. It would also save trucks, or truckers themselves, an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel each and every year.

Ontario is a leader in road safety, and we are always looking for ways to make our highways safer. Studies show that speed has a direct relationship with the severity of injuries in a vehicle crash. Reducing the speed of a

large truck will greatly reduce the impact in a collision. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles. We anticipate that speed limiters would address this situation.

I would like to acknowledge the stakeholders who have helped us to develop this legislation to improve the environment and keep our roads safe. We're joined in the House today by representatives from the Ontario Trucking Association, Pollution Probe, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Safety League, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Lung Association, SmartRisk, and the Ontario Provincial Police. I note, in diverting—I know we're not supposed to divert from the statements—that it's interesting that the Ontario Trucking Association, which is most affected by this, is here today in full support of it and has been for some time. The Ontario Trucking Association states that more than 50% of Ontario's trucks are already voluntarily using speed limiters. The majority of this industry realizes that the use of speed limiters would increase a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs. Large trucks must operate at safe speeds so our friends and families may get home safely.

This legislation, if passed, will help to save lives. It will help us breathe cleaner air. We are serious about improving our environment, and we're committed to improving road safety. Let's tackle these issues together. Let's curb pollution by burning less fuel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Let's reduce collision rates. Let's promote safe driving. Let's keep citizens safe on our roads. I ask all members to support this bill.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES ALLOCATIONS-LOGEMENT

Hon. Jim Watson: I rise today to inform members of an important housing program that is helping thousands of low-income working families across the province. The program is called ROOF, which stands for rental opportunity for Ontario families. It is a \$185-million program that helps low-income working families to pay their rent. These are working families who are not living in social housing, working families who are not receiving any social assistance, working families who are struggling to get by while spending more than 30% of their income on rent. In July 2007, the government launched the ROOF program to ease the struggle; it was launched by my colleague the now Minister of the Environment. Currently—

Applause.

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank him for applauding for himself.

Currently there are approximately 14,000 low-income working families, each receiving a housing allowance of \$100 per month. For these families, this money can mean

the difference in many day-to-day costs like purchasing healthy food or warm winter clothing for children. We know that more families need this assistance. That's why on February 22, I was very pleased to be in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean, particularly at the Michele Heights Community Centre, when we announced the second round of applications for this important housing allowance program.

1400

Pour ces familles, cet argent peut faire toute la différence quant à plusieurs de leurs dépenses quotidiennes, comme l'achat d'aliments sains ou de vêtements d'hiver pour leurs enfants. Nous savons qu'un plus grand nombre de familles a besoin de cette aide.

At the announcement, I had the privilege to meet with Russell Mawby, the city of Ottawa's director of housing, and Eileen Dooley of the United Way, who said, "We have a waiting list for affordable housing and we hope this announcement will reduce that list." They spoke about how programs like ROOF support their clients in their struggle, and how a single mother needs every bit of help to pay the rent and provide for her family.

Housing affordability is a complex issue and covers a broad spectrum of challenges. It's about homelessness. It's about finding safe, affordable housing in one's own community. It's about keeping up with rent payments and supporting a family. It's also about getting a foothold in a housing market that is becoming less and less affordable.

These challenges are varied and they require a variety of initiatives to address them. ROOF is the latest addition to the province's housing program, which includes the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program, the strong communities rent supplement program, the provincial rent bank, the delivering opportunities for Ontario renters initiative, and initiatives to benefit off-reserve aboriginal households.

I believe that ROOF will be a major help to low-income working families. Eligible families must have at least one child under the age of 18, have a net income below \$20,000 per year, as outlined in the program guidelines, and pay more than 30% of their income on rent. Families must not be receiving a rent subsidy or social assistance.

I would encourage families in Ontario to take advantage of the second chance to apply for the ROOF program before the June 30, 2008, deadline. ROOF is making a real difference in the lives of many working families in the province. Families can request applications online at ontario.ca/roof, or by calling the ministry's call centre using the toll-free number 1-888-544-5101.

I hope that all of my colleagues will encourage their constituents to apply for the program. I have sent material to all MPPs' offices and I hope you will distribute it to those individuals who qualify.

Safe, affordable shelter is a basic human need. It is crucial to our survival and our sense of self-worth. Our government believes housing is fundamental to the strength of Ontario.

J'espère que mes collègues encourageront leur commettants à présenter une demande dans le cadre du programme. Notre gouvernement estime que le logement est essentiel à la vitalité de l'Ontario.

I commit to you that our government will continue to do all it can through ROOF and other programs to help people obtain suitable affordable housing. That's why I was so pleased on Monday to be with the Premier and Minister Deb Matthews to announce \$100 million to repair affordable housing units throughout the province of Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am very pleased to rise in the House today to inform members of the record-breaking levels of activity and investment that are being achieved in Ontario's mineral development industry.

I can report to the House that the mood of the industry is upbeat, as demonstrated by record attendance at the recent Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada annual convention in Toronto two weeks ago. At the same time, we've all heard a great deal these past few days and weeks about issues between aboriginal communities and mineral exploration companies. Our government is saddened by these developments. However, it does not lessen our resolve to work co-operatively with Ontario's aboriginal communities. There are many positive stories that I feel should be acknowledged and looked upon as examples of what can be when we all work together in a co-operative, respectful partnership.

From a mining perspective, the good news is that our most recent statistics show that Ontario is expected to once again lead the country in 2008, with \$629 million in exploration expenditures, up from \$502 million in 2007. We are hopeful that this kind of activity will lead to the development of new mines such as the De Beers Canada Victor mine, 90 kilometres west of Attawapiskat on the coast of James Bay, which I am pleased to say is completing its first production run as we speak. With a total investment approaching \$1 billion, De Beers expects the mine to produce six million carats of high-quality diamonds during its life. The Victor mine has employed about 600 people during construction and will employ another 375 during production. Estimates are that this project will create a \$6.7-billion ripple through the provincial economy; much of it, I'm pleased to say, in northern Ontario.

In preparation for the opening of our new mine, the government put in place a highly competitive royalty rate that has positioned Ontario's diamond industry to thrive now and into the future. I'm pleased to say that the hallmark of the Victor mine has been extensive and forthright consultations with local aboriginal partners. This has led to the signing of impact benefit agreements that cover a wide range of issues, including education and training, employment, workplace conditions, business opportunities, environmental protection, social and cultural protection, and significant financial consider-

ations. Our government believes this is only the beginning, and that the minerals sector can provide meaningful opportunities for economic development and job creation for many of the north's aboriginal communities.

We also believe that there is a positive way forward. That's why my ministry has been working, over the past several years, to continuously improve relationships and engagement processes with aboriginal peoples. As part of these efforts, and in keeping with our policy goals outlined in Ontario's first mineral development strategy, we initiated a comprehensive engagement process aimed at developing more effective aboriginal consultation approaches for minerals sector activities. Last year we released a discussion paper as one part of a multi-pronged engagement process that has included numerous meetings, workshops, pilot projects and information-sharing sessions across the north. To date, my ministry has received positive, detailed feedback and advice from many aboriginal communities.

We're also encouraged by the progress made thus far. We're encouraged by the memorandum of understanding that was signed earlier this month between the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations. We're encouraged by other local MOUs between exploration companies operating in northern Ontario and local First Nations, and by the impact benefit agreements signed with several First Nations and tribal councils for the Musselwhite gold mine near Red Lake.

At the recent northern boreal prospectors symposium, more than 100 participants from 30 First Nations and aboriginal organizations came to Sioux Lookout to hear from other First Nations members how northern communities and individuals can benefit from the minerals industry. For the first time, at the recent prospectors' convention in Toronto, an aboriginal organization from Ontario actively participated in seeking business-to-business relationships.

There is no question that serious challenges remain, but these communities and others like them have shown us that there is indeed a way forward. My ministry strongly believes this, and through our commitment to meeting our duty to consult, which we are implementing in the context of the Mining Act, we believe the way forward is communication, co-operation and engagement.

Today I will be joining industry partners for Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. We will be reminded that Ontario's mining industry produced an estimated \$10.7 billion worth of minerals in 2007, and that mining continues to be a pillar of our economy, sustaining some 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. Most importantly, we will be reminded of the opportunity mining offers to the people and communities of the north and, indeed, all of Ontario. I look forward to seeing my colleagues from all sides of the House at today's reception, to greet the members of the mining association. We welcome them all here today and look forward to seeing you later in the day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today in response to the Minister of Transportation's statement regarding speed limiters, and I want to start by thanking our transportation critic for the official opposition, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, for allowing me to respond to the minister.

I think it's important that we remind all members of the House—the ones who were here before and the new ones who just arrived—that back in May 2006, I introduced Bill 115, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, known as the speed limiter bill, to this Legislature. The Ontario Trucking Association, which is here today, has been advocating for this very concept and has been a leader on this front, and they've literally been waiting for the Liberals to get on board. So I want to thank them for all the support that we've received. This isn't a new parade, but once again, as we've so often seen before, the McGuinty parade crashers have jumped in front of the parade and pretended to take the lead.

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Prior to October's election, the Premier travelled all over the province making election announcements on the taxpayer's dime, including a bunch of last-minute environmental items. The minister has asked all members to support this bill, but I think it's also very important to remind everyone here that despite what members of the government are trying to convey now, the Minister of Health himself voted against the legislation when I introduced it.

Interjections: No.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. Not only did he vote against it, I recall him running rapidly from the back room to get into his seat to voice displeasure at the private member's bill, which is the same as the one introduced today. Not only that, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation at that time also voted against it. But I digress. The Minister of Health, who responds to the real and serious needs of long-term-care residents with the insulting suggestion that he wear a diaper—this is the Minister of Health.

I suppose safety and environmental concerns weren't getting the polling numbers needed in order to be a priority for the Liberals—or, worse yet, maybe they were too busy diving into that slush fund—but the bill was never brought before committee. We support the principles of this bill, and I say how truly disappointing it is that the Liberals, who clearly felt that road safety, reduced fuel consumption and reducing emissions weren't important, are now trying to take credit for a concept that wasn't important to them only a few months ago.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to register my concerns in the House that this Minister of Municipal Affairs is using this Legislature as a backdrop for a self-congratulatory reannouncement opportunity for something that has been

reannounced three times. There's nothing new in here. In fact, it was first announced by Minister Gerretsen. He said that he'd have 27,000 low-income families. Then it was announced by yourself, back in December, as 20,000 people. That's 7,000 people less. It seems like you're going in the wrong direction with this plan.

What the minister should be doing here is spending a bit more time keeping the costs of shelter down, not raising the costs, raising taxes and the cost of energy, all of the costs inherent with living in a shelter. You're raising the costs, not lowering them.

Minister, spend a bit more time working with those people that can't afford your high cost of doing business.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased the minister pumped up the "meet the miners" night, which I encourage all members to go to as well. But the minister's statement was a bit like the rooster taking credit for the sunrise. Certainly, Ontario has enormous mineral potential and talented entrepreneurs that are in the industry. But the McGuinty government ain't got much to do with the Victor mine or the other activity, because the minister well knows that his predecessors took Ontario from the number one jurisdiction for mineral investment in the world under the previous Mike Harris PC government out of the top 10 altogether, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's high taxes, high energy and runaway red tape.

I know the minister didn't write this line, but when he says, "In preparation for the opening of our new mine, the government put in place a highly competitive royalty rate"—George Orwell couldn't have come up with that one. I know Gravelle didn't write that, because what you did after the mine was under way was jack the tax rates up, to potentially three times the value—a move, by the way, that would make Hugo Chavez blush. It reverberated throughout the world, and I do hope that this minister, who I know quite well, will fight that and get mining taxes back down to the level that they should be.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm responding to the Minister of Housing's statement. This is how dire the housing situation is in this province: We have over 125,000 households waiting for affordable housing, over 70,000 in the GTA alone, and the average housing wait time is 10 to 12 years. We need ROOF, but we need roofs more, Minister.

I want to announce that I'm going to be tabling a bill next week calling for shelter to become an Ontario human right, because housing is a right. It is a right; it is not a privilege. I know that the McGuinty Liberals treat it as if it were a privilege, so we have one superficial announcement after another. We don't see the shovels in the ground, and that's what Ontarians need. And they need it now.

This is a government, after all, that promised at least 20,000 new builds when they were first elected, and they

have provided less than a third of that, by their very own reckoning, which I have to say is also somewhat suspect.

Again, I reiterate: Housing should be a right, according to the United Nations—that's why I am bringing in the bill—not a privilege. This government treats it as if it were a privilege.

So what do we need? We need roofs as well as ROOF. We need a shovel in the ground now—new units.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I want to first of all welcome all those from the mining industry who are here today. We understand very well in our caucus the importance that the mining industry plays in Ontario and what it means for hard-working people who are employed in the industry—some of the best-paying jobs, some of the most technical jobs and some of the jobs that quite frankly sustain our communities, such as Sudbury, Red Lake, Timmins and others.

I want to say to those who might have forgotten, I come out of the mining industry. I worked underground for a number of years as an electrician and understand the industry well. I want to say to the minister across the way, what gall you have coming into this House today and crowing on your record of mining. On the De Beers project, you guys tripled the mining royalty. You come into the House and you say, "We have a competitive rate for royalties when it comes to diamond mining." De Beers went to the international board and said, "We are selling this project in Ontario as a stable place to grow, as a stable place to do business. We are saying that Ontario is not going to change the rules halfway through the process."

Do you know how surprised everybody was at the last budget? People basically fell off their seats because they couldn't believe this government, after they were involved, getting ready to spend a billion dollars to bring that mine on to production—that you would essentially triple the taxation rate on diamonds. I say that is not a progressive move. That is not a fair move. That is one that is quite regressive and one, quite frankly, that should be undone.

Then you come into the House, today of all days, a couple of days after we've basically jailed the leadership of the community of KI for trying to do what is right by their community and making sure that, yes, mining happens in that community but that the community is able to benefit. The provincial government's response is not to say, "Let's put in place protocols that basically deal with the need to consult between First Nations and the provincial government." The industry understands this. The industry understands that at the end of the day, if we are going to do business in mining in northern Ontario, we have to have the protocols in place to make sure that First Nations are benefactors of the project.

What have you done? You've taken the leadership and you've thrown them in jail. I say to this government,

"Shame on you," because that is not co-operation. That is how you basically entrench the First Nations community into a position that quite frankly none of us are going to benefit from, because you guys have set it up.

I say to this government across the way, if you want to talk about co-operation, resolve the issue. Tell your Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and tell your Premier to do what the mining industries and others have been calling for, and that is to put in place protocols when it comes to development and when it comes to exploration, and have revenue-sharing put in place so that when mining happens in communities, everybody can benefit.

The last point I want to make—I use De Beers as the example of how to do things right. Yes, De Beers did it right, but they didn't have the support of your government or other governments to the degree they needed in order to work their way through trying to negotiate a deal with the community of Attawapiskat and others. They've basically been on their own because this government has been missing in action when it comes to the leadership role that they have to play to assist industry to get those IBAs in place so that you can do the development. They're still negotiating some of those agreements with some of the communities, and this government has been missing in action. So don't come in here and try to pretend that you guys are progressive on this file, because you failed a long time ago.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the members to introduce a number of guests today.

First I'd like to introduce the former member of the 35th and 36th Parliaments from the riding of Victoria-Haliburton, and from that riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for the 37th Parliament, Chris Hodgson, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

1420

On behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain, I would like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. David Agnew, Ms. Judy Agnew and Mr. Ron Barker.

On behalf of the member for Welland, I'd like to welcome the students from the law program at Niagara College, in Welland. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I'd like to welcome Jeff Muzzi, the father of page Daniel Muzzi. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

VISITOR

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd be remiss if I didn't point and welcome in the gallery a former employee of the Ministry of Energy, my daughter, Angie Robson.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Deputy Premier. You can imagine the shock when we read yesterday's headline in the Saskatoon StarPhoenix: "Windsor, Ont. Mayor Wants Residents to Fly West for Jobs." Windsor, as we all know, is the hometown of both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development. But thanks to this government's failed economic policies, the mayor of that fine city is looking outside Ontario to find work for his people—not to the two supposedly influential cabinet ministers.

This is just one glaring, and I trust very embarrassing, example of how, thanks to this government's failed economic policies, Ontario is setting records for people leaving the province. If the Premier and his colleagues won't listen to us, maybe they'll listen to the mayor of Windsor and admit that this government's policies of high taxation and suffocating red tape are killing jobs. Will you do that, Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I hope the honourable member might at some point have the opportunity to speak with the mayor of Windsor, who I think was primarily focused on trying to build opportunities through their airport to service a broader array of communities. But our government has been tremendously committed to the people of Windsor, with about a billion and a half dollars of investment—investment which demonstrates our fundamental commitment to the understanding that a strong economy depends on having strong people and strong infrastructure as well.

