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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 1 April 2008

Mardi 1^{er} avril 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 1 April 2008

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

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*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB OF CAMERON
STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL**

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to pay tribute to the environmental club of Cameron Street Public School in Collingwood for receiving the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Youth Achievement in natural heritage.

Made up of 15 students from grades 3 to 8, the club has taken a leadership role at the school and in the community, organizing a variety of activities to not only raise awareness, but also help the environment. Among other things, the club holds a litterless lunch once a week, walk-to-school Wednesdays and a school-wide recycling program. They also provide mentoring services to younger grades by leading initiatives such as a kindergarten class composting program.

Environmental awareness and action can never begin at too early an age. The work the club has done thus far is representative of the students' incredible dedication to the environment and indicative of a sense of civic duty that is well beyond their years.

On behalf of all of the residents of Simcoe-Grey, I want to congratulate the Cameron Street Public School environmental club for receiving this very prestigious award; it's the first time it's ever been received in my riding. I want to thank their principal, Mike Giffen—who, by the way, used to work for me—their teacher, Ruth Hall, and all of the club members for improving our environment and for setting an excellent example for all of us to follow.

Congratulations, too, to their parents and to each and every student. May all schools adopt this program.

RIDING OF OAKVILLE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This past weekend, I had the pleasure of being a part of two great events in Oakville.

On Friday, I hosted the Kevin Flynn 10-pin Challenge as part of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters Bowl for Kids Sake campaign. It's the biggest fundraiser of the year.

This fun event not only raised awareness, but also raised over \$16,000 for Halton Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

I want to highlight that Big Brothers and Big Sisters are people just like you and me. They're regular people who volunteer to share a little time with a child or with a young person in need. I want to encourage all members of this House to think about getting involved as Big Brothers or Big Sisters themselves.

On Saturday, I attended and served as the MC for the second annual Sydney Clark Fundraiser for Sick Kids Foundation. Two years ago, young Sydney fell into a coma. Later, she was diagnosed with Reye's syndrome, which is a very uncommon and deadly disease. She was transferred to Sick Kids, where, under great care and after significant work, she made a full recovery.

The event was called Do You Believe in Magic? It was a great evening. It was attended by the president of the Sick Kids Foundation and Sydney's doctors and nurses. This year's event raised over \$43,000 for the Sick Kids hospital foundation. As the event coincided with Earth Hour, the Clark family made sure that their event would celebrate that as well.

I congratulate all those who made these events possible and who work so tirelessly to strengthen the great community of Oakville.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, the closure of the CanGro Foods canning facility in St. Davids, in Niagara, which was to be effective yesterday, has jeopardized the livelihoods of some 150 pear and peach growers in the region and will soon, sadly, put more than 100 plant employees out of work once the final canning projects have been completed. This facility had been a leader in North America—in fact, the only canning facility in Canada this side of the Rocky Mountains—one of the latest victims of Dalton McGuinty's high taxes and high energy policies.

This, I remind members, is an industry still reeling from the closure of the Cadbury Schweppes plant in St. Catharines in June 2007, and the closing of a local processor's sweet cherry operation this past year. As a result of these three lost businesses, farmers are now being forced to pull out or find a new market for as much as 3,700 acres of peaches, pears, sweet cherries and grapes.

The Premier has become an absentee landlord when it comes to the greenbelt. If the Premier wants to freeze the

farmers' land under the Greenbelt Act, then he must make every effort to help farmers find a profitable market for their product. The federal government recently came forward with over \$20 million to help with a transition program. Sadly, the province has not brought forward their share of that funding program. Anyone can draw a line on a map and call it a greenbelt. It takes real leadership to make the investments to make it a success and support our local farmers.

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION FUND

Mrs. Laura Albanese: On Sunday, March 30, I had the pleasure of attending a championship awards ceremony for a basketball tournament in our riding of York South–Weston. I was delighted to witness over 180 young athletes participate in the basketball tournament, and thrilled that our government had a part to play in making this event a success by providing funding to the tournament organizers, the Ogaden Somali Community Association of Ontario, through the communities in action fund. This fund, from the Ministry of Health Promotion, enables community associations to provide programs and remove barriers to participation in organized physical activities.

Organized sports bolster confidence and provide alternatives for young people who are looking for things to do outside the home and outside of school hours. Competitive sports like basketball and soccer give young people a great opportunity to work together as a team and to build their self-esteem.