It's sad that on a continual basis the honourable member, taking his lead from the federal finance minister, is trying to have a flashback in the province of Ontario, a flashback to a circumstance where the panacea of tax cuts was offered without the requisite acknowledgment that that leads to service cuts. It would be nice for the honourable member to stand up and start identifying all of those areas where he would like to see the cuts to services instead of standing up and asking on a daily basis about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't know how the minister can explain the mayor of Windsor's actions with a straight face. In the last few months we've seen British Columbia attempt to lure Ontario workers away, we've seen Alberta hold job fairs here, and now we witness the spectacle of the mayor of Windsor, home of two senior Liberal ministers, outing this government and its failed economic policies, urging his citizens to go west for work—a shameful and sad situation in this wonderful province. But the mayor is stating the obvious: There are few jobs to be had in Windsor, and your sheep-like follower ministers have failed their community and this Liberal government is failing our province. Minister,

when will you stop ignoring the evidence—admit it, you're on the wrong track—and switch course?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member was part of a government that liked to pretend it was on the right track. Its right track was cutting taxes and cutting jobs. Today other jurisdictions compete for workers, but back in their day they called nurses hula-hoops and they sent them packing. That's the difference between our government and theirs.

We fundamentally believe in the idea that a strong economy depends upon strong people. That's why we have 100,000 additional opportunities in our post-secondary environment today, making sure that the well-trained workers are part of the attraction to our province. There is a solution rooted in the past and rooted in ideology, and the people of the province of Ontario have seen that play. They don't want to return to a day where cutting \$5 billion because of tax reductions has the result of cutting services left, right and centre.

We're going to continue to invest in the people of Windsor because we know they have strength. That's why we've invested \$1.5 billion in the Windsor economy today.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Given the minister's recent comments about the challenges facing long-term-care residents, he has a lot of nerve quoting former members.

The deputy and his Premier won't listen to us; they won't listen to other provinces; they won't listen to the mayor of Windsor. They have ideological blinders on, continuing down a dead-end road of high taxes and increased red tape that has cost the province over 194,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004, and leading to have-not status for the province.

I have a quote from another individual that just maybe the Deputy Premier might listen to: "Corporate tax cuts will give Canada's exporters a tax advantage to replace the lost currency advantage. It's not a left-wing policy, it's not a right-wing policy. It's for families and workers, a sound policy." Stéphane Dion, January 2008.

Deputy Premier, the evidence is all around you. Will you take off the blinders and stop choking business?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do appreciate the pundit's offering compliments on the results in the federal by-elections the other night.

The honourable member wants to talk about nerve speaking about health care. It was the Health Services Restructuring Commission which rolled through his communities and other communities in the province of Ontario and led to the closure of 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario. He talks about ideological blinders. He stands up today and asks for a return to those same policies—cut taxes as a revenue eliminator, so that they can force their agenda of cutting services for Ontarians.

We understand that a strong economy depends on strong people and on strong infrastructure. That's why our government has made those investments. But last

year's budget began an elimination of business education taxes. Capital taxes were reduced and eliminated for the manufacturing sector and the forestry sector in our fall economic statement and—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The next question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. This government—

Interjection: Who is it?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, who is it?

This government is laying waste to the small business sector in this province, and this minister is missing in action—nowhere to be found. We saw the latest yesterday with a question from the member for Sarnia about how this government is taking business away from small and independent pharmacies across Ontario when it comes to WSIB claims. I'm sure the minister knows about this. It's a major concern in rural and northern Ontario.

Will the minister tell the House whether or not he has been in touch with the Minister of Labour to protest this decision to steal business from hard-working independent business people and the Minister of Labour's gall in describing it as a "great policy"? Have you done your job here? Have you talked to him about this?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Labour, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have indeed had an opportunity to speak with the chair of the WSIB about this particular policy. Whether it's employers—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. Pardon me; no, leave the clock running. A point of order?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly the question was directed at a minister about if a minister is doing his correct job. I ask you if this is an appropriate referral considering the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister chose to refer to the Minister of Labour, who's responsible for the WSIB.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I was saying, I have had an opportunity to speak to this particular policy with the chair of the WSIB. The WSIB, as members know, is an arm's-length agency of this government. As I said yesterday, they are responsible indeed for their purchasing policy.

What this policy does is, it provides workers across this province with the ability to pick up the phone and order the material they need. It's a limited amount of material that's available under this program, but it gives them the convenience of—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

1430

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, is the word "spineless" parliamentary?

The Speaker: Keep the clock running. Again, we had a discussion yesterday about words that are or are not parliamentary. I believe that that is a personal attack, and I would ask that the member withdraw his statement, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I will withdraw, at your request, Mr. Speaker. But it was also a personal question that dealt with the minister's activities—specifically with his activities.

I want to go back to him. During the pre-budget consultations, the finance committee heard from small business people. They heard about the effects this government's wrong-track economic policies are having on this critical part of the economy. The federation of independent business says that the number one problem for small and medium-sized business in this province is the increase in total tax burden and the burden of red tape. Will the Minister of Small Business please advise the House if he shares the concerns of the business owners he's supposed to represent at the cabinet table, and whether or not he's been advocating for lower taxes for this critical sector of our economy? Have you been doing your job?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to refer this back to the minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, it's interesting. About 15 minutes ago, I met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is what they told me: Our government is on the right track; we are doing the right thing. We are trying to decrease the burden on our small businesses, we are taking the right initiative by decreasing the capital tax on manufacturers, we are providing a capital cost allowance to manufacturers, and we are working with them closely. We are not sitting with them and just asking a question; we are actually out there, meeting with them and hearing them. I had five sessions with them to hear what needs to be done. We are doing exactly what our members are asking us to do.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think we'd find too many people in the business community who would agree with that.

Here are some comments from the small-business community heard at the finance committee hearings, and I'm quoting:

"Taxes and regulation are becoming prohibitive for small businesses. No incentive to be in business in the first place."

Another quote: "Small business is unable to sustain the current level of taxation. We find more and more erosion of our profits, with the lion's share going to government."

This minister is supposedly the advocate of small business at the cabinet table, and one would hope that he understands that a strong economy is the only way we

can afford our hospitals, schools, and the programs that we all care about. Surely he's been pushing this message at the cabinet table. Can he confirm this? Has he been doing his job and standing up for small and medium-sized business in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I actually had the chance to meet with four independent groups in the last two months. I don't know how many people the Leader of the Opposition met that he can stand here and ask these questions.

Let me just say what Judith Andrew had to say. She said, "It's nice to see that the government is coming in with some tax relief that puts money in their pockets and helps them weather the coming storm."

That's exactly what we are doing: We are doing the right thing that needs to be done. We do have a plan on five fronts. But in addition to that, we are decreasing the capital tax, we are matching the capital cost allowance, we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The leader of the third party.

WINDSOR ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Premier rejected the NDP's Buy Ontario plan because he said, "It would compromise our economy." The city of Windsor has already seen 35% of its manufacturing jobs vanish under the McGuinty government. That sounds like an economy that has already been significantly compromised. Given that the McGuinty government has already compromised the economy of the Windsor area with the destruction of 19,000 manufacturing jobs, what is the McGuinty government's real excuse for not adopting the NDP's Buy Ontario plan?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm not sure what makes a greater mockery of their very plan. Is it the opposition that they have to the expansion of the subway line to York University and beyond to York region, or is it in their very own spending as a party? They hire a polling firm from Winnipeg that they spend \$78,000 on and an ad agency from Vancouver that they spend more than \$100,000 on. So if the honourable member really believes in Buy Ontario, maybe he should demonstrate it with those dollars that he has authority over.

Mr. Howard Hampton: At least I don't fly to Chicago to seek an image consultant.

But the issue is this: Windsor has lost 19,000 manufacturing jobs, representing more than a third of its total manufacturing workforce. Things have gotten so bad that the mayor of Windsor is now trying to line up direct flights to fly unemployed Windsor workers to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

My question is this: Does the McGuinty government actually believe that long-distance commuting of unemployed Windsor workers to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan is better than a Buy Ontario policy for manufacturing jobs in Windsor?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's really important for people to know what the people of Windsor understand: We build great cars in my town and in this province. Ninety percent of all of our vehicles—90% of them—go to the United States. We are an export jurisdiction and we're proud of it.

Not only that, the people in Windsor know that for many years they have been leading the nation in terms of productivity. We are the first ones to understand the challenge that we're having right now. That's why this government has come forward in just these last four years with a billion and a half dollars, far more than any of you on the other side of this House could ever envision, in investment in the city of Windsor; basic infrastructure. But I will remind, people of Windsor, every member on that side of the House—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The sad reality is that the McGuinty government has been so effective that 19,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared from Windsor. The McGuinty government has been so effective that \$825 million in manufacturing wages has been ripped out of the Windsor economy. The two Windsor cabinet ministers in the McGuinty government have been so busy twiddling their thumbs that the mayor of Windsor is now saying that workers from Windsor should seriously consider commuting to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan because there aren't any jobs in Windsor.

I ask again: If that is your economic policy for unemployed workers in Windsor, that they should commute to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan, stand up and tell the people of Windsor that that's a better option than a Buy Ontario policy that would help to sustain and create manufacturing jobs in Windsor.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: The people of Windsor are in partnership with the government of Ontario, and we would like to think the federal government, who are not on the page yet, but we hope to bring them onside. What we know is, we've invested in Valiant, we've invested in Chrysler; we hope to invest in Ford along with the federal counterpart. What we hope is that our new medical school will bring new jobs; our new engineering school will bring new jobs. The \$400-million investment in our casino is bringing new jobs. We have invested in the city of Windsor and we will continue to do so.

1440

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Deputy Premier: The McGuinty Liberals could help sustain and create thousands of jobs in hard-hit communities now by implementing a meaningful Buy Ontario transit policy that would ensure that 50% of the work that goes into the building of transit vehicles is done here in Ontario. Will the Deputy Premier admit that anything less than 50% in

a Buy Ontario plan will only further compromise Ontario's manufacturing jobs?

Hon. George Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party, who refused to agree that the extension of the subway to York University, which would have created thousands upon thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario, should proceed. I appreciate that.

I know that some of his colleagues behind him were flabbergasted when he happened to come forward with the policy of opposing that extension, because that in itself, of course, would provide the opportunity for the stock associated with it to be produced in Ontario.

I can tell the member that we are working hard to ensure that when these projects are undertaken, the overwhelming amount of money spent on those projects—for instance, 82% in the Move Ontario program—will be spent in the province of Ontario. We look for any other opportunities we can to ensure that we have a fair opportunity to access—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully for an answer to the question, but there was no answer. It's a no-brainer: If the construction work is going to happen here, the construction jobs will be here. But this is about manufacturing jobs. This is about ensuring, if we're going to spend money on urban transit, that manufacturing jobs happen here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government is missing in action on this. Meanwhile, municipal leaders have convened manufacturing summits with labour leaders and business leaders. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has endorsed our Buy Ontario plan. Workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay have endorsed the Buy Ontario plan. We offer a Buy Ontario plan for this government to adopt.

My question is, when will the McGuinty government show some leadership and adopt a Buy Ontario plan that will sustain at least 50% of the manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You can tell that the member has his usual simplistic answer to every challenge that's out there. I appreciate that his colleague, the member for Timmins-James Bay, who has been a good friend for a number of years, is, I think, sincere in the goal he sets. I think that what we have to look at, when we develop a policy of this kind, is the impact it would have overall on plants in the province of Ontario.

The member for Windsor, for instance, stated earlier today that in terms of exports, 90% of the vehicles produced in Windsor, in the instance she gave, were in fact exported. We want to ensure that the export markets that are available to those who produce transit equipment in Thunder Bay and elsewhere continue to be available. So we want to be cautious when we proceed with a plan to assist our people—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government's response seems to be that the United States is wrong in adopting a Buy America policy in terms of transit equipment, which results in 60% of the manufacturing work being done in that country. The McGuinty government seems to be saying that Germany is wrong, when it results in 98% of the manufacturing work being done in that country, and France is wrong, and Belgium is wrong—except, all of these countries have successfully built an industry around the manufacture of various kinds of transit vehicles.

Toronto reasoned that if they purchased from Thunder Bay, some 70% of the work would actually be done in parts plants around the greater Toronto area. Everybody else seems to see the logic. Where is the McGuinty government? Why are you on a different page from virtually every other transit manufacturing jurisdiction in the world?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, I appreciate this question coming from the individual who opposed the extension of the subway in Toronto to York University and all the jobs it would produce. He can smirk and smile over there about that, but his own members feel very uncomfortable about that—they disagree with him—and they should be.

May I say that our government is looking at every opportunity it can to be of assistance to all of those who are involved in any of these transit projects. He will note that the TTC, which has members on it who are members of the New Democratic Party—but they are members of the New Democratic Party who face the reality of being in office and having to come up with practical solutions—did not choose the 50% solution. In fact, they stipulated 25% Canadian content as part of their proposal. So I think the member should speak—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Minister, have you been working with the Minister of the Environment to reduce regulatory red tape for small and medium-sized businesses?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me thank the member for asking this question. Last year alone, we were able to reduce the paper burden impact on our small and medium-sized businesses by about 24 percentage points. When we release the number by the end of March this year, you will see similar progress made again this year. So there will be sufficient progress made on the small and medium-sized businesses because we think small and medium-sized businesses are critical to our economy. They employ 50% of the total workforce, and they are about 99% of all corporations in Ontario. That's why we are working very closely with them to reduce the

paperwork burden and, at the same time, making other reforms as well, so that we can move forward and make them more competitive in this competitive environment.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, let me tell you about a new form—because you didn't really answer the first part of my question—that was introduced in August 2007 for the generation registration report requiring new and more detailed information and reporting. I've heard from some frustrated small business operators. Here's what one that uses a product to clean out pump bearing houses in their shop had to say:

“Why in heaven's name am I considered the producer of the cleaning fluid when in fact we only contaminate it with the product of our cleanings? You must think that all companies, no matter what size, employ chemical engineers and corporate lawyers to defrag the crap you write into your applications. There are thousands of small generators throughout Ontario (auto mechanics, pump/motor/fan/etc.) that are repair depots whose only waste is greases and oils and yet we are placed amongst the major chemical users insofar as waste generation is concerned.

“Give us a break, ease up and simplify this ludicrous yearly event.”

Minister, will you follow this business person's advice and simplify this reporting process?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Our government has paid a lot of attention to making sure that there is a regulatory reform for the small and medium-sized businesses when we reduce the burden on our small and medium-sized businesses. All of our ministries have been working very closely together to make sure that that happens, and the Premier is providing strong leadership on that front to ensure that our environment becomes competitive and becomes the leader, not only in this country but in North America as well, in making sure that the environment is a great environment for small businesses to survive, succeed and start in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Yesterday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tried to indicate that the NAN northern table discussions between the McGuinty government and Nishnawbe-Aski Nation were continuing. In fact, he said that directly to the media. I want to read a letter of today's date from the grand chief:

“As NAN grand chief, I suspended the participation of NAN leadership at the northern table Monday following a caucus of NAN chiefs who were in Thunder Bay for the court proceeding. This bilateral partnership with NAN leadership will remain suspended until further direction by chiefs-in-assembly.”

Does the McGuinty government still want to tell this House and tell the media that the northern table discussions are continuing?

1450

Hon. Michael Bryant: Only the New Democratic Party would celebrate the idea that discussions would discontinue. In fact what is happening is that I'm continuing to have discussions with Grand Chief Stan Beardy. I spoke to him yesterday at some length; I'm speaking with him today; I spoke with him earlier in the week. I'm speaking with him, national Chief Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief Angus Toulouse and others, as well as reaching out to the acting chief in KI and the vice-chief and co-chief at Ardoch as we continue discussions to try to ensure that we continue to make agreements and find solutions that will allow for First Nations in the north and in the south to see more jobs and more prosperity for their communities. That's what we're fighting for.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I can tell members of the McGuinty government that misrepresenting the position of NAN chiefs is not going to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that the member withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I withdraw.

I can say to the government that stating that the northern table discussions are continuing when in fact the chiefs have suspended them is not helpful. Nor is it helpful when the minister tells the media that he has offered to pay the legal expenses of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, when we then find out that he has offered \$200,000 when in fact the legal expenses are over \$700,000.

It seems to me that if the McGuinty government wants to proceed, there has to be some authenticity. When is the minister going to admit that it's the McGuinty government that is responsible for the conflict that has arisen? You're responsible because you've failed to meet your constitutional duty to accommodate and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, we have said that we'll pay the legal fees of KI. We've said that we will assess the fees above \$200,000. Only the leader of the NDP would think that \$700,000 in legal fees is something that the government of any province should just pay, sight unseen. You'll excuse us for trying to assess the fees over and above \$200,000.

It's just part of an attempt by this government to try to come to a solution. But the member really disrespects all of those First Nations that have come to agreements with the mining industry across this province to build more jobs and build more revenue. I'm talking about Sagamok First Nation, Timiskaming First Nation, Webequie, Attawapiskat, Moose Cree—the list goes on and on. There are far, far more First Nations working with the mining industry and working with the government to the benefit of First Nations than the leader of the NDP would have us believe.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Attorney General. As you know, the terrible contaminated water tragedy in Walkerton which occurred in May 2000 resulted in a compensation plan that was to provide financial support and compensation for those who became sick, lost loved ones or incurred other losses. Minister, can you provide this House with a status update on this compensation plan?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the member for Huron–Bruce for her determination and advocacy in this area.