The communities in action fund promotes healthy lifestyle choices. In the case of the young people participating in the Ogaden basketball tournament, instead of being sedentary and playing video games or watching TV, or being on the street, the youth were in a safe, social and community setting. I want to commend the tireless dedication of parents, coaches and volunteers, who create and run these programs and help remove the barriers that prevent or discourage youth from participating in physical activities.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: As you know, Mr. Speaker, we've just finished having our 2008-09 budget introduced in this House. One of the things that I found incredible, when you review some of the things that happened in the past, was that from the year 1867 to 2003—136 years—we got the budget from zero to \$67 billion. But do you know what? In the last five years, from 2003 to 2008, we've raised the budget another \$29 billion. It's now at \$96 billion, an increase of 41%.

I say to you, is the environment clean, for the 41% increase? I don't think so. Are there enough family physicians? It's worse than ever. Are our farmers prospering? Absolutely not.

I know we have kids being shot in our schools, but are there enough police officers? Likely not.

Is our economy strong? Absolutely not. We've lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs in the last three years.

This government has to rethink everything they're doing. They're an overspending, Liberal free-spending government—overtaxing the general public in this province. Start spending your money wisely.

1340

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last summer, the Premier announced the climate plan but in fact provided none. The government has not been open about its lack of a climate plan. Thus, we on this side of the House are forced to look for clues, to paw through the entrails to find out what's going on.

On March 7, the total of eight months since the Premier's campaign statement of a climate plan, the Toronto Star reported that the Liberals will set up a climate secretariat in April, "a small guerrilla outfit with strong vision that can drive through ministries," a source said."

The announcement was bizarre on two counts: first of all, the strange image of a group of bureaucrats rumbling through the halls here, late at night, checking to see whether deputy ministers have been good boys and good girls, delivering on climate events, and retreating during the day to their forest redoubt on Philosopher's Walk. It just doesn't give us a sense of someone really running things. The second point about this that's bizarre is that there would be no climate change plan for that secretariat to work with. None has been announced. The Minister of the Environment was asked by the Globe and Mail last week when the climate plan would come out, and he said, "Two or three months from now."

On top of all that, there's no indication in the budget of actual forward motion on climate change, no indication that the funds will be there to meet the targets that were set, as inadequate as they were.

The Premier has now had the promise of a climate plan hanging around for nine months. He has to treat the issue with the moral urgency he claims it has.

BLUEBERRY PICKERS

Mr. David Ramsay: As many in this House would know, for years, many hard-working families in northern Ontario have been supplementing their incomes by picking blueberries in the summer.

In the summer, all along the major highways of northern Ontario—Highways 11 and 17 in particular—these families set up stands or just sell out of their cars their harvests for a six- or seven-week period. Some sellers-brokers are also bringing these berries down to Muskoka berry stands, and from time to time there have been attempts to bring these down to the Toronto market.

Four years ago I was approached with the idea of creating a co-op that would bring order and certainty to selling the blueberries by providing a consistent supply to

the Toronto market over the busy berry season. Today at 4 a.m. I toured the Ontario Food Terminal with Dan Spiegelman, who approached me with this idea. Dan—for 40 years—has experience there at the Food Terminal, and everyone I met down there knew him. Ontario's premier fruit and vegetable market woke up this morning and began its day that early. The wonderful work that goes on there distributes our fruits and vegetables to all our retailers right across this province. I talked to some of the brokers, who were very interested in featuring this natural product from northern Ontario into the south.

In the coming weeks, there will be local meetings occurring throughout the area of northeastern Ontario to see if the pickers want to adopt this sort of system. I'd just like to say that I support this idea and I hope that this goes ahead. I think it would be another economic opportunity for a lot of our hard-working families.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak today about the good news the recent provincial budget and various other programs have provided to the riding of Brant.

Since I was elected, I've worked very hard to improve the quality of life for the residents of my riding. I'm very proud to have announced last week that our government is coming through and keeping its word.

Our government will be investing \$1.5 million in Brantford and \$3 million in Brant on repairs to roads and bridges through the Ontario highway program. I've spoken often about this issue, and now the riding will have the much-needed funds so that local officials can start to fix up the downloaded roads and bridges that connect our communities in a way that is safe and efficient.

In addition, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative—MIII—brought to Brantford and Brant valuable funding to work on water and sewers, roads and bridges and libraries, just to name a few. To highlight, my riding will be receiving \$3.5 million towards improvements on Henry Street, a very important road in Brantford, and nearly \$3.5 million to rehabilitate the downloaded Highway 54 in the county of Brant to help families and goods get to where they're going safely and efficiently.