As a result of the terrible tragedy in Walkerton that occurred in May 2000, the government reached a settlement with claimants in 2001. That settlement provided that the government fund compensation for those affected through an independent, court-overseen process. There is a court monitor; there are those specifically required to assess these claims. Bringing us up to date, over 9,000 cases have been settled. Over \$65 million has been provided to provide everything from compensation for the terrible loss to compensation for simple living expenses. It has been a very difficult time, but the court process has moved with—

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Minister, I do want to thank you for sharing the information. I can tell you that it is reassuring that this plan has been able to offer some help to those who have suffered so much. However, there are concerns, and they have been raised in the Walkerton area, about a number of claims that still remain outstanding. Can you assure the people of Walkerton that their claims will be dealt with in a fair and a timely manner?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I said, 9,000 cases have been resolved. There are approximately 101 cases remaining, all of which will be dealt with by government funding through an independent court-monitored process. So this means that the court monitor and the adjusters are working with every single one of the claimants, assisting them in assessing the claims, determining what additional information is required, determining how best to move forward. Every single one, I understand, knows the process, knows the next steps, has the options available. As a government we are absolutely determined to ensure that the necessary funding is in place to make sure that all claims, as assessed by the independent process, are resolved. We'll see this through to its conclusion. There are 101 left. I'm hoping for as expeditious a resolution as possible. Again, I thank the member for Huron–Bruce for her determined advocacy.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Deputy Premier: The Minister of Finance's so-called Investing in Ontario Act, introduced yesterday, is not exactly what he claimed

it would be. In fact, the bill defines an eligible recipient as "a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit." The word "municipalities," which he claimed, is nowhere to be found as an eligible recipient. Minister, isn't it true, then, that under that definition, a hall-of-fame Liberal slush fund recipient like the Ontario cricket association would qualify under this bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I think that all of us were very enthusiastic to see the response that came from noted municipal leaders like Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga. She's been one of those who has been waging a very aggressive and appropriate campaign to encourage the federal government to offer an appropriate level of support, recognizing the underlying circumstances for infrastructure.

As I had a chance in earlier questions from the leader, I would acknowledge that we really do believe fundamentally that investing in quality infrastructure is important. That's why, as this bill comes forward for debate, it will enjoy enthusiastic support from our side. We'll look forward to all the critiques and amendments that the honourable member might wish to offer, but for now we're delighted with the progress associated with the idea that our municipalities need further sustained investment.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know it wasn't the deputy leader; it's obviously the Minister of Finance who tried to pull a fast one on municipal leaders and MPPs by suggesting that this was about a municipal capital program for future surpluses. If you look at the bill, Deputy Premier, that was introduced yesterday, you can see that what the minister claimed last week is not in keeping with the facts when you actually read the bill. For example, cabinet would be able to decide "to whom payments would be made, the purposes for which payments" are to be made and "the method of and basis for calculating the payments." Again, the word "municipality" is not part of that bill.

Minister, it's nothing but another Liberal slush fund trying to escape the scrutiny of the Provincial Auditor. Will you agree just to scrap this bill altogether, this back-door Liberal slush fund, and come forward with a real program that's transparent for municipal capital?

Hon. George Smitherman: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: It's a little rich, coming from that party, talking about funding to the municipal sector. They're the kings and queens of downloading over there, and the municipal community will never forgive them or forget the punishment they suffered as a result of downloading costs that should be at the provincial level.

Let me quote the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Doug Reycraft, who said, after Minister Duncan introduced the Investing in Ontario Act, that it "is another significant step in the province's commitment to partnering with municipalities to help

ease the infrastructure challenges they are facing.” This is an act that is going to help municipalities, and we’re very proud of it. We call on that party to come forward and support this particular piece of legislation. We will then forgive you for all of the damage you did to—

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

1500

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Quand M^{me} Rachelle St-Amand visitait sa mère dans une maison de soins de longue durée de Sudbury, elle a trouvé d’autres résidants dans le lit de sa mère, des selles sur les meubles, des sous-vêtements souillés sur le plancher et des résidants complètement nus qui se promenaient dans les corridors.

Madame St-Amand told the Sudbury Star that they need more one-on-one, and they don’t have the staff to do it. Does the minister think that our loved ones in long-term-care homes deserve a minimum standard of care of 3.5 hours?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question. First off, I want to say that for anyone who is visiting a long-term-care home or has a resident there who doesn’t think the care is at an appropriate level, their responsibility is to call the action line which is posted inside the door of all long-term-care homes. I give the honourable member and all Ontarians the assurance that those compliance cases are dealt with in a very timely way.

I’m pleased as well that we are moving toward the implementation of a regulation that will have the effect of establishing a much higher standard of care than the New Democratic Party had when they were in office. She calls today for 3.5 hours, but the legacy of that party was 2.25 hours. In the province of Ontario today we have 2.95 average hours of care per day for all residents of long-term care, and being added to as we speak.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I’d like to read you a quote from the Sudbury Star dated March 11: “No one who talked to the Star blamed staff or management at long-term care facilities. The consensus is that they are overworked, doing the best they can with limited resources. The question each asks is: Why are resources so thin? Why is it so hard to treat our mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers with dignity in their final years?”

These questions are ones that all Ontarians are asking. What is the minister’s response?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that no community has had a greater increase in the number of long-term-care beds in Ontario than the Sudbury community. To date, that increase represents 47% more beds added in the last several years.

I want to say to the honourable member that I agree it’s important to have higher standards in long-term care. That’s why we’re already 0.6 hours per day higher than when the NDP was in office; 9.55 million additional hours of care today, every year, in the province of Ontario’s long-term-care homes than when the New Democratic Party was in office. Those will be added to as we make further investments in both nursing and personal-support workers. Accordingly, I do want to say to the honourable member that we believe these individuals deserve a high level of care. That’s why we’re so fundamentally committed to it and that’s why we’ve added an additional 9.55 million hours.

TOURISM

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. The tourism industry is a vital part of Ontario’s economy. We are all aware of the many challenges the tourism sector in Ontario has faced over the past few years: the high value of the Canadian dollar, higher gas prices, and the US proposal to increase border security through passport requirements. Tourism has increasingly become a more competitive industry, and we are competing on a global stage as never before. Would the minister inform members of the House about what the government is doing to confront these challenges?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for that question and for his clear understanding of how important tourism is to Ontario, to our economy and to strengthening our communities across this province.

I can tell you that Premier McGuinty and this government take tourism very seriously. Our government has been working closely with our tourism partners to address the challenges that, yes, are before us. That’s why we’re investing more in Ontario tourism today than ever before in our history. We continue to build those strong partnerships with our attractions, our festivals, our events, our restaurants and our associations. At this critical time, the industry has asked for a comprehensive competitiveness study of the industry, to be led by someone who has this strong understanding of the public sector and enterprise. That’s why I’m delighted that Greg Sorbara will be the chair of this most important study.

Mr. David Zimmer: The other day I was listening to the radio and I heard the leader of the official opposition say that there are no major attractions to get visitors to come to the city of Toronto and spend their money. As a member from one of the Toronto ridings, that was an appalling statement. In fact, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario have just undergone major renovations and are setting a world-class standard. The Toronto International Film Festival is world-renowned and attracted visitors from all over the world this year and every year.

I’d like the minister to expand on how the competitiveness study will look at how we can best leverage these great attractions that we have here in Ontario and particularly in the city of Toronto.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I would like to thank the member for Willowdale for that question. It's so unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition would knock down the tourism sector with a glass-half-empty attitude, a sector that employs over 300,000 people in this province. However, like I said before, our government realizes the importance of tourism, and that's why we're investing in tourism, investing in our economy. This is the largest employer of our youth. To make sure that happens, Greg Sorbara as the chair will be seeing what we're doing well in the province, where we've had some major successes, where we can improve and where we can take advantage of the many opportunities in this industry that is experiencing such phenomenal growth.

DEVELOPMENT FEES

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Work on the Hampton Hotel in Brantford has now been shut down on eight separate days by the Haudenosaunee Development Institute demanding payment. This is just one of several construction sites in Brantford shut down by protesters demanding extortion fees. Aside from the Hampton Hotel, there are the Mission Estates on Garden Avenue, First Urban at Gretzky and Henry, and the Grand River Avenue site of home builder Mike Quattrociocchi.

Yesterday, you said you are "going to work" with Six Nations, municipalities and developers. We've had two years of construction shutdowns. Minister, when will you start working with area home builders?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, we'll continue to work with area home builders, and we'll continue to work with municipal leaders and, yes, we will continue to work with Six Nations leadership. I've never heard the official opposition talk about any of those members working with Six Nations leadership. We're not going to pick and choose who in that community we're going to work with to try to make progress. I've expressed to band council at Six Nations, I have expressed to the confederacy in the Haudenosaunee Six Nations that obviously we all need to treat each other with mutual respect on all sides as we work through these issues, and I will continue to do so.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, Minister, the home builders do have questions. They obviously have questions on the land dispute negotiations and progress or lack thereof, the demands of HDI and the status of property rights in the province of Ontario. They want to meet with you face to face; your YouTube publicity stunts just don't cut it with the business community. What options do they have?

Mr. Quattrociocchi has a question. If he were to bring his backhoe to Queen's Park, would the police stand by in the same fashion as in Caledonia and as in Brantford? On policing, Minister, Brantford Police Services need help. When are you going to stop blaming Ottawa, step up, fund and resource the extra policing required as a result of these confrontations in the city of Brantford?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, there you go, Mr. Speaker. You heard it pretty clearly right there. There's a

difference between Premier McGuinty's approach on this side of the House and the John Tory approach on that side of the House. On this side of the House, we understand that the police are independent of the government. It's not the Premier's police or the executive's police; it's an independent police force. It's a civil society.

1510

Over there, the former Premier and leader of their party—we know what his approach to this was: "Get those Indians out of the park," he said. That is not our approach, and that will never be our approach. We will continue to follow recommendations of the Ipperwash commission and not take any so-called leadership from the official opposition. Shame on you.

DIET SUPPLEMENTS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Does the minister support best nutrition practices for recipients on ODSP?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This government is very serious about the quality of life of those on ODSP or social assistance. Of course we support diet being part of good nutrition and a good way of life. That's why we have seen an increase in the diet budget and the number of people who are receiving supplements for a special diet.

Mr. Michael Prue: If that is the case, perhaps the minister can explain to this House why someone like Brian Woods of Lindsay, who has diabetes, had to have his food allowance reduced and his leg subsequently amputated; or why a person like Julie Sauvé of Bracebridge, who has multiple sclerosis, has been denied the high-protein, high-calorie diet she needs to maintain weight and muscle strength. Perhaps the minister will know. In both cases, your ministry decimated their special diet allowances.

My question back to you again: Is it the minister's intention to defend these reprehensible actions now that the case is before the Human Rights Commission?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm sure the member of the opposition party knows that I cannot comment on specific cases. But the thing that I can assure the member is that we are very serious about improving their quality of life and also their nutrition. That's why for the past five years the number of people receiving a special diet has more than doubled; I would say that it has tripled. The budget went from \$5 million to \$128 million.

I cannot comment on specific cases, but every case is being reviewed. If the case is before the Human Rights Tribunal, let's wait for the decision of the Human Rights Tribunal.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Education. This government believes that the best way to build a strong, publicly funded education system is to

involve our educational partners, including and especially the parents.

In January, this government announced continued funding for Parents Reaching Out grants. More than 1,300 projects are being funded through a \$2.3-million investment across the province in 2008-09. This funding will go to local school councils and also to regional parent engagement projects. Minister, what specifically does this mean for children and families in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The first and most important thing this means is that students will do better in school, because what the research says is that if their parents are involved in their education, they are going to achieve higher success. That is the fundamental of our parent involvement policy.

We're recognizing the vital role that parents play in the school community and in their children's lives. We've invested \$2.3 million, and that's \$1.1 million for individual school council projects and \$1.2 million for regional-provincial projects.

Some of the examples of the kinds of things that parents are doing with this money are workshops for parents to increase their engagement in their children's education. We know that there are some parents who are less comfortable coming into the school, and we need the parents in the school, to reach out to those parents, to bring them in and help them to be comfortable. Whether it's a language issue or whether it's just a familiarity issue, we need those kinds of workshops to help parents come into the school.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, thank you for that information. I know that in my own riding, parents put a lot of time, energy and creativity into their applications for these projects. People in my riding are extremely pleased that we are able to support innovative projects in the Ottawa area that will encourage more parents to become engaged. People in the Ottawa area will benefit from over \$70,000 provided for school councils, for initiatives including parent seminars, speaking engagements and school events that involve families. As well, I understand that the Ottawa area has received almost \$82,000 in parent-driven regional initiatives, such as projects encouraging partnerships between the home and school through web-based communications and a parent-led student nutrition project.

Minister, I also understand that these Parents Reaching Out grants are one part of our plan to it make it easier for all parents to participate in their child's education. Could you please enlighten us on what else our government is doing in this regard?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On top of those projects that bring parents into the school, those outreach projects, we've funded local school councils. We've provided money to school councils. We've provided money to regional parent bodies, and also we've created a provincial parent board. The purpose of all of those bodies is to enhance parent involvement and make sure that we get the best advice on what parents need to be involved.

We've also put in place 89 parenting and family literacy centres in high-needs neighbourhoods across the province. Those parent and family literacy centres are extremely important. They get young kids used to a school environment and some of the routines of early childhood education—ready for kindergarten—but they also bring parents into the school and allow the parents to understand what the routines of the schools are. So those are related issues—as well as a website, abc123, that allows parents to look for tips to help their kids with homework.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Day after day in the House we've been hearing of the pressure of 180,000-plus jobs lost, mostly in manufacturing in Ontario, but all we're hearing from you is a response not recognizing the drag on the economy of high taxes, high energy prices, as well as red tape. In fact, Deputy Premier, you're stifling the opportunities in the province of Ontario. What we hear generally is the typical Liberal response of, "Don't worry, be happy."

In an article today in my riding of Durham there is a response from April Cullen, and I'm going to quote here. It says, "I suspect we'll see aftershocks of the layoffs down the road when people start to exhaust their savings and exhaust other benefits...."

Deputy Premier, what is your plan to deal with not just the aftershock but with the dismal state of the economy, not just in Durham but in the province of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Actually, I had an opportunity to be in Durham and speak with the chamber of commerce there. I will tell you it was one of the warmest receptions I've received, in particular when I spoke about the requirement for the federal and provincial governments to work together when we face such challenging times in the manufacturing sector.

On that same day that I was in Durham, General Motors actually spoke of the potential of an investment in Oshawa very much related to this area. As this member knows well, we are specifically asking the federal government to join us, to help these companies make major investments. A company the size of General Motors, for example, would benefit from the tune of about a \$10-million corporate tax cut, just based on our finance minister's last economic update. That's the kind of initiative that they see the Ontario government coming forward with, not to mention the level of support that we have shown so far.

1520

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, that is the minister who comes from a riding where they're giving advice to send people out west to get a job. To have her in charge of anything in the economy is an absolute shame. In fact, I can't imagine I hear—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to leave the clock running. I just ask that we have some respect for the individual members. In your initial question, you talked about laughing at the ministry, and you've just taken another jab at the minister. I just ask that we at least have some respect for one another.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect, I think what I'm looking for is a little respect from the opposition. I'm asking the question not on behalf of the opposition party, but on behalf of the staff and the councillors of Durham region. They're concerned here, Minister, about the aftershock of your failed plans in the economy. Your plans have been high taxes, high energy and more red tape, and job losses are the result.

The question I have for you, Minister, is very simple: What's your plan to deal with the impending disaster in the economy and the impact on social welfare rolls in the region of Durham and the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think that I would take my cues, rather, from the Durham economic development commission, which works very closely with my ministry. In fact, next week they will be joining us in Alberta, along with 208 delegates from the manufacturing sector here in Ontario, because we are an activist government. We understand the challenges that manufacturers are facing in this province. We are the largest manufacturing jurisdiction anywhere in North America, second only to California. So when there's a challenge, we recognize how large that challenge is. That's why we're coming to the table with programs like our Next Generation of Jobs Fund, the largest investment package ever in the world: \$1.15 billion, along with a 45-day service guarantee.

The people in Durham know full well how active we are. Big companies and small companies also see the work we're doing to discover new markets, new products, and bring innovation. Ontario has a future, and it will have a future under this government.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my name in full support.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

That comes from Toronto. I support this petition and affix my name to it.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition, again presented by my community. Mr. Ed Green is spearheading this petition. It's the third day in a row now that I've been reading this same petition, with different signatures. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

“Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

“We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Michael, who is here with me today.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. John O’Toole: The petition that I would like to present on behalf of constituents and the people of Ontario reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And I’m pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

HOME CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

“Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario’s health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

“Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

“Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

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

“We call on the government of Ontario:

“(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

“(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients’ needs.”

I hereby affix my name to this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with fairness for Ontario workers. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the federal government’s employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

“Whereas over 75% of Ontario’s unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa’s unfair eligibility rules; and

“Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

“Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus, unemployed are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end this discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario’s unemployed workers.”

Since I agree with this petition, I’m delighted to sign my name to it.

1530

LORD’S PRAYER

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I have affixed my signature to this as I am in agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Peterborough.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. It’s nice to see you in the chair.

We have a petition regarding children and smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

“Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

“Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support ‘legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present’; and

“Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under.”

Madam Speaker, I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me from Bethel Tabernacle of Preston and Knox Preston Presbyterian Church:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord’s Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord’s Prayer as part of its daily proceedings.”

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Madam Speaker, congratulations on assuming the chair.

My petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was provided to me by Meadowvale secondary student Brienne Westland. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I am pleased to affix my signature and to fully support this petition and to ask page Fatima to carry it.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was signed by a lot of my constituents, but it primarily came from the Community Living Tillsonburg folks. We’d like to thank them for circulating the petition. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario disability support program is designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities who are in financial need, or who want and are able to work and need support; and

“Whereas it is appreciated that the McGuinty government increased the maximum monthly rates in 2004, 2006 and 2007;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to establish an independent commission to make

recommendations for setting social assistance rates. These rates need to be raised to provide for the real cost of living.”

I'd like to thank you, on behalf of all the people who signed it, for letting me read this petition.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have received a petition signed mostly by residents of my own riding. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'd like to read it and have it included in the record.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I want to thank the residents of my area. I'd like to supply the petition and have it be recorded as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2008, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Beaches—the member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just a bit to the west. It's very good to see you in the chair.

It's been more than eight months since the leader of the Liberal Party made a commitment, a promise, that he would be taking action on climate change in this province, that he would produce a plan, provide a plan, would put it on the table, that he would provide transparency in action, so that in fact we would see movement in Ontario, we would see action taken to deal with climate change and also to reshape our economy so we'd have a green economy, one that would provide us with the jobs that we know are going to be in demand in the 21st century. That plan didn't hit the table.

On November 30 we had the speech from the throne. There was a statement in that speech from the throne about the government's ongoing commitment to climate change action, about the targets that had been set, about the need to meet those targets. Frankly, it is now three months later, there's no legislation before us, there's no plan before the House and there's no concrete material for us to critique. If we look at Quebec, if we look at British Columbia, we see that they have climate change plans. The one in Quebec is funded at \$200 million a year. It's set to meet the Kyoto targets. The one in British Columbia is a far weaker document, but at least there is a plan, something that people can look at, that they can criticize, analyze and maybe, in the course of time, something that could be improved. We don't have even that.

This is a government that has decided that climate change is a tremendous marketing opportunity but not an area where they really want to do the fundamental work necessary to come to grips with the issue.

1540

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to the comments made yesterday by the member from—I want to get his riding correct; I know his name very well—Niagara West—Glanbrook. I was here for your comments yesterday, and I just wanted to comment briefly, in the short time that I have.

I guess what we are concerned about, as a provincial government, is the disparity between the federal government and the provincial government, and especially the equalization clawback. Ontario is giving money to the federal government and we're not getting back our fair share when it comes to, just for example, unemployment, because I think there's a \$4,000 disparity in terms of what we get back here in Ontario and what the federal government provides, or at least collects and provides elsewhere in Canada. So we will continue here on this side of the House, as the government, to try as much as possible to fight for Ontario and to fight for the people of Ontario.

In the comments yesterday, we were talking about the throne speech and the importance of what the government here plans to do in the next four years. We're going to continue to put our message out, that Ontario requires its fair share, and we'll continue to fight for its fair share in terms of what we put out in money to the Ottawa government and what we get back. We want to be able to be on a level playing field. I think that's the

number one issue here, one of the key issues this government is going to continue to fight for, led by our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. He's obviously made that a high priority. I support that as well, and many others do.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also want to compliment the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook because I know that as our finance critic he has a very firm grasp of the dilemma that faces Ontario, all of which was kind of omitted from the throne speech. In fact, I heard a trace comment from the member who has just spoken here, kind of blaming Jim Flaherty. That's kind of what I heard; it's sort of like the equalization stuff and the transfer payments. They should realize that their own purpose spending has gone up inordinately, and one has to ask oneself, as our critic does regularly, "Are we any better off?" The real test of this is, we're spending more, but are we any better off? There's homelessness that we've seen today brought about. There are almost 200,000 people without jobs. The economy is struggling. And yet, "Don't worry; be happy." It's tragic, quite honestly.

I have just visited about six or seven nursing homes in my riding, and they gave me this card which says, "Long-term care needs more than a Band-Aid." You know yourself, Madam Speaker, that they're asking in this province—I'm going to read this. It's to Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario. It says: "Please tell government to provide the \$513 million required in this budget for the necessary additional staff and supplies, so that:

"—residents aren't rushed to meals or left waiting for help to go to the bathroom;

"—homes can provide more weekend and evening programs, improve meal services, increase the average number of daily incontinence changes..."—we know what the Minister of Health has said about that; it's shameful;

"—homes can maintain housekeeping, laundry and related services."

There simply isn't enough for anybody in Ontario, and they think it's okay. I'm waiting for the response from the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Excuse me, Madam Speaker. I was going to do another situation, so I'm going to discuss it with my colleague—just a second.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The rotation began with the NDP and then the government and the official opposition. I'm just checking with you—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Yes, and there are four rotations.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So the NDP, if they wanted to have one—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): They have another rotation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: A two-minute rotation on the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Yes, they do. Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thank all my colleagues for their comments on my speech last evening.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm doing responses.

To my colleague from Scarborough Southwest: He talks about equalization payments. I understand that if you observed the economic policies, the misguided economic policies, of the McGuinty government of going to the highest tax rate on business investment, the high-energy policies and increasing the red tape burden on businesses, you may observe that they have pushed Ontario closer to actually being have-not status. A rather bizarre way—if that's their intention, and I hope not—if addressing the equalization issue would be for Ontario to become a have-not province. Frighteningly, we're getting increasingly close to that. It's hard to contemplate: an Ontario that we've always known as the engine of growth in all of Canada, and a place that attracted others to come and work and raise a family, being a have-not province and getting equalization from the rest.

Don Drummond, for example, the chief economist at TD, said, "Ontario is not so far from being an equalization province." Douglas Porter, the deputy chief economist at the Bank of Montreal, says, "While the arcane equalization calculations may still peg Ontario officially as a 'have' province, the reality is far less friendly for the provincial economy—Ontario is becoming relatively poorer each year."

My understanding is that initially when the McGuinty government took office, our per capita GDP was about \$400 above the equalization bar, and now it is barely treading water above that bar. I think it's frightening to contemplate that Dalton McGuinty's harmful economic policies have done so much damage to our economy, to job creation and to the expectations of working families and seniors in our province that we would be that close to becoming a have-not province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to address the issues in and not in the throne speech today. I'd like to start off with economic development. For far too long, the problem not addressed in this province and in this country is the real root of the economic conditions. That, I firmly believe, is the lack of Ontario-Canadian ownership and controlling shares in major Ontario-Canadian corporations. In the last 10 years, I have watched the deterioration and erosion of our base industries in this province and, in fact, throughout this country. Many Ontario companies are actually multi-national, foreign owned. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the Premier's global market. However, why is it that so many companies with highly skilled Ontario workers don't keep the jobs, the production and the ownership in Ontario or at least in Canadian hands?

Why would Ontario ownership be good? Because whenever we hit a recession or a downturn in the economy, these foreign-owned companies come to the government for subsidies and handouts of Ontario taxpayers' money. They threaten plant closures, leaving the province and moving back to their countries of origin or, even worse, they move to a Third World country where they abuse the workforce by paying low, below-the-poverty-line wages with no benefits and poor working conditions that we long ago fought because we knew that they were completely wrong.

What happens in these cases in Ontario is that these companies are not only leaving, shutting down, but they're removing the equipment and setting up shop in other countries. The latest example in Hamilton: Two weeks ago Amcam shut down. The usable equipment was sold to a German firm, and the outdated equipment will be scrapped and the building sold. This affected unionized, non-unionized and management workers, thrown out on the street with their severance, benefits, pension and other hard-earned security under threat of loss after 30 years plus loyal years of service.

The NDP has introduced a Buy Ontario strategy, but I could go further by encouraging, promoting and supporting Ontario-Canadian ownership to strengthen our economy. When employees and owners have a commitment to our local communities and economies where their families participate in the same local schools, recreation programs and other activities as their employees, everyone is spending in Ontario.

Recently, GM in Oshawa shut down its fourth most profitable plant and moved to the States—fourth, Madam Chair, fourth most profitable company in the States—leaving hundreds here in Ontario with early retirement, buyouts, job transfers and job losses. Why? Because they took our jobs back to the States and we did nothing to protect our Ontario workers. Yet we keep giving money to the Big Three and foreign-owned corporations. What security do we have for that money? What future handouts do these large foreign-owned companies want?

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The NDP's Ontario manufacturing investment tax credit would help sustain existing jobs, create the conditions for new manufacturing jobs and ensure better economic conditions in Ontario manufacturing communities. Other incentives should ensure job security of Ontario workers to ensure that companies remain viable, productive and, in Ontario, Canadian-owned.

If companies decide to pull out of Ontario, then Ontario taxpayers, after the employees, should have the right of second claim on the equipment, buildings and land, equal to the amount of the loan plus interest.

Some examples of foreign-owned companies that have pulled up stakes, equipment, employee salaries and benefits, sold the land and left Hamilton an industrial ghost town: Westinghouse; International Harvester; Firestone; American Can; Dominion Glass; Otis Elevator; Allan Industries; Procter & Gamble; Continental Can; Camco. And some of the Stelco

subsidiaries: Canada Works; Frost Fence; the number 2 rod mill; the 20 inch mill; the plate mill; Brantford works; Page-Hersey Works; Welland Pipe; Parkdale Works, sold to Mittal; and John Inglis. These are just some of the many companies that I could list that have moved, causing economic hardships, downturns and struggles for the city of Hamilton and the surrounding areas.

When I started at Stelco in the early 1970s, there were over 13,000 hourly paid employees in Hilton Works, Stelco's major plant; another 3,000 to 4,000 salaried employees. When I left the plant in June 2007, there were less than 2,000 hourly paid employees and less than a few hundred salaried employees. That's a total of less than 3,000 workers.

If the government had encouraged Canadian ownership and sunk money into the industry with conditions, we still would have a thriving plant with a sizable workforce. Yes, we would have lost some jobs through technical change, but we would have significantly more jobs in Hamilton than we do now. What would have happened? Would we have had money being spent in Hamilton to better our economy?

The problems facing Hamilton and its surrounding communities are alarming. The recent McGuinty government announcement of a low-income dental program, meals in schools and affordable housing falls so short of real needs and is just another band-aid solution. In Hamilton, 20% of our total population live below the poverty line; over 90,000 children, singles and seniors. This is a disgrace in a province that has all it takes for a stable economy.

It's obvious that the real root of the problem is the lack of jobs. Jobs stimulate the economy, allow workers to provide housing, food, and education for their families, and help their seniors and parents. The impact of the loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs over the last four years is seen in houses lost to mortgage default, increased individual debt, increased numbers of social assistance recipients, and food bank clients. In the last few years, thousands of these good-paying manufacturing jobs have left Hamilton.

Our tax base for the Hamilton area was—was—70% industrial, manufacturing and business, and 30% residential. Today, it's the exact opposite. This has put serious financial burdens on seniors trying to maintain and live in their homes, where we have one of the highest levels of property taxes in the province. How does this government expect people to survive in this economic environment? After Mr. McGuinty's announced financial infusion is split up throughout this province, how much real money will actually get to those in need in Hamilton?

Pollution: I don't recall anything in the throne speech that will help the problem of pollution in Hamilton. We have ongoing problems with emission violations. The MOE needs more inspectors, strong enforcement of their own laws and regulations, more prosecution of violators and more sizable fines.

The MOE constantly allows companies to ignore the certificate of approval conditions with respect to community liaison committees. In some cases, the companies have even gone so far as to disband—disband—these committees and replace the membership with company puppets.

Why does the ministry not enforce its other conditions in these certificates of approval? When violators are caught dumping illegal contaminants and hazardous materials into non-hazardous landfills, why are they not dealt with quickly and to the full letter of the law? The full letter of the law needs to be rewritten. It does not properly protect the people of Hamilton and the province. The record of the McGuinty government on environmental protection is hazardous to the people of Ontario.

When I sat on the Taro landfill community liaison committee, we constantly were up against the wall with the MOE—the lack of communication. It constantly challenged our recommendations and amendments. The lack of inspectors to enforce the truck content rules: for example, often only one inspection, maybe two, on 500 trucks. When violators were caught, the response by the company would be, “How can we dig it out? We don’t know where we put it.” Stuff went into the landfill that even the state of Michigan wouldn’t take. After the blatant violations, these companies were allowed to continue operating with the same minuscule amount of MOE enforcement. As far as I can see, not much has changed in the intervening years, but how could I know for sure as the MOE allowed the landfill company to disband the company in direct violation of the certificate-of-approval rules? So no community oversight now occurs.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act: The WSIB has a new plan called the Road to Zero. What it should be called is “road to poverty.” In my discussions with injured workers, consultants’ groups, the Ontario Federation of Labour and my colleagues, they have identified the three most critical areas that need immediate attention. I will paraphrase their publications: “The whole system of experience rating must be rewritten, with significant input from labour organizations and front-line workers who help injured workers through the process. Businesses, particularly those who do not follow the rules, must have their input as well.”

I want to read to you from an excellent document, *The Perils of Experience Rating*, by the Ontario Federation of Labour:

“Experience rating adjusts premium rates based on an individual employer’s claims history. In theory this provides an incentive for safety and injury prevention in the workplace. In theory, employers receive rebates on their premiums for good claims records and are penalized for poor claims records.

“Experience rating is touted as a major incentive to improve workplace health and safety by its employer advocates. To date there is absolutely no evidence to support this claim.

“But there is evidence that experience rating promotes many negative practices. Premium costs can be reduced by covering up or misreporting accidents, by forcing workers back to work before they are ready, by paying sick employees wages rather than have them receive benefits, or by simply contesting all claims, including the most well-documented and well-founded cases.”

How can anyone think this is acceptable?

The OFL report goes on:

“Experience rating has a very negative effect on injured workers. It undermines the basic principles underlying the compensation system. It weakens the collective liability system; burdens small employers for the gain of the bigger ones; effectively denies injured workers their legitimate benefits; produces nightmares instead of peace of mind for injured workers and their families; and increasingly makes the system more and more adversarial.”

Why would anyone want to put a worker already injured through this stress?

The OFL report says it all:

“Tens of millions of dollars are drained out of the WSIB’s accident fund each year by employers who have learned how to play the game of experience rating. In fact, according to the WSIB figures, rebates have exceeded penalties by more than half a billion dollars in the last four years alone—\$114 million in 2006, \$124 million in 2005, \$115 million “in 2004 and \$169” million “in 2003, for a total of \$522 million. That is not the total amount of rebates, but the amount by which rebates exceeded the penalties!”

“The results of OFL studies confirm what the OFL has already known—a shocking disconnect between the declared goals of experience rating and the way that bad performing employers are taking advantage of the program.

“If the theory of experience rating programs is to encourage investment in health and safety, why are so many employers with a history of serious violations and convictions rewarded with significant—significant—rebates?”

Injured Workers’ Consultants produced a document, *Deeming Adds Insult to Injury*, which was submitted to the WSIB on Bill 187 interim policies.

“The deeming problem: Most wage losses were not based on the real life situations of workers. Deeming an injured worker to have an income that he or she does not have was the rule, not the exception. Deeming was not restricted to situations where a suitable job had been offered to the injured worker and declined.

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“‘A’ had a high school education and worked in the social service field. In her 40s, she injured her right, dominant hand and developed a permanent injury. At the time of her accident, she was a single mother earning \$14.50 an hour. She received approximately four months’ retraining as a customer service representative. She did well. The LMR provider sent her a letter congratulating her on her successful retraining. But she was unemployed and looking for work. As in a cruel fantasy world, this

did not matter. The board deemed her to be working as a customer service representative at the rate of \$9.50 an hour, the entry level wage for that field according to the wage data of the NOC (National Occupation Classification published by the federal government). This gave her a weekly 'wage loss' award of \$122.88 a week, based on deemed wages she did not have.

"Although trying her best, no employer has hired her. Unable to live or support her child on \$122.88 a week, she was forced to turn to social assistance. The WSIB reviews these decisions for six years after the accident. At the last review, she was still unemployed, despite her best efforts. Rather than causing reconsideration in her favour, the board 'deeming machinery' simply deemed that, by now, she should have been earning higher wages as an experienced customer service representative. She was not only deemed employed, but deemed better employed, deemed to get a raise to \$14.35 an hour, the average wage for experienced customer representatives according to the NOC wage guide. Her wage loss compensation was reduced to \$38.24 per week. She was still unable to attain suitable employment.

"There are thousands of injured workers in Ontario who are deemed to have post-injury jobs they do not have. Some are receiving 'wage-loss compensation' based on a cruel assumption. Some are receiving nothing at all, pushed completely out of the system because they are deemed able to return to employment with no loss of earnings. Many of them spoke to board officials and a string of successive Ministers of Labour and MPPs. The problem became evident from the outset of the wage-loss system. Steve Mahoney, a former Liberal labour critic, had criticized the policy and practice of deeming in his April 1994 report called *Back to the Future*. The board and the political leaders all listened, the injustice was evident, and injured workers anxiously awaited a proposed solution.

"What is striking in this case is the total failure by either the WSIB or the WSIAT to take the legislative history and the government's explanatory purpose into account in any way. In the case of Bill 187, we are fortunate to have the legislative history and purpose readily available. It should not be ignored."

This continues:

"By removing the term 'deem' and including the word 'available' the legislative intention is to 'help injured workers retain benefits when work they could perform after rehabilitation is not available.' The policies subvert this intention. The interim policies only consider whether or not a job might be available to the injured worker at the point of determining the SB. The policies ignore whether or not a suitable job is 'available' at the more crucial point of determining and reviewing the LOE. The purpose of the legislative change is not to deal with the SEB decision-making. The intention of the legislation is to 'help injured workers retain benefits when work they could perform after rehabilitation is not available or suitable.' The legislative change was made to eliminate deeming in the calculation of LOE benefits.

"In the interim policies, deeming continues completely unrestricted in determining the LOE. It is our experience that in almost in all cases, post-accident earnings are determined without regard to the actual wages, if any. The policy explicitly provides for deeming injured workers to be fully employed at good wages when they are in fact unemployed and may never return to employment because no suitable job is available to them.

"We see, instead, that the board has kept the old deeming system intact as if Bill 187 had never seen the light of day.

"Next steps

"The net effect of the new policies of WSIB will be greater injustice for injured workers. We cannot emphasize enough that the consequences of deeming are going to be more negative and more widespread than they were before these interim policies. The policies must be made consistent with the purpose of the legislation and the intention of the Legislature."

Injured workers deserve inflation protection: Bill 187 was introduced by my colleague MPP Andrea Horwath, the former NDP WSIB critic. Injured workers would receive a regular cost-of-living increase to their WSIB compensation payments under this legislation, which called for "annual indexing of Workplace Safety and Insurance Board benefits for injured and disabled workers, retroactive to 1994."

As MPP Horwath stated, "Injured workers are forced to turn to social assistance and food banks because their compensation payments aren't adjusted for inflation. Year after year, their compensation continues to dwindle in value. Indexing is long overdue and is the just and fair thing to do."

Why does this government think it's appropriate to shift the cost of an injured worker's plight from the WSIB onto another ministry and onto the hard-funded local food banks and social service agencies?

The WSI act, 1997, provides for two indexing factors to be applied each year to insured payment amounts. The indexing factor to be used depends on the type of payment. One indexing factor is equal to the percentage change in the CPI. The other indexing factor is calculated by reducing the percentage change in the CPI according to a formula set out in the act.

Any worker in Ontario should expect inflation protection. So why would we not automatically provide this for these workers, who, through no fault of their own, are forced to receive their income from WSIB?

This government seems to find success in one ministry by foisting the problem onto another ministry and subjecting the working women and men of Ontario to a vicious game of hide and seek.

I was very disappointed in the lack of substantive content in the throne speech. There are many serious issues that need to be dealt with now, not by this government making inadequate announcements with great fanfare on limited content. It's time that we get down to the real business of Ontario's economy: protecting workers, both on the job and injured; protecting

our environment by actually enforcing the laws of this province; and providing support to our manufacturing sector that ensures good-paying jobs that are bound to stay in Ontario if we get the co-operation of government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: We need a partner, not an adversary. Our cities are facing new challenges. My community of Mississauga is growing at a rapid pace, placing new demands on infrastructure. This, combined with the cost of social services previously downloaded, is putting more pressure on our city to increase property taxes. In response to these challenges, the McGuinty government has begun to upload programs and provide funding for key infrastructure projects. However, even with continued provincial support, the city is forced to consider a new 5% levy.

We understand that what municipalities need is a partner, not an adversary. We need to continue working together so that our cities maintain affordable taxes, strong social programs and economic stability. Some of the provincial initiatives to relieve the financial burden on the municipalities include increased uploading on land ambulance funding; public health funding; ODSP and Ontario drug benefits will begin uploading this year; and increased funding for affordable housing programs and rent supplement programs.

But our city needs a federal partner as well. While we make these investments, the federal government still lacks a national housing strategy, making Canada the only major country in the world without one. On top of that, Ontario workers are receiving \$4,000 less in EI benefits than Canadians in other provinces.

Our plan to strengthen municipalities doesn't stop with uploading. We must invest in infrastructure now. That is why we've committed to an unparalleled amount of support for transportation needs, including two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax for public transit.

The federal Minister of Finance recently announced that Mississauga will receive \$83 million for transit in the city. The city is still awaiting those funds. I encourage the minister to not delay any further. We need to work with the municipalities now. The McGuinty government has come to the table for Mississauga; I encourage the federal government to join us in partnering with Ontario's municipalities. Please, let's keep working together.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on what I think is an excellent throne speech put forth by our government. I've listened intently to the debate and comments made by others in this expanded House of some 107 members now. Many of the members made their initial speech, commonly known as their maiden speech. They did exceedingly well. It was good to learn about their ridings and the enthusiasm they bring to this House on all sides of the aisle here.

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In our throne speech, we did talk about five points in particular:

- major investments in the education and skills of our people, which is paramount in our workforce today in a very highly competitive world, a world that is getting exceedingly smaller, with the Internet and shipping of goods around the world happening in virtually every country;

- keeping our taxes competitive, which includes phasing out the capital tax to help our businesses;

- supporting innovation and the good, high-paying jobs of the future through, for example, the new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund;

- accelerating the largest investment in the province's infrastructure in 50 years, including Move Ontario 2020, a historic expansion of public transit, something that many communities are seeking; they're excited to hear about the initiatives that'll flow from the throne speech; and

- forming key partnerships, such as those formed through the automotive investment strategy, which has helped to leverage \$7 billion in new auto investment, and the new Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which will create new good, high-paying jobs by developing new clean and green technology.

We're going to expand on all of these points and others as we address the needs of the people of Ontario, immediate and into the future. I am looking forward to hearing the budget next week.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to comment on the speech made by my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. He's addressed a fundamental problem here, and that's the hollowing out, the impoverishment, of manufacturing Ontario. There's no question when he speaks about the situation in Hamilton—the loss of jobs; the loss of a stable manufacturing base; the reduction on an annual basis, on a constant basis, of good-paying jobs—that he's talking about a fundamental problem that this province is facing, one that this government is not addressing.

Earlier this year, I had an opportunity to speak with my federal colleague Irene Mathysen from London. In the last 12 months, London lost 5,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. Minister Bentley, earlier today, in responding to Howard Hampton's comments, said that things were fine in London. Well, I'd love to see that headline in London, I'd love to see the kind of response he would get in London, because I have to tell you, there's a lot of unhappiness out there. When I was talking to Irene Mathysen, one of the people that she'd been in touch with was a member of the local city council, a person who, on a part-time basis, was also a process server. His service of mortgage foreclosure notices has gone up 75% since last November. I think that speaks volumes about the reality of life in manufacturing Ontario.

When the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talks about the property tax burden in Hamilton, I know the problem here in Toronto as well. Cities have been left to their own devices. This has been hugely problematic. They have to deal with profound social problems on a tax

base that cannot support those programs, that cannot support those issues. The member was entirely correct in his comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I heard the comments of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I really support him in his attempt to help workers in Hamilton and across the province. I think he's to be commended for that. But the one thing I can't understand from the NDP is, you've got a federal Minister of Finance telling people across the world not to invest in Hamilton, not to invest in Stratford, not to invest in London, and the NDP is silent. They're beating up on the people of Hamilton by saying that, because Hamilton is part of Ontario, as we well know, and London is; so when he beats up Ontario, he beats up all our communities. The silence of the NDP is really difficult, especially when the fact is—when our property taxes are higher, why does Mr. Flaherty claw back billions of dollars from the taxpayers of Ontario so we can have lower property taxes in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Newfoundland? We have to fix the holes in the roofs in Brighton, Ontario, Hamilton and Orléans; we have to help our own people now. Yet the federal government keeps clawing these billions of dollars every day out of small businesses in Ontario. The NDP are totally silent about that. They do not stand up and say that the equalization clawback is unfair to the hard-working people in Ontario and that that has to stop.

This equalization clawback amounts to \$20 billion a year taken out of our pockets and the pockets of our constituents. Yet the NDP are silent on Mr. Flaherty's billion-dollar equalization clawback. They let Mr. Flaherty beat up on Hamilton, beat up on London, and say, "Don't invest in Hamilton." That's why you've got to stand up and stop defending Mr. Flaherty. Defend your own people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect to my colleague across the floor, I find his comments quite interesting. For the last four years, I will inform the member, I have been lobbying down in Ottawa, fighting for these very things. I've been fighting for jobs; I've been fighting for more training; I've been fighting for all the things that your party is now touting as theirs. We've been doing this for years.

As for as being silent—hardly. The problem is, we're always misdirected with things that are insignificant, things that are not important, by both parties. We never get our platform in front of them because the media doesn't deal with it. We have a big issue, we have all kinds of issues, but we're always put in the back seat. We can't get our programs forward because the Liberals don't want to deal with them.

Let's talk about the past election. Ninety per cent of that election in this province dealt with education. They didn't talk about our plans; they wouldn't even listen to it. They talked all about education and they went after the Tories on that. Every time we got into a debate, they wouldn't discuss these issues. And they say the NDP

isn't? Sir, I wish you could have followed me for the last five years and seen how I went down to Ottawa and tried to fight for workers' pensions—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They just fight with Ottawa.

Mr. Paul Miller: They fight with Ottawa. They blame Ottawa for everything. If this Liberal Party is so concerned about the people of Ontario, then why doesn't Dion vote that government down and bring it to the people of this province?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate?

Before the Chair recognizes the member, it's appropriate to acknowledge that there are some guests here. Oh, I'm sorry. Am I on the wrong rotation? I am. I'm sorry. That's the Speaker's error. I apologize. I was assuming that we were on the maiden speech of one of our new members who is going to be speaking later, but in fact we have another new member who's speaking now: the member for Ajax–Pickering. I apologize for that.

The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to split my time today with the member from Hamilton Mountain in my inaugural address.

Just as I am honoured and humbled to be the elected provincial member for the new Ajax–Pickering riding, I'm also privileged to address our provincial Legislature today. The boundaries I represent include, for the first time, 100% of the municipality of Ajax as the major portion, and generally all of the rural area of the city of Pickering: north from Finch Avenue and the 401 in some areas to the south Uxbridge border; to the west, the Toronto border; and to the east, the Whitby border. It's a great combination of urban and rural residents in north Pickering, including such hamlets as Brougham, Cherrywood, Claremont, Green River, Locust Hill, Greenwood, Whitevale and Altona; and of course the urban residents living in Pickering, west of Notion Road to Glenanna, and all of the town of Ajax.

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I recently had the honour of publicly congratulating our new Speaker of the House, the honourable member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, and his all-party Deputy Speakers, including the members for Essex, Hamilton Centre, Wellington–Halton Hills and Simcoe–Grey. Similarly, I'm personally taking this opportunity to thank my Premier for the opportunity to be here, his cabinet ministers and all Liberal caucus members for their welcome. I also wish to thank the opposition. To the Conservative and NDP members, I sincerely appreciate and thank you for your hospitality. Working together in a professional manner can only bring us the highest results and the needed changes in Ontario by this government.

The residents of Ajax have been extremely generous to me, electing me to two terms on the Catholic school board before regionalization, and seven terms on Ajax council, including one as regional councillor and deputy mayor. People have been very good to us, electing us in local elections 100% of the time.

After signing some 3,000 members and winning the provincial nomination in 1994, we lost our only election when Mr. Harris swept to provincial power in 1995. Two strong candidates shared the riding in that term. They were then-Minister Jim Flaherty and then-Minister Janet Ecker.

We have strong representation federally in our area now, with MP Mark Holland holding the identical boundary to me federally. With MP Dan McTeague to the west, we also have another people's champion. Until recently, the very popular Judi Longfield, a past MP to the east, served us well.

The potential of the opposition separating education was a concern at the door in the past election. However, both health care improvements and education upgrades, two of our strengths, were definitely also key elements. People acknowledge that the Premier's plan had assisted in elevating and improving health care and education. Both the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Education have been of great assistance in Durham region, particularly in Ajax and north Pickering. In their fields, both the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities have provided us with additional strengths.

Today's challenges show the economy as a concern. Even with the numerous provincial incentives and tax cuts that we have implemented, and even though we have added some 400,000 jobs, manufacturing is impacted by the new global economy. As an example, my own company in Ajax has lost two printing orders in the last year—significant ones—one to China and one to India, so I understand. Add to that record high Canadian gas prices; the significant impact of the Canadian dollar, which costs us millions of dollars in manufacturing sales; and of course the slipping American economy, and we have our work cut out for us. In addition to the many positive Ontario incentives, we may have to tighten our belts and work a little harder.

The Dickson family is derived from Irish heritage, like the Hickey and Teefy families on my mother's side and the Kennedy name on our father's. We're a Roman Catholic family and the children of Mary Alice and Louis John Dickson, who devoted their lives to God and to their family. It was here that I had the opportunity to seriously look at the priesthood on two occasions as a youth. I have the distinction of being the oldest of 10 children who include, other than our baby Mary number one, who passed away after being baptized on her first day of life, Ellen, Ed, Margie, Judy, Christine, Mary, Paul and Veronica.

Interjection: You did well.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you.

It was here that we all learned a great lesson in life: We are all here to help one another as often as we can and wherever we can, not unlike our government. My immediate family is my wife, Donna, who has been by my side since we were married almost 43 years ago, and I proudly acknowledge her presence in the gallery today.

Our wonderful children are Jim, a successful Xerox of Canada manager, and Joanna, owner of Canadian Property Staging Co., presently doing the Juno Awards after several years at the Royal Canadian Air Farce. We love their spouses, Elaine and David, and our three beautiful granddaughters, ranging in age from two to five: Madeleine, Grace and Carys.

My wife, Donna, has been with me on all 11 election campaigns, particularly being my undefeated manager on all nine of my municipal campaigns. Donna's great-grandfather, William John Bragg, was the last Liberal provincial MPP from Bowmanville, which is east of Oshawa, over 70 years ago. We can change that next election.

The municipalities I represent are vibrant and unique in many ways. Both have special waterfronts: Petticoat Creek Conservation Area in Pickering and of course the Ajax waterfront, which I had the opportunity to chair for some 15 years, and which travels the full length of the municipality, from the Pickering border to the Whitby border.

Highway 407 reaches Brock Road in Pickering and needs expanding east to Highway 115 to help decrease gridlock in our two rapidly expanding municipalities and for the rest of Durham region as well. Our current mayors are Dave Ryan in Pickering and Steve Parish in Ajax. Some other excellent leaders of note whom I have worked with include Ajax mayor Bill McLean, current regional chair Roger Anderson and my regional chair, Gary Herrema.

Of course, my witty neighbour, Jim Witty, is the only person in Durham region to be both Ajax mayor and Durham regional chairman. My good friend and colleague MPP Wayne Arthurs is in the adjacent riding of Pickering-Scarborough East and was Pickering mayor for over 15 years. During all of this time frame and before, my wife Donna and I have filled several area Liberal Association president seats, in addition to being area coordinators for Durham region, both provincially and federally.

I'm in this Legislature today because of a strong elected Ajax riding association, hundreds of volunteers as well as many helpful donors. To them, once again, I say thank you. Without you, I would not be here. Our public service has stretched over 45 years, when I commenced the Ajax minor basketball association with friends like Jack Brown, Wayne Daniels and Ross Newitt.

People have been good enough to appoint us chair or president of over 40 non-profit and charitable associations over that time. Because of the dedicated people I have worked with, several recognitions have come our way—and I say, "our way." A few were the Queen Elizabeth 50th anniversary medal, Canada's 125th anniversary medal, the National Achievement Award for sponsorship of minor sports in 1986 and the Jaycees Outstanding Young Canadian Award in 1976.

To this day, my family and printing company annually sponsor over 22 youth and adult sports groups. We have been fortunate with this commitment to youth, which has

led to two provincial championships in hockey as well as a Canadian midget lacrosse championship in 1986.

My business experience began when I was eight years old, learning to operate—and some of you may remember—something called a tabletop, hand-cranked Gestetner mimeograph machine. That's when my dad commenced the Ajax newspaper that still carries the name *The Ajax Advertiser*. It led me to start a part-time commercial printing business as a teenager. It opened my eyes to business, and particularly to fiscal responsibility. It also gave me the beginning of working longer and harder when my father sold his business, putting me in the unemployed ranks one day before my wedding. Fortunately, my wife still married me.

However, from a humble beginning, our printing company started to grow, and we expanded into the office products and office furniture business. One of our offshoot companies was Stationers Marketing of Canada, and that worked extremely well with my friends Jim Connors and Derrick Wagg. It was a marketing and purchasing company exclusively for our dealers, who were in 10 provinces and included some 54 different companies. It was sold in the early 1990s to the Canadian members.

My fiscal responsibility and experience has allowed me to bring in the only town of Ajax balanced budget in the last 10 years, with a zero percent tax increase. That was in 2000.

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There are many thousands of public green acres in Ajax—26,000 in total. However, if you don't have time to visit all of our parklands and open spaces, then try any of our beautiful golfing landscapes, from the small executive courses like Carruther's Creek and Riverside Golf to Durham region's most spectacular 54 holes at Deer Creek and fine golf clubs in Pickering such as Seaton, Cherry Downs, Four Seasons and, of course, Glen Cedars.