Also, in terms of community and social services and of children and youth services, the riding of Brant will be receiving over \$250,000. Together, Brantford and Brant received nearly \$100,000, the Six Nations received \$85,000, and the Mississaugas of New Credit received \$68,000, to help these communities maintain a good quality of life.

I'm particularly proud to be part of this government during this time when the riding remains healthy and strong. Premier, ministers, I thank you and the residents thank you. We appreciate it.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise today to thank the McGuinty government for its investment and continued support for students in the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I've committed 20 years of my life as a vocation to students in school.

Despite all adversity in their lives, students come to school, and when students come to school hungry, it's heartbreaking. This government's \$32-million commitment to student nutrition, doubling over three years, and its partnering with educators, parents and school boards continues to move us forward toward a goal of increased student achievement.

The third party has called this budget an "Oliver Twist budget." As a teacher of literature, let me remind you that Oliver Twist ended up with everything in the end, and he left his society a better place to be. I quote Charles Dickens directly from chapter 53: "Oliver's warm and earnest heart ... linked together a ... society whose condition approached ... one of perfect happiness as can ... be known" in this ever-changing world.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008 /
Projet de loi 45, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2008.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to introduce our new group of interns. With us today in the Speaker's gallery are the 2007-08 legislative interns. They are Ryan Cookson, Sabrina Hoque, David Michon, Kayla Monteiro, Aamir Taiyeb, Matthew Thornton and Judith Wong. Would all members please join me in welcoming our interns to the Legislature.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies to intern Katie Robb.

VISITOR

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's really my pleasure to introduce Tyler Wiles, who is sitting in the gallery today, the president of the college student alliance from St. Clair College in the great riding of Windsor West. I'd appreciate if we would all help welcome him here today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

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?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This bill would raise the minimum wage above the poverty line, unlike the government's moves. Therefore, it would raise over a million Ontarians out of poverty by introducing a minimum wage of \$10.25 immediately.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Hon. John Milloy: Today, along with my colleagues the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Minister Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, I had the opportunity to visit a very special place of learning in Ontario. The First Nations Technical Institute is the longest-standing aboriginal post-secondary institute in our province.

For 22 years it has provided aboriginal students with the training and skills they need to succeed through college, university and community programs. It has also welcomed them into a strong, caring community that offers a holistic approach to learning opportunities for aboriginal people. That's why it was so troubling to learn from Minister Dombrowsky, in her role as the local MPP, that because of federal cuts the institute was in danger of closing its doors.

Our government wanted to make sure that didn't happen. Together with Minister Dombrowsky, we worked with the institute to forge a new partnership. This year we'll make a one-time \$1.5-million investment in the school and, working together, we're going to develop a financial plan to make sure the institute can succeed in the years ahead.

I'm proud of the work our government has done with the First Nations Technical Institute and the work we've done on aboriginal education generally. In 2007-08, our government invested \$24 million in aboriginal post-secondary education and training. Of that amount, \$1 million went to the institute's programs, including the school's highly regarded aviation program; an additional \$671,000 funded other institute programs. This is all part of our commitment to making sure that aboriginal students in Ontario can reach their full potential.

But we are missing an important partner in the federal government. From 1985 to 2007, the federal government funded the First Nations Technical Institute. Recently, they made a decision to cut funding to aboriginal post-secondary education. I've written to my federal counterpart and asked him to join me in helping to find a secure, long-term answer to the post-secondary challenges faced by our aboriginal partners.

We're going to continue to work with our education partners in the year ahead to make sure aboriginal students get the support they need to succeed. And I'm going to continue to ask the federal government to come to the table and work with us.

I want to again thank my colleague the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for her hard work on behalf of the institute. It's because of her advocacy that the people of Ontario recognize the importance of the institute and the critical role it plays in the community.

In closing, I'd like to bring to this Legislature the greetings and appreciation of Chief R. Donald Maracle, Chief of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, who was at the announcement this morning and wanted me to pass them on to this Legislature and to our government.

FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to echo the comments of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, along with the great member for Prince Edward-Hastings. It was a truly special morning to meet with students and facility members of the great First Nations Technical Institute of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. We were all inspired by the passion of the faculty to teach, by the desire of the students to learn and by the drive and leadership of their president, Tim Thompson.

With today's announcement of increased support, the McGuinty government is doing its part to ensure that the success of the First Nations Technical Institute is secured and continues to grow now and in the future. Our focus is training, education and, most of all, jobs. Jobs increase respect and choices for First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, and respect preserves dignity. Increasing and preserving that for First Nations in Ontario, Metis in Ontario and Inuit in this province is a main focus of this government.