We all know our personal development dates back to our mothers and fathers. My father is an amazing 90-year-old man who resides on his own in Owen Sound and lost the right to compete in the Olympics for Canada because of World War II. My mother was born in Pickering township, raised in Pickering village until she married and lived her life in Ajax where Mom and Dad raised the Dickson family. Mom would have been 92 this year except that we lost her five years ago this coming August. With those two beautiful people uppermost in my mind, I say thank you to them. As I thank everyone in this Legislature for the opportunity to speak with you today, I say, "Thank you, Dad and Mother. This day is for you."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, as I stand here in such a historic place, I'd like to formally acknowledge and thank the voters of Hamilton Mountain for giving me the great honour of representing them here as their member of provincial Parliament.

I want to begin my remarks this afternoon by acknowledging my predecessor and good friend Dr. Marie Bountrogianni. Marie, whom I have known very well over the last few years, has always been a relentless champion not only for the constituents of Hamilton Mountain, but indeed for all Hamiltonians. In true Greek fashion, she has passed the torch, and I don't intend to drop it. Of course, I simply can't forget my colleague and fellow Hamilton MPP, our Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the Honourable Ted McMeekin. Thank you, Ted, for all of your support and guidance. I sincerely appreciate it. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not formally thank all of those people who supported and encouraged me during the course of the election and, in particular, my friends and my family.

My parents emigrated from Greece to Canada from two very small villages, my mom from Afisou, a small village close to Sparti, and my father, a village called Agios Nikolaas, which is at the tip of Greece. When they came to Canada in the 1960s, they dreamed of Canada as their new home of opportunity.

With your indulgence, I would like to share a short story with you on how I first became interested in politics. It was a cold fall evening. I was only eight years old, and my mom and dad were getting ready to go to the polling station. Like any typical eight-year-old who was not really interested in going anywhere with their parents, I threw a temper tantrum. Well, when my father stopped, turned around and said to me in his very loud and thick Greek accent, "No daughter of mine is not going to vote in an election," it was at that point I knew that if politics was important to him, it was going to be important to me, and after that I was hooked. I watched the political debates, and I found out everything I could about government, and I thank my parents for that inspiration.

There is an old Greek proverb that says, "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." That is the very reason why I respect anyone who puts their name on a ballot and why I want to congratulate all the members who sit in this House, because the great majority of all of our hard work over the next four years will not be realized and fully appreciated for years to come. I believe that as the keepers of the public purse and stewards of the province we have the responsibility of doing what is right for Ontarians, not just for those who reside in our ridings. This government can be a force for good in our province. It can create opportunity, remove barriers and offer a helping hand to those less fortunate. What I do believe is that government has a duty to create the environment necessary for individuals and families to prosper.

Like many people, I know what it feels like to lose a job. It's devastating, not only financially but the loss of self-esteem. Being unemployed has taught me that I needed to make a difference in my own life. That is when I decided to become a small business owner. It was risky and it was scary, but I knew if I didn't try, I would always regret it. Nikos Kazantzakis, a 19th-century Greek

writer, said it best: "In order to succeed, we must first believe we can."

I stand here today and I tell you that I understand the challenges of small business but I also understand the passion and the enthusiasm and the excitement that entrepreneurs have. In fact, entrepreneurs are a vital component of our economy and will continue to play an increasingly large role within our province. Nearly one million people in Ontario describe themselves as a self-employed business owner, and I am very proud to be one of them.

Now let me tell you about the people of Hamilton Mountain and why I am so proud to represent them. This is a riding filled with hard-working, salt-of-the-earth people with strong family values and a lot of common sense. They have so much in common with my parents, who taught me a simple lesson: that if you work hard, you are destined to succeed. These men and women understand the value of education and health care. Just like them, I have to brag about Hamilton Mountain being home to world-class medical and post-secondary institutions like the Juravinski Cancer Centre and the Henderson Hospital.

The government is committed to excellence in both education and health care. It is the platform that Hamilton residents support. My constituents also see the importance of job creation, a healthy environment, child care, and the need to eradicate poverty and address the social issues facing the marginalized in our city and our province. All of these beliefs were reflected in the positive message that our Premier and party brought forward in the last election. Our government plans to provide excellence for all in education; deliver health care we need; build an economy that achieves our potential; grow strong communities; and create a government that works for and addresses the issues that matter to Ontarians.

Hamilton has many advantages. Among these is our skilled and well-educated labour force. We have the talent in place to make Hamilton one of the most competitive cities in North America. We have top researchers, business people, community leaders, health care professionals and educators. Hamilton is also a transportation hub. We have the third-largest port in the Great Lakes, we have the number one cargo airport in Canada and we have the road and rail infrastructure that reaches a market of 120 million customers within 800 kilometres. These are just some of the reasons why, in 2007, Hamilton smashed its records for total annual building permits to well over \$800 million.

I am certain that the next four years will be a lot of hard work and long hours and have their share of challenges. But like the Greek writer said, "In order to succeed, we must believe that we can."

It is, in closing, a real privilege to be here in the Legislature today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa-Nepean.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean-Carleton, but that's okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is wonderful to see a woman in the chair. I've not seen that since I've been here.

I want to address my two colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Ajax-Pickering. I just want to say how pleased we were in the official opposition to listen to your speeches. They were both incredible and they came with a lot of heart. What really warms my heart is that you talked about your family and the people who served in your community prior to you, whether they were a Liberal, a Conservative or a New Democrat. That is a really good sense of purpose to start out with, because you know where you're going and because you know where your community has been. So I congratulate my colleagues in doing that.

I remember my maiden speech here. It was two years ago, almost to the day, when my colleague Christine Elliott and I and our good friend Peter Tabuns were elected in by-elections. I was very nervous here. I was the youngest member, I was a woman and a Conservative, and it was a very exciting time for me.

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But what's exciting today, of course, is that I'm not a rookie any more. I might still be the youngest, but you guys are newer. That has a sense of empowerment all to itself. But I'm very pleased to be here. We do have a lot of new blood, particularly in our own caucus. I'm going to be very excited to listen our colleague from Sarnia-Lambton later today when he makes his maiden speech. He's just an incredible—incredible—addition to our caucus, as are Sylvia Jones and Randy Hillier and—I'm missing someone. Who else do we have that's new?

Interjection: Peter Shurman.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Peter Shurman. How could I forget? He's actually the most amazing man that we've got. He's from the Thornhill area, and we think that he's doing great.

In any event, as I wrap up the clock, I just wanted to again congratulate our colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Ajax-Pickering on winning their elections. I wish them much success in the four years ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to reiterate the comments. I must commend you both, the member for Ajax-Pickering and, of course, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. Well done. It's a very nerve-racking thing to get up for the first time and speak in this House. It's overwhelming. I did it myself just before Christmas, and I must confess that I was extremely nervous. But once you've done it, it's like anything else: You get better at it. You two presented very well.

I guess the time wasn't quite there for Sophia to finish, but I'm sure that you'll be speaking a lot in this House in the future. You do a great job, and I must say, Sophia is very passionate about our community. We may be on different sides of the benches, but I'm sure she's got Hamilton's best interests at heart. We all want to work together for the people of Ontario.

The member for Ajax–Pickering: It's nice to know your history. We like to share that in these inaugural speeches. It's nice to know a little bit about the people. It's a little more intimate to know where they come from, their relatives and their history. All the people in this Legislature have a wonderful history. You don't come here unless you've done a few things right in your life. So I commend you all, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate you for being in the chair; you're doing a great job.

I am delighted to welcome my two new colleagues to the House and to have the opportunity to hear their maiden speeches. I could see they were nervous. I wasn't nervous when I did my maiden speech, because late one night the whip of the day said, "Lou, would you like to speak for about 10 minutes?" As a result, I wasn't prepared, and it was the best thing that I've ever done. So I didn't have to share the agony that you went through.

To my friend for Ajax–Pickering: That was my old neighbourhood. I kind of wish I was still living there, to have such a great MPP representing me today. So, to you and your wonderful wife, you're doing a great job. I know you're here for the right reason.

To Sophia, the member for Hamilton Mountain: I must say that she is really here for the right reasons and certainly shows it—the way most of us are here. What's interesting is that I can really relate to both these folks because they're both small business owners, as I've been for all of my life. But I must tell you, I haven't tasted Sophia's sauces yet. I am waiting for—

Interjection: We're all waiting.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We're all waiting. So that's a challenge for you, Sophia. We'll give you a thumbs up, I'm sure.

I know you're going to make a great addition to this government. Your heart is in the right place. You have the same beliefs that we all do. All I can say is that we look forward to working with you for the next four years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment.

I certainly want to add my congratulations to the member for Ajax–Pickering, Joe Dickson, and the member for Hamilton Mountain, Sophia Aggelonitis.

This place can be far too partisan at times. At the time when someone makes their maiden speech, I think this is the real essence of why we're here in this Legislative Assembly. We know that there are a lot of things that get done here and there are a lot of games that get played. Part of it is theatre, and part of it is because we passionately see things in a different light. But we are all here for the very same reasons, and that is to represent in the very best way we know how the people who have honoured us by sending us here.

I was very interested—I was sitting in the members' gallery at the time, not too far from Joe's wife, Donna,

and listening to his history of community service. I was very impressed with that. Joe and I have had a chance to chat. Joe actually does some skidoing up in my riding, and as I told him, "Any time you come into Barry's Bay, you make sure you give me a call and we'll have lunch."

Hon. Jim Watson: Who's buying?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly not me. Look, Joe is the guy who shows up in his printing truck; we know when he's on the job. I know that he's doing very well, and I'm glad to hear that, so I'm looking forward to a good meal from him.

I first had the chance to really sit down and chat with Sophia when we were doing some committee work up in Kingston. I think we do far too little of that, where we actually get together as a group in a non-partisan way to get to know one another a little bit, and we find just how similar and how very much alike we really are, in so many different ways. We have the responsibility of representing the party that we ran for and the people that we represent, but we don't see the world that differently in most cases. I think it's very important that we never forget to recognize that we're all here for the very same reasons, and I welcome these two fine members. I congratulate them on being elected by the people—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

I call on one of the members for a response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to stand on behalf of my friend and colleague from Hamilton Mountain, MPP Sophia. I'm waiting to taste some of that scrumptious cooking as well. She and I share the same family values. The family is perhaps the most important thing in our lives.

Hamilton has a great history. I would just like to add one or two little things that are part of the Ajax–Pickering history, and that is the strong ties to England.

The town of Ajax, of course, is named after the HMS Ajax. It was the HMS Ajax, the HMS Achilles and the HMS Exeter that sank the Graf Spee in the Second World War. All of our streets are now named after British sailors who were on the HMS Ajax, and that will overlap onto the other ships as well.

Many people may not know that during the Second World War, Pickering township land was bought by the government and had formed the largest single munitions series of factories in the entire British hemisphere. That enabled us, as one of the major features in winning the Second World War.

I'd like to just say that good things are happening in Ajax–Pickering. We're just celebrating the sod-turning of a major Ajax–Pickering hospital renovation, almost at \$100 million; that was by our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing came to Ajax some few weeks back to announce \$50 million for assisted housing in Ontario. And just recently, through the Ministry of Education, we have an announcement that the very school I went to, St. Bernadette's, is going to be rebuilt on the same site at a cost of \$9 million.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Before I ask him to begin his remarks, however, he has asked me to acknowledge that he's brought some people here: Michelle Gray, his constituency assistant, as well as Elizabeth Bailey, his spouse, are in the members' gallery to join in his inaugural speech. Let's welcome them. Welcome.

The floor is yours.

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Mr. Robert Bailey: Before I start my remarks, I'd like to initiate them by thanking all the members on all sides of the House for the warm welcome I have received since I came here. I enjoy the partisan part, but I also enjoy the after-hours with members of the opposition.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Following in the Lorne Henderson tradition.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah. I'll mention him later. But at this time I'd also like to congratulate the new members who gave their inaugural speeches today: the members from Ajax-Pickering and Hamilton Mountain. It was wonderful to hear the personal stories about how they got here and the things they did to get here.

Today, I'd like to begin my remarks by thanking, first of all, the voters of Sarnia–Lambton, who, on October 10, 2007, showed their faith in me by electing me as their new member of provincial Parliament. To be held to account by one's peers and not found wanting is indeed humbling. An opportunity to represent my constituents is truly a privilege that will always be one of the highlights of my life.

I would be remiss if I also did not pay tribute to my family, who are the real reason for any success I've achieved in life. The entire Bailey family—sons, daughters, siblings, nieces and nephews etc.—were involved in this endeavour, and there's a large family there. I must specifically, at this time, single out my wife, Elizabeth, who is here today in the gallery, who has been with me—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: She probably should be here instead of me. But anyway, she has been with me in any venture that we've accomplished in life. She has always had faith in my ability when I had doubts myself and has always been the major reason for any minor success on my part.

I am reminded of some wag who said, "Beside"—I don't say "behind"—"every successful man, there's a successful woman and a more surprised mother-in-law." I think that holds true in my case.

I must also pay tribute to my election team back in Sarnia–Lambton, who conducted a first-class campaign. Together, we took the issues to the voters, with the outcome being a significant majority on election day. It's an honour to serve as the member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia–Lambton, especially when I think about the past Progressive Conservative MPPs, Liberal MPPs and the NDP who have served parts of that riding as well. Specifically I'm speaking about the Honourable

Andy Brandt, former interim leader of our party, who was MPP from 1981 until 1990, and Marcel Beaubien and David Boushy, who served for parts of the riding in the 1990s. Going back a little further—I don't know whether even the honourable member from Mississippi Mills would remember Zeb James. He was here from 1945 to 1963. That might even predate him.

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Was he here when Queen Victoria was here?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes; he unveiled the statue.

Also the honourable member Bryan Cathcart, who represented Lambton West from 1945 to 1963. But of course, for 22 years, serving with Mr. Yakabuski's father from 1963 until 1985, Lambton county was represented—and I know a number of the members here remember him—by the Honourable Lorne Henderson, who was agriculture minister amongst a number of other portfolios. Lorne and these other members were all very important to the riding of Sarnia–Lambton and the province of Ontario.

Lorne himself was a giant of a man, both literally and figuratively, in Lambton county. His ability to remember people's names and deliver things for his constituents was legend. I hope, in some small way, that over the years I may be able to contribute in the same way.

While it's an honour to follow in the footsteps of these former MPPs, I am also aware and conscious of what a big job it will be. Since my election, no one has been more supportive of me than these former members, during the campaign and since. I want to pay particular tribute to the Henderson family. Lorne's widow, Rita, and their children are a constant force of encouragement and support to me.

In the time allotted to me, I would like to tell the House a little bit about the riding that it is my honour to represent. Sarnia–Lambton is comprised of the city of Sarnia and parts of Lambton county. The towns of Petrolia and Plympton-Wyoming, the police villages of Oil Springs and Point Edward, and the townships of Enniskillen and St. Clair, as well as the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, are contained there as well. The St. Clair River is our western boundary, and we are bordered on the north by the great Lake Huron.

The economy of Sarnia–Lambton is largely dependent on the petrochemical industry. Manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors also add to its standard of living. My riding has the added feature of being on the route to the St. Lawrence Seaway, and it is also the location of one of the busiest international crossings, the Blue Water Bridge, which was recently twinned to accommodate trade now exceeding over \$2 billion a day. The area also has a Canadian national rail tunnel under the river, linking it with the United States and other world markets.

As you know, the North American petroleum industry started in my riding over 150 years ago. This summer, that first oil well's discovery will be celebrated in Oil Springs, Ontario. At this time, I'd like to personally in-

vite every member of provincial Parliament and the Speakers on all sides of the House to please come down to Oil Springs in the months of August and July. We're doing a number of different presentations. They're unveiling a stamp recognizing Oil Springs.

Without the petroleum industry, Sarnia–Lambton and Ontario wouldn't be what they are today. We still benefit greatly from the petroleum industry in Sarnia–Lambton. Shell Oil is currently studying the feasibility of constructing a major, 250,000-barrel-a-day refinery. This would be the first new refinery in Canada in many years. If it's built, it will be built in St. Clair township in the riding of Sarnia–Lambton.

With a construction project of this size, we need the province to be on board to help the company and the municipality, and to work with the federal government to make sure the infrastructure is in place to handle this new development. Mayor Steve Arnold and St. Clair township have approached the government and I know they're working with them today. I only hope that the government will work with them to put anything in place that needs to be done to make this project a reality, which will be of benefit to southwestern Ontario, Sarnia–Lambton and all of Ontario.

We all know that industry in Ontario is suffering right now. In Sarnia, we see the effects of the troubles in the manufacturing sector as much as anyone. Recently, Lanxess—formerly known as Polysar, one of Canada's oldest manufacturers of butyl rubber—announced they were closing one of their units and laying off over 270 people. For those of you who follow these things, the picture on the back of that \$10 bill from the 1970s and 1980s was a picture of the unit at Lanxess. In fact, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke tells me that the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills actually has a number of these originally minted \$10 bills. He's very reluctant to spend them or even show them, but maybe if we prevail upon him, he might. So if you want to see that original unit, we can maybe prevail upon him.

Lanxess made this decision for two reasons. One, unfortunately, was the strength of the Canadian dollar, which none of us can do anything about; it's made us uncompetitive. But the second that the plant manager indicated to me was that energy costs in Ontario are at least 20% higher than energy costs in other jurisdictions like Europe. In fact, Lanxess is moving this production to France, where the cost of doing business, in their opinion, is much lower.

It's reasons like this that I believe the provincial government needs to act now to reduce the cost of doing business in this province. My leader, John Tory, and this party that I am proud to be a member of have offered a plan that would help our manufacturing sector. This plan includes reducing taxes on business and business investment, reducing taxes on small business, and seriously addressing the questions around the security and cost of our energy supply and transmission.

In my riding, like in many other sectors, energy supply and transmission is a big issue. It is even bigger in

Sarnia–Lambton than in other places because we have the Lambton generating station in St. Clair township. This generating station can generate up to 2,000 megawatts, at full capacity, of much-needed electricity. So when the government talks about closing coal-fired plants, they are also talking about throwing many of my constituents out of work, which I find unacceptable.

I understand that clean air is an important priority for all of us. But I understand that the technology exists, if this government would make it a priority, to reduce the emissions from these coal-fired plants. In a time when we are all talking about the need for more electricity and generation, and all the experts tell us we will always have a mix of electricity sources to keep and control costs, we should not be talking about taking generation off line. Instead, we need to be talking about ways to clean it up. We should also work with the federal government on this new method of carbon sequestration; there are examples of that in Weyburn, Saskatchewan right now. The geology in Sarnia–Lambton and that part of Ontario are well-served to handle that with our underground storage wells.

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If the province was serious about cleaning up air, it would make the expansion to four lanes from Indian Road in Sarnia–Lambton a reality. This Highway 402 expansion to four lanes to the Blue Water Bridge is a priority in my riding. Currently, as a result of security measures on the United States side of the border since 9/11 and at other border crossings, trucks are forced to idle for hours at a time on Highway 402 leading to the Blue Water Bridge, creating gridlock. Blue Water Bridge Canada and the community of Sarnia–Lambton are supporting a plan to expand the highway to four lanes westbound from Indian Road. This would enable us to take advantage of the NEXUS and FAST cards for pre-approved truck traffic and commercial traffic so that we could access the bridge. There would be vehicle traffic; it would be used as an expressway across the north part of the city, and we could also keep the tourist traffic moving.

The environmental assessment has been completed, and we are now only waiting for the go-ahead from the province. It's with the bureaucracy. The sooner we get approval, the sooner this work can begin. Every level of government recognizes the importance of this project, but it is provincial red tape and rules that are holding it up. This is important not just to my riding but to Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and all of Ontario, in fact. We've got two major border crossings in my area, one at Windsor and one at Sarnia–Lambton, so it's very important that we do this.

There was no bigger issue in the last election in Sarnia–Lambton than the construction of our new hospital.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, this is it. This hospital project had been on the books for many years, and for a number of reasons it was never completed. The city of

Sarnia has two hospital sites currently; both of them are old and outdated. They desperately needed to be replaced. I'm happy to say that one of my first jobs as a Member of Provincial Parliament-elect was to turn the sod for the construction of that new hospital.

Mr. John Yakabuski: One day, and you got it done.

Mr. Robert Bailey: A couple of days. I had to take the day off after the election, but by the Friday we were at it, shovels in the ground.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I've got to admit, the minister was there. He and the Minister of Health helped.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they were a lot of help to my election; they really were.

Anyway, the big issue with the construction project is the cost overruns and who will be responsible for paying them. Our community feels that they have raised more than their fair share, especially when you consider that any cost overruns seem to have been caused by the government delay as they changed the funding formula. I will work hard to ensure the province will live up to their responsibilities, as they have promised, on the hospital funding.

The community of Petrolia, where I am now a resident with my family, also has a hospital site. It's been in the community of Petrolia for over 100 years: Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Lorne Henderson was born in that hospital.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Lorne Henderson was born in that hospital, as I was. I'm a—Norm might have been there when they opened. No?

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He was a midwife.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes.

This hospital is an important part of the provision of rural health care in Sarnia-Lambton. Recently we received word from the Ministry of Health that we could move ahead on the new cataract centre of excellence clinic. I was there the day that a large donation was made by the family of Roger Mailloux in memory of his late wife, and this clinic will be called the Pat Mailloux cataract clinic. The hospital still has a lot of work to do to raise money for the new equipment, but I know the hospital, with examples that have been set in the community, will help the foundation be successful in these fundraising efforts.

One of the interesting and perplexing aspects of health care in Sarnia-Lambton is the underserved designation of the city of Sarnia, yet Petrolia is not part of this. What's perplexing about this is, many residents in Sarnia who can't find a doctor there are taking the short drive to Petrolia and seeing all the new doctors who are residents of Petrolia. This is putting extra demand on the local doctors in Petrolia, making it impossible for local residents of Petrolia and area to find a doctor. I need to work, and I'd like the government to work with me and

the Ministry of Health, to take a look at how the underserved designation is worded and see if we can do something on the catchment area and change it where appropriate.

The riding of Sarnia-Lambton has a large manufacturing sector, a large tourism sector, but it also has a large and very important, vibrant agricultural sector. Shortly after my election, I met with a group of 500 livestock producers from Lambton county. At that meeting, I heard all about how the livestock sector is suffering from the high cost of input and the high dollar. While the government admittedly did put some money in before the end of the year, what we are finding out is that apparently more of these cheques are going to retired farmers than are going to new and current farmers. As a knowledgeable colleague of mine, the member for Oxford, pointed out the other day, how do you explain to a farmer that they aren't getting any money but yet a retired neighbour who got out of the hog industry two years ago is getting a cheque for upwards of \$80,000? I'd love to know how many of these cheques the government is now sending to sunny climes like the state of Florida.

In closing, I'm honoured to be a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus here at Queen's Park. Over the next four years our party, under the leadership of John Tory, will be working hard to make sure that this government is held to account.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hear them all cheering. They're cheering for John right now.

On our side of the House, we believe that it's time for a government—

Interjection: We want John.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we want John. I can hear it now. Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Order, please. Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Robert Bailey: They're cheering me on. It makes me feel good; I'm part of the place.

On our side of the House we believe that it's time for a government that tells the truth, trusts the people and has the common decency to mean what it says, only promise what it can deliver and then to deliver on those promises. That's the kind of government I believe we need in Ontario. It's the kind of government that this caucus and I and my colleagues will be pushing for every day. Thank you very much for your solicitous listening today. I'm proud to be a member of this House with all the members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to convey to my colleague Mr. Bailey that I must confess the first time I met him he was a very warm, outgoing person, and he was probably the second person I ever talked to in my orientation. I must say that he was cordial, friendly and we had a great dialogue. Unfortunately, the next day we were headed downstairs and he decided to take almost a

header down the stairs, and I had to spring into action. At least he didn't fall, and I was glad of that, because you know the NDP are there to help everybody.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you're the guy we have to thank.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's right. I saved that man. Actually, I'd just like to convey—a very stormy speech. He got a good reaction from the government. There was a lot of humour in his speech, which is always good for the heart. I'm sure that Bob is going to fit in nicely. He presented well, and he didn't seem too nervous. He may have been a little nervous this morning when we were talking, but I think he came through quite nicely. I congratulate you and wish you all the best, sir.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me say you're doing a wonderful job in the Speaker's role today, and I know you'll be very successful throughout this Parliament.

I certainly want to welcome the member from Sarnia-Lambton to this great chamber. I know that he will do a wonderful job here. It's nice to hear some of the history of Sarnia-Lambton. There are other great members who came from that area. I think of the late Jim Bullbrook, who was mayor of Sarnia and a member of this place for many years. In fact, on a couple of occasions, the late Jim Bullbrook contemplated running for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party. He was one of those really distinguished members who did his work on a day-to-day basis. I know that the member here today will follow in the great Bullbrook tradition of looking after his constituency exceptionally well—that great work ethic that was established by Jim to represent Sarnia-Lambton and the great natural assets that the Sarnia area has to offer. We know that it's the chemical centre for Canada in many ways. The city of Sarnia is certainly noted for its innovation in that particular industry and the hard-working men and women who go to those jobs every day that contribute to Ontario's wealth and the wealth of the Sarnia-Lambton area.

I know the new member will be a very distinguished individual here who I know will contribute on a day-to-day basis with some new ideas. I know for him that leadership does matter, and we'll certainly be looking for that demonstration on a day-to-day basis as he goes forward in representing those citizens. I know we certainly welcome him here, and perhaps he'll get the opportunity to visit the riding of Peterborough in the not-too-distant future. We'd certainly like to welcome him there to show that member the great assets we have in the Peterborough area. But I know he will make his mark here in this Legislature. Certainly, on behalf of the government we welcome him here, and I will enjoy working with him over the next four years as we move Ontario forward together, which is the common interest for all of us in this Legislature.

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Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I really feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak in the two-minute rebuttal on behalf of my caucus because, quite frankly, all the members of the caucus here would like to stand up and welcome such an excellent MPP from Sarnia-Lambton.

I have had the privilege of serving with some of the predecessors that Bob Bailey talked about here in the Legislature, and I'm sure that Bob Bailey will bring the problems of Sarnia-Lambton to this Legislature, to ministers of the crown, and will be able to effect the same kind of positive results that people like Jim Bullbrook, Lorne Henderson, Andy Brandt and Caroline Di Cocco did before, and I include Dave Boushy as well. All of these members, I believe, were worthy members of the area. I think one of the things that Bob is going to have to learn is to change his speaking style just a mite in order to fit in with the Sarnia-Lambton tradition. That is when Lorne Henderson, all 300 pounds of him, used to rise in this Legislature, and particularly when he was the Minister of Agriculture, never spoke with his hands in his pockets like this, as Bob tends to do. He has one of his hands in his pocket. Lorne Henderson always talked with those very large hands. I think his hands were about 12 inches long, or whatever, but he always talked like this. He would always talk like this when he was talking to people. So, Bob, I think that's a hint you'll have to work on.

Otherwise, I think we are very fortunate in this caucus to have Bob in spite of the overall generally disappointing results of our party in this election. Bob is the one member who took one of the seats of the sitting government. We congratulate you especially on doing that, Bob.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response from the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank all my colleagues, especially the ones from Ajax-Pickering, Hamilton Mountain, the riding of Peterborough, and obviously Carleton-Mississippi Mills. I'd like to thank all of them for their kind comments, and Paul Miller. I shouldn't be naming people, I know—by their ridings. Anyway, it's a real privilege.

I remember something a fellow told me a long time ago, and I just thought of that. I should have mentioned it in my remarks. He said there are a lot more members who talk their way out of here than talk their way in, so I hope I'm not one of those. I hope I am able to serve the riding. It's a privilege—I really mean it—to be here. I think the province of Ontario has something like 13 million people, and 107 of us have the opportunity, the privilege, to serve in this august assembly. I sincerely mean it. I appreciate it. I appreciate the opportunity that the voters gave me. I hope I can do a good job, and I intend to visit a lot of these ridings. I'm feeling more at home all the time in here, and I'm looking forward to either—I'm not going to say "heckling," but adding to the debate, and if I get heckled back, that's fine, but I've

enjoyed it. I see kind of how the give and take works. It's certainly an honour.

Someone told me once about Jim Auld, who represented a riding down near Brockville, I think. I met him at the Honourable Lorne Henderson's one time. I said to someone, "What can you tell me about this fellow?" He said, "The best thing to say about the Honourable Jim Auld is that when you ask him what time it is, he builds you a watch." So I don't know; I don't think I'm at that stage yet. I don't think I can do that, not like some of the members who are in this chamber. I've had the great opportunity to watch a lot of them in action so far.

Anyway, it's been a pleasure. Thank you again, each and every one of you. And to my family and everyone who's here today, thank you again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I rise to address two issues: one, about racism in this province, and secondly, if I have the time, I want to talk about this government and its approach to climate change.

Last fall this government presented its speech from the throne. The Lieutenant Governor spoke the words of the government, set out its platform and set out its vision. In the course of that speech, the following statement was made: "Our people speak every language, embrace every culture, and have ties to every corner of the globe, but they share a common goal—to build a better life for themselves and their families, predicated on a belief in opportunity for all."

Actually, that's a true statement. That's a fair statement about this province. But it's not enough to make such statements if we want to have that kind of society. You can't just say, "This is the way it is"; you actually have to take steps to protect this society. To have a harmonious society, to have a society that functions well, that can provide everyone with the opportunity that we have, we have to ensure that racism is addressed, and it has to be defeated every time it raises its head.

To defeat racism, we here in this chamber have to make sure that people who come from every corner of the world know that the leaders in this province will speak out when racist statements erupt, when racism rears its ugly head.

This past weekend, I was contacted in my role as immigration and citizenship critic for the provincial NDP. The Community and Race Relations Committee from Peterborough brought to my attention a letter that had been sent by a Mr. Gordon Gilchrist, trustee with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. This is a difficult issue to discuss. It's personally difficult for me and I think it's difficult for us as a society. He wrote a letter—and I have the letter—that was completely outrageous. This letter was published in the Port Hope Evening Guide and apparently in some other local papers. In his letter, Mr. Gilchrist made entirely racist remarks about immigrants, remarks that I will not repeat in this House and we should not have repeated in this society. Mr. Gilchrist slandered and stereotyped people

with a Jamaican, Indian, Lebanese, Tamil and Muslim background. He went across the board.

My roots are immigrant roots. I am very proud of those roots. I have to tell you that when I read this letter—and I think the reaction would be the same by any person in this House—I was so angry I could not think clearly. I know that for us to do our work, at times we have to distance ourselves emotionally so we can think through what can be done to correct this. How can this damage be repaired?

I have not often encountered such comments in print. I have not often encountered such comments from someone who has the responsibility of elected office in this country. There has been and there is an uproar about this letter in that community. He was denounced by many organizations in his area, including the Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough. I want to read some of the those comments into the record.

"It is inexcusable for Mr. Gilchrist—or anyone, for that matter—to write such racist views. I am asking for Mr. Gilchrist to be accountable for his actions and hand in his resignation immediately"—Ron Maguire, president, CUPE Local 5555, support workers of Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

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Next: "Simply put, Mr. Gilchrist must resign"—Dave Wing, president, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Kawartha Pine Ridge Elementary Teachers' local.

Or, "The letter written by Mr. Gilchrist to the Port Hope and Cobourg newspapers propagates extraordinarily prejudicial stereotypes of several different communities in Canada. These include negative comments about the Islamic religion, displaying a completely disheartening lack of knowledge and understanding of our faith"—Dr. Kenzu Abdella, Kawartha Muslim Religious Association.

Or, "It's extremely discouraging, but hardly surprising, that a person who could make the comments outlined in Mr. Gilchrist's letter to the editor would, when called to account, categorically deny that those comments were racist. Yet all of his letters could be used as examples of the dictionary definition of racism"—Lois Cromarty, barrister and solicitor, executive director, Northumberland Community Legal Centre.

Or, "There is nothing unclear about the racism of trustee Gilchrist's remarks. His February 12th letter is a catalogue of racially-based negative stereotypes and fear-mongering allegations"—Melinda Rees, executive director, Peterborough Community Legal Centre.

Or, "At issue for me and the OSSTF members I represent is a serious concern that Mr. Gilchrist's views regarding immigrants and Canada's immigration policy may have a negative impact on decisions he is charged with making that may harm the education of over 35,000 students that attend KPR schools"—Mark Silnicki, president, OSSTF district 14.

"Trustee Gilchrist's statements are racist. The anti-immigrant statements and racial stereotypes that are

flagrantly apparent in his letter are not to be tolerated. Given the seriousness of the situation, Gordon Gilchrist must resign, and the community at large would gladly accept his resignation”—Dr. Davina Bhandar, Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough.

I do find it difficult to think about what he had to say and the impact that this has on this community. I've been to this area—Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough, Cobourg, Port Hope. This is gorgeous country; Oak Ridges moraine country. There are great farms, friendly people, hard-working people, people whom I've met in all kinds of situations, whom I like a lot. This is a part of Ontario that we have to treasure. This is a part of Ontario with fabulous architecture. This is really a part of the heartland of this country.

In the heart of this beautiful country, amongst these really good people, we had Mr. Gilchrist making comments that have damaged his community's reputation and, I think, damaged the social fabric of this province.

Mr. Gilchrist wrote an apology. He called it an apology. He said his remarks were “interpreted” as racist. He said his remarks were “matters of citizenship and not those of racism.” Well, Mr. Gilchrist, I don't know if you're watching and I don't know if someday you will read this transcript. But I want to say to you that unless you recognize that your remarks were in their very nature racist and not a question of interpretation, then you will not be able to apologize to people and you will not be able to make the amends that are necessary to be made.

It was interesting to me, reading his so-called apology, that all his comments about immigrants who were damaging this country were illustrated by remarks about non-European immigrants. He made no slanderous statements about American, Dutch or British immigrants. It was very clear in his letter which immigrants were the target of his anger, his distaste.

Racism, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is (1) “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.” That is a very dangerous ideology. Or (2) “racial prejudice or discrimination.” We're dealing with a situation in which it is clear that Mr. Gilchrist assumes an inherent superiority on the part of long-time Canadians and makes clear in his letter the inherent weaknesses of the most newly-arriving immigrants from the non-European world. His remarks did not just make me angry; they made me weary. In a fundamental way, they made me tired.

We, in this room, have all known or seen division on the basis of ethnic background or religion. I grew up in Hamilton at a time in 1950s and 1960s when ethnic division and religious division were just an everyday part of life. Catholic kids fought Protestant kids and vice versa. I'm sick of that kind of division. I don't want to hear any more of that stuff in this world. I'm tired of it, and I think most people are tired of it.