The First Nations Technical Institute is the launch pad for more jobs and a stronger economy and, most of all, a brighter future for Ontario First Nations.

I congratulate the president of FNTI, Tim Thompson, and all of the faculty, staff and students at the institute for its many academic and community accomplishments; so, too, to Chief Maracle and council and to that community. I look forward to many more years of success for this institute and its students.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I rise in the Legislature today to speak about how our government is partnering with industry to create jobs and opportunity for Ontario families. Recently, we announced two examples of this strategy in action: our most recent investment with Ford, and the Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

It was a very, very proud day when we had Premier McGuinty in Windsor to announce this partnership with Ford Motor Co.

Yesterday I joined the Premier, Minister of Finance Dwight Duncan, our own MPP Bruce Crozier, and Ford executives at the Essex engine plant in Windsor to announce a \$170-million investment by Ford to retool this facility and put roughly 300 previously laid-off people back on the job.

We believe there's a strong possibility that the number of jobs returning to the Essex engine plant will increase with the implementation of further phases and with additional and constructive dialogue between both levels of government and Ford Motor Co. We are committed to working with Ford and the federal government—and let me say that clearly—to bring even more investment to this facility. The Ontario government has made commitments under the Ontario automotive investment strategy allowing us to fund up to 10% of total program costs, and in this case, \$17 million. This strategic investment represents a big win for the workers of the Essex engine plant, for Windsor and for Ontario's automotive sector.

On March 4, the McGuinty government announced its \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund to deliver good jobs for Ontario families by making Ontario the best place to develop and make products for tomorrow. NextGen is a different type of fund for a different type of economy; at \$1.15 billion, we're putting major resources behind this. The fund targets areas where Ontario has the greatest potential: green auto research, parts production and vehicle assembly; clean fuels, clean industries and environmental technologies; health technologies and pharmaceutical research and manufacturing; and digital media and information and communications technology.

NextGen will position Ontario to win leading-edge global investments, it will make Ontario a centre of excellence for innovation and commercialization, and it will place Ontario ahead of the curve in green technologies, making products that reduce greenhouse gases, help our environment and make Ontario more competitive.

We know that opportunity doesn't hang around, and that's why companies submitting a completed proposal for their project will get a decision in 45 days. Our service guarantee is a first for the Ontario government business program and means that a managing director of an Ontario subsidiary can phone the global CEO of their company and say, "If you want this project done quickly, choose Ontario."

Ontario has the highest percentage of people with a post-secondary education in the world. We're building on this advantage through our investments in education and training. NextGen is the next stage, creating the rewarding high-value jobs that will live up to our talented and skilled workforce. This is how we will make Ontario a leader in the knowledge economy.

Today's economy is too complicated and too competitive for governments to simply cut taxes and hope for the best. Of course, creating a competitive business environment is at the core of any prudent economic plan. That's why our budget proposed new tax relief today totalling \$750 million over four years. That's on top of the further \$1.1 billion over three years in targeted, strategic tax reductions proposed in the 2007 fall economic update.

But governments need to do more. They need to show leadership and vision. They need to be at the table, partnering with industry to create jobs and win investment. Make no mistake: If Ontario doesn't step up, somebody else will.

1400

We know what we can accomplish when the government and business work together. By coming forward with our \$500-million automotive investment strategy, we managed to leverage that into \$7 billion of new investments, safeguarding thousands of jobs—and this during very tough times for our car companies.

Yesterday's announcement with Ford is just the latest in a series of success stories from our government's partnerships with industry, and these accomplishments will continue with the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. We are sending a message to companies around the world: If you've got a project that will grow your business and create jobs, Ontario wants to partner with you to make it happen.

We will continue to do this as our part of our government's five-point economic plan: partnering with industry, investing in skills and education, rebuilding infrastructure, boosting innovation and cutting business costs.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is prepared to step up to the plate and be part of the solution. That's what Ontarians expect and deserve, and that's what Ontarians will continue to get from this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My friend from Durham, who shares a bench with me and spent 30 years in the auto-

motive industry, says this plan is wrong-headed. Wrong-headed—it's headed in the wrong direction. It is a classic example of anti-free trade policy. This plan is government-driven; it's not industry-driven. It is a plan that would feel comfortable in the 1960s and 1970s, when the government used to guide industry in these ways, until we found out that government had an unholy ability to judge industries that were about to fail and pour Ontario taxpayers' money into industries that were not doing well.