Mr. Gilchrist, you have to act to heal this damage. You should not be in a position of authority on an elected

body in this province, and you should resign. Our society is made up of people from every corner of the world. The statement from the speech from the throne was right: The fact that people are gathered from around the globe in this place gives us an extraordinary opportunity. We have access to the talent and intelligence of some of the best in the world, all gathered here. It's a significant part of the reason this country is admired, respected, successful.

To make a society successful, to make it work, we have to be on guard against its being poisoned, against its being destabilized. It has to be nourished. It has to be kept in balance. It has to be strengthened. Attacks that incite racial division, that demoralize us, that pull us apart, damage the very fabric of our society.

Make no mistake: He has already damaged this community and caused division. Talk to the Peterborough Examiner, look at their letters-to-the-editor page, look at the comments that are being made: deep division. That's why we, here in this Legislature, cannot be silent on the matter. That's why I ask for his resignation.

Beyond my call, I believe that other members of this Legislature, in particular the Premier, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the MPPs in the area we are discussing today, should be showing leadership and should be calling for action. We have to make it very clear that attacks on Canadians, on the basis set out by Mr. Gilchrist, cannot be acceptable.

My understanding is that the Premier and the ministers I have noted have been contacted by e-mail. It's my understanding that this matter will be before the district school board next Thursday, March 26, and that it will be considering a request from the local community to ask for his resignation. The district school board can't force him to resign. Electors hire us; electors fire us. No one can force him to resign, but he could resign, and the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board could make it very clear not only that they censure him—which they have done, to their credit—they need to go that next step and say, “We would be very happy to accept your resignation.”

Although I am angry, although it takes a lot to be calm when dealing with this kind of stuff, in the end, not out of anger but out of a desire to prevent future damage, I ask that he resign, and that the leaders of the government of this province ask him to resign and do so immediately.

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Madam Speaker, I had not expected to speak so long on that issue, and it's very difficult to turn to other matters, but I want to say that in the course of looking that question, I realized that in part what is going on in our society and what will accelerate in our society as further stresses accumulate is unhappiness around difficulty in making a living, unhappiness about insecurity; economic insecurity feeds the kind of negative sentiment that we have seen. Last summer, as I said earlier when I had a chance in a two-minute commentary, the Premier had said that he promised to take action on climate change, and we haven't seen any of that. In fact, what we

have seen on occasion are repetitions of promises and simple statements that something will be done—that a guerrilla bureaucrat will be put in charge of making sure things happen.

I am not going to be using my time, but having talked about the other issue, I realize that nothing else really is appropriate. I've said what I have to say. I hope that the people of Kawartha Pine Ridge, the politicians who are in that area, will speak out. I hope that the people of that very beautiful community, very productive community and very valuable community find it in themselves to build the bridges necessary to heal this damage that was done, and I hope that Mr. Gilchrist will do the honourable thing and remove himself from that board of education.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Speaker, and I too want to add my congratulations on your new position.

I also want to take this time to congratulate the member from Sarnia–Lambton, the member from Ajax–Pickering and the member from Hamilton Mountain for your maiden speeches. You all did a very good job, and I'm very proud. It's an honour and a privilege to work with all of you in this wonderful institution, the Legislature.

One of the things I want to talk about—and I wanted to leave enough time to speak to the comments made by the member from Toronto–Danforth. I'm going to make one statement and then I'm going to add more comments. One of the statements that was made was from the throne speech, that it was right, and that statement spoke about Ontario working together, pulling together, diversity being our strength, opportunity and hope for all.

I, too, as the member from Huron–Bruce, have no tolerance for discrimination, but it's more than that. We must ensure that all of our children have the opportunities that we can provide, and that is, in my mind, the greatest strength that we can give the province of Ontario. But we also must always be cautious of the democratic freedom and the ability to speak and to act and to ensure that those freedoms always remain in place. I, too, as an elected official, think that this is one of our very important roles. But I don't want anyone to lose sight of the fact that when we lose that diversity, when we lose our sense of hope, our sense of opportunity, all of the province of Ontario falls and lags behind, because we are not as strong as when we stand together. That is when we have the strength for all Ontario and a celebration of our diversity is what makes us strong.

Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would just like to add a couple of comments to the speech that we have just heard, and I think that it's very important in a democratic system that we always maintain those fundamental principles upon which our country and our institutions are founded. The question, then, of a judicial system—a system that finds people innocent until proven guilty; a system which

recognizes the rights and responsibilities of every individual; a system that provides for the kinds of freedoms and opportunities that, frankly, many people in the world today are literally dying for. I think it's one of the things that probably has prompted most of us to enter into public office, who've recognize the unique values that we have in this country and the necessity to always be prepared and always have the courage to provide leadership in supporting those institutions that we hold dear.

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I have to commend my associate from Toronto–Danforth. This is a very difficult thing to bring to this Legislature. It's a sad day in our province when elected officials act in this manner. Mr. Tabuns was actually shaking when he was speaking, he was that angry. That says that this is a passionate plea to our province. It also tells me that his heart is in the right place and that all our hearts should be in the right place when it comes to matters like this. It's unacceptable, it's disgusting, and it should be dealt with appropriately and quickly.

Further to his speech, which he touched on, the member from Toronto–Danforth is a former executive director of Greenpeace. I'm not supposed to mention names, and I won't, but this member has a history of caring about the environment, about people, and about the right direction this province should move in. I can't say enough about his compassion and his commitment to those areas, and I'm honoured to serve in this House with him.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's great to have an opportunity to make some comments on the speech from the member from Toronto–Danforth. It's very seldom that we agree on even parts of our thinking in this House, but it's got to be history that I totally agree 200% with his comments.

Mr. Gilchrist happens to live in my riding, being an elected official for the school board within my riding, and that school board is shared with the good members from Peterborough, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Durham. So we have had a lot of occasions to meet with the school board and this particular gentleman. And it is a sad day. We're all immigrants. I just have no idea. I'm sorry if I missed it, but I'm not sure whether you had the opportunity to mention that at one time he was a federal member of government, representing a riding in Scarborough, here in Toronto. His family has a long history of parliamentarians; one of them even sat in this House for a time. So I tell you, I couldn't agree with you more, Mr. Tabuns.

The community is outraged. There are letters to the editors. Yes, he does have some letters of support—very few.

I want to congratulate the chair of the school board, Diane Lloyd, who censured Mr. Gilchrist. And you know what he did? The whole board voted unanimously to support it, and he voted against it. He even had the audacity to vote on something that's trying to put him in his place. He voted in support of what he did.

So this is a really, really sad day when we talk about—we are the envy of the world; 200 different ethnic communities living under one roof in this great province of Ontario, and we have to put up with this. So, Mr. Tabuns, congratulations on bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's gratifying to have the support from my colleagues in the House. I've had an opportunity in my short career in this Legislature to talk to many of you and hear you speak on the floor, and I know that the sentiment in this House is not one that supports the comments that were in that letter. That's very clear. As the member from Northumberland–Quinte West has said, “Ultimately, we are all immigrants,” and to dishonour the latest wave of immigrants is to dishonour us all.

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The reality is that when you look around the world—when you look at the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and how quickly ethnic hatred came to the surface amongst communities that had lived together for centuries, when you look at what happened in Kenya in the last 12 months and the ethnic conflict between people who had lived side by side for generations, and when you look at Rwanda and how that ethnic hatred led to mass slaughter, there is no question that racism, ethnic division, is a very dangerous beast. At every opportunity that it rears its head, it has to be hit back. The message that needs to go out to those who have seen this debate here is that we in this House don't accept that kind of behaviour. We condemn it. We know what it leads to, has led to in other communities. We don't want that here; we absolutely don't want it here. We want that message to be carried back to that school board to make sure that there is no question, no hesitation, not even the slightest bit of doubt that that approach in behaviour is unacceptable in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand today and speak for a few moments about the speech from the throne. As I got ready to talk about it today, I wanted to pull it out again to remind myself what words were in this speech: “Moving Forward the Ontario Way.” What I thought I would share with those in the House and perhaps those watching at home and my constituents is, take what these words on the paper say, lift them up and bring them to life by example in my own community.

One of the topics in this speech is education, talking about how the Ontario way, as the last speaker has said, is bringing our kids together to learn together, grow together, prosper together, and to have our education system be a place in our community where community comes together. Over the past number of months, as we have had the privilege to spend time in our home communities finding out what matters—finding out, for me, what matters to the people in Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I've had a chance to visit a lot of places in

my community where education truly is bringing people together. I've had a chance to visit the Islington Junior Middle School, where I saw first-hand the mosaic that is our public education system, with kids coming to school from all corners of the earth, from all corners of the globe, joining together in what is a wonderful community school. I saw those students form a student government, meeting the members of their cabinet and their prime minister, who are now leaders within that school, and finding out from them what is success. I heard about their challenges as they come from many families, old and new to Canada, and bringing those opportunities and experiences together in that school.

I had a chance during literacy week to go to the family literacy and parenting centre in that very school and talk to parents of young children, like myself, caregivers who emphasized the importance for them, in their daily lives, of what our government is doing to assist those families to learn how to be good parents, learn how to teach their kids to love reading, and to see that first-hand. I saw the affection and love provided by the caregivers and the teachers in that parenting and learning centre who are helping moms right across the province, in every one of our communities—and this is the one in my community—really understand how we can work with our young children to set them on that journey of lifelong learning.

I want to share with you, Madam Speaker, that after attending that event and meeting some of the parents, one of the parents sent me an e-mail. She talked about how she watches the news and sees one of our local stations talking about, “My Toronto is ...” She said, “My Toronto is the cultural mosaic that exists at the Islington Junior Middle School and the love and affection and the teaching, caring and compassion that is exhibited by those who work in this learning and parenting centre.” I know for myself that it is so critical that we, as parents, are reminded how to teach and have our kids learn and to see first-hand what the teachers and caregivers and early childhood experts in those schools are doing to set all of our kids off on the right foot.

Recently it was March break, and kids all across the community were looking for things to do. I had an opportunity to go into Park Lawn Junior and Middle School and the James S. Bell Junior Middle School and see in action those community schools, which are hubs of activity for our families across the city, and to see students write about—I asked them, “Draw me a picture of some of your favourite places in our community.” A number of the students at those events drew me a picture of their school because, for them, school is where they go to learn, for companionship, mentorship, guidance and for feeling included.

School is truly, for them, what defines “community” at that age. Isn't that a wonderful thing—to know that our government values education to such an extent that it was a significant piece in the throne speech and that one of the phrases that was used was, “A true test of this

generation's leadership will be the next generation's success."

Madam Speaker, I know that you, too, are a mother. There is nothing more significant to each individual parent than ensuring that their child succeeds. But if we step back from that, it is also our collective responsibility to make sure that the next generation succeeds. We all know that bringing early education, phasing the full-day training of four- and five-year-olds, will open up that world of learning to our students in a way that will open up opportunities for them, it will make public education be the best it can be, and it will move our province forward in the way that Ontario has always done: by putting education first, bringing groups of diverse communities together and having them live, grow and learn together.

I also want to talk for a moment about what has also been contained in the throne speech by way of tackling poverty—this critical issue. It was International Women's Day during our break from this place, while we were out in our constituencies. Each year, my federal colleague and I—it is now Michael Ignatieff; before, it was the Honourable Jean Augustine—have a day where we celebrate women in our community.

The theme this year was, "Strong women, strong world." It gave us an opportunity to talk about some really incredible women, bring some really incredible women forward and highlight how true that phrase is: "Strong women, strong world." We know that when we help mothers be stronger economically, that will help their children. We know that when we support women, they will raise their families and support their families.

We now have an incredible champion within our government in the Honourable Deb Matthews, who will be leading the charge on a poverty agenda, but let us and those at home and around the province know that Deb Matthews is not going to do this alone. She has the support of our entire cabinet and caucus behind her because we know that that is going to be the way we will move forward the Ontario way: It is by moving forward together.

We only need to look back generations from behind and in the past. I know that when I stood in this House some four years ago and gave what was my maiden speech, I talked about my grandmother, probably one of the strongest women that I have ever known. The fact that she, within one generation, was able to move her family from poverty, from some very challenging times, and have some of those 10 children be in the classroom, be in the boardroom, be in the courtroom, be in the Legislature here in Ontario—as one of my uncles was—be in the operating room, be engineers, doctors and lawyers, demonstrates how important the support of community was, and how important setting students on the right track and having them understand the importance of education.

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As I talk about my grandmother, I often say if you have 10 kids, they can be a lot of things. I hope that my

boys are as successful and prosperous, but I do want folks at home and in the House to know I'm not planning on having eight more kids.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Do you still have those Leafs shirts?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I do have the Leafs shirts, I say to my colleague who gave my boys wonderful Leafs shirts, and I certainly hope that some day our Toronto Maple Leafs will do well, that we'll be able to have a big celebration with those Leafs shirts. I do think I might have a little bit of a hockey player on my hands. Zachary is a very good shot at two and a half, I have to say. He's very good with that hockey stick and connects every single time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Give Cliff Fletcher a call. Cliff Fletcher's looking for talent, so give him a call.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Okay, we're looking to the years ahead; we're getting ready.

I've just been passed a note. I was about to move to the topic of seniors, and maybe this note is quite relevant to that topic. I don't want to offend my friends across the House, but I understand there are those of us who have been here longer, and today Bob Runciman is celebrating his 27th anniversary as an MPP. That might be a nice segue—

Applause.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I don't want to offend the member opposite, but it is a good segue into the topic of how valuable seniors and those of an older generation are in the province—keeping on working, doing such great work here in the province.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Oh, he's been here since he was a baby.

On a serious note, let me tell my friends in the House about some of the work that the incredible seniors' organizations within my community are undertaking. We recently had a seniors' fair at the Franklin Horner Community Centre; Etobicoke Services for Seniors has had a number of celebrations; Storefront Humber. We have a community of incredibly active seniors, and I really want to thank them for the work that they do every day to make sure that the values and views of our government and the desires that we have for seniors to live healthy, long lives, to live in their own homes, to be able to be well taken care of and to have an opportunity to live with dignity—it is those groups that execute upon that vision in our community every single day, and without them, without our health care providers such as the LAMP Community Health Centre, which was here yesterday as community health centres joined us at the Legislature, we would not have seniors who could live with dignity and be caregivers and prosper.

I want to just turn, with a couple of minutes remaining, to the last thing that I wanted to highlight, and that was the economy. Certainly, we have a lot of celebrations to make with respect to success stories. I want to highlight that this week we had the Etobicoke Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Board of Trade, Business Excellence Awards. What we do in Etobicoke

is—just as folks in Etobicoke are like our government, we're very clear-eyed about the challenges that are going to be posed by the high dollar, by the high commodity prices, by competition. But we're very optimistic about what our community businesses will undertake and do and continue to make sure that the province prospers. We are there side by side with them, encouraging them, making sure that we relentlessly innovate with them, because we know how important the economy is to ensuring that we have good jobs, a good education system and a good health care system.

With those three key elements that have come out of the speech from the throne, I certainly say that I am very pleased to stand and make remarks in support of the speech from the throne. I do think we are moving forward together in a way that is the Ontario way, and that is what all of our communities need and want. That's how we'll make sure that we will have a community that prospers for many years to come and that our generation will be leaving the next generation on a very solid footing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Any further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to support the throne speech. It's an ambitious plan and it is a plan that will keep our economy strong.

Over the next four years, our government is committed to move Ontario forward by investing in people, in communities and in businesses, for a smarter, healthier, greener and prosperous Ontario.

On October 10, 2007, constituents of my riding, Mississauga–Brampton South, and Ontarians gave a loud and clear message that they want a public health system that treats everyone equally, irrespective of income and status, whether you are a first-generation, second-generation or third-generation Canadian.

Our government is committed to a publicly funded education system where children can come together, grow together and learn together. Finally, we want everyone to be at his or her best so that we can dream together, work together and build together for a strong and prosperous Ontario and a stronger Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

On December 3, 2007, Ms. Pendergast moved, seconded by Mr. Ramsay, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the

gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

On December 4, 2007, Mr. Runciman moved that the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"However, the current speech from the throne fails to adequately address the state of our economy, which is the single most important issue facing Ontario today; and

"Whereas, since the beginning of 2005, Ontario has lost more than 153,000 manufacturing jobs; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to recognize that economic growth predictions for the province have shrunk by a full percentage point from predictions used by the government less than a year ago; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to indicate any sense of urgency for dealing with the economic challenges facing Ontario; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to provide a plan for dealing with this new economic reality by maintaining a program of unreasonable taxation and undisciplined spending; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to set out a plan to reduce taxes and reduce regulations that are killing business in Ontario and placing such hardships on Ontario's families;

"We therefore regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government is ignoring the very real economic problems facing Ontario and has failed to ensure our economic fundamentals are sound and, in so failing, is failing to live up to the responsibilities placed on it by the people of Ontario."

The first question to be decided is Mr. Runciman's amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There is to be a 30-minute bell.

I've received a deferral slip. The vote is accordingly deferred until tomorrow—I'm sorry; I have to read the deferral slip itself.

Date: March 19, 2008.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on the motion by Mr. Runciman on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be deferred until Thursday, March 20, 2008."

It's signed by the chief government whip, Mr. Colle.

The vote is accordingly deferred until tomorrow, March 20, 2008, during deferred votes on the agenda.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The House is adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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