The other thing this plan does is benefit Ford, which is fine in Windsor and fine in Oakville, it's a wonderful thing, but it injects itself into the free market. It hasn't put any money into Chrysler. It hasn't put any money into General Motors. It makes it uncompetitive in those other industries when government supports only one industry in a town like this.

This industry is suffering from high taxes and the high cost of doing business in Ontario. If you reduced the taxes of the industry, if you made Ontario a more competitive playing field in North America, instead of having the highest taxes in North America, the highest taxes in Canada, if you made it—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Nonsense, nonsense.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sorry, Speaker. She had her time and apparently she wants my time too. That would make her a Liberal.

If you levelled the playing field for all businesses, then all businesses would succeed, instead of looking for some other place to do business. I read a very nice poem about that in the Legislature last week; I would recommend it to you. It's in Hansard.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently the member from St. Catharines also wants some of my time.

The \$1.5 billion would be better spent creating a business-friendly atmosphere for all Ontario businesses, one that would level the playing field and let everyone participate in it. After all, 82% of Ontario employment is in small and medium-sized businesses. Those businesses are not going to benefit one iota from these kinds of expenditures. Those are the businesses that are going bankrupt and leaving this province for lower-cost jurisdictions, and those are the businesses that employ, as I said, 82% of Ontarians, and you're doing nothing for those businesses. It doesn't apply to small businesses and they are the ones suffering.

You put \$17 million into Windsor—\$17 million, \$57,000 per job. But how much did you put into Kitchener? How about Kitchener, where there were 2,934 jobs gone missing? Where is \$17 million for Kitchener? They should get the same thing in Kitchener. What about Hamilton? Hamilton has lost 1,840 jobs. Whereabouts is the \$10,000,488 for Hamilton? Whereabouts is Guelph's money? Guelph lost a tremendous number of jobs, as did Collingwood, as did Cambridge, Thunder Bay, Smiths Falls. Whereabouts is their money? No, they don't have two cabinet ministers in their towns.

This is patronage, that's what this is: a bunch of patronage to make you look good in your towns, using Ontario taxpayers' dollars to do it.

You shouldn't be proud of this. You should be ashamed.

FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: In the short minute I have left, I'll comment on the statement by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. As usual, the provincial government initially just argued that the problem belonged to the federal government in terms of the First Nations Technical Institute. We all recognize that education and training opportunities are of paramount importance if we are going to see improvement in the conditions in our aboriginal communities.

This government has a new aboriginal policy framework. Let me explain what that means. That means the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, when he deals with the situation in Caledonia, shows up there—he doesn't actually talk to anybody. He just shows up in Caledonia. He goes around and films himself and posts it on YouTube. That's the new aboriginal policy framework in action. He doesn't have to talk to people.

From where I'm standing, this government really needs to roll up its sleeves and has a lot more work to do. Look at Kashechewan, where they're waiting for a new school to serve a community that hasn't produced a high school graduate on its own soil for more than two years. And read the Lieutenant Governor's recent speech that he made in Sudbury, if you want to see all the work that needs to be done on the aboriginal file.

FIRST NATIONS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, here we go again, the Liberal government engaging themselves in their favourite pursuit, and that is to blame the federal government every time something happens and to try to put everything on their doorstep. I would remind the government that the province of Ontario, for every citizen in the province, is responsible for education both at the post-secondary level and at the primary and secondary levels. Why should First Nations people be treated any different?

Today, the government announced they're going to put forward \$1.5 million to the First Nations Technical Institute, an institute that is in place that allows First Nations people to get the skills that they need to bring back to the communities to build a capacity that is so necessary to run their institutions and run government in their own communities.

What does the government do? The federal government has cut the funding by over \$2 million. The provincial government should have come in and basically said, "We are going to make sure that people who want to get an education at the post-secondary level are able to get it." What do they do? It's a half measure. They bring

forward \$1.5 million. Why? Because this provincial government is no different than the federal government. The policy is, you underfund it and you make it fail. That's what this government is up to.

I am upset with this government on behalf of the communities that we represent. My colleague Michael Prue on the finance committee brought a motion before the finance committee that was clear. That motion proposed that we bring forward the necessary funding to make sure that FNTI gets the dollars that are necessary so that they can survive beyond the spring, they can survive beyond next fall, so they can flourish and become the organization they need to be so communities can build capacity.

This is no different than what the federal government always does: Underfund it, let it fail and let's see what happens.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to address the engine plant. I want to be clear that the NDP supports direct investment in companies if there is a clear link between the investment and the creation of good, paying jobs. I notice that no date has been given for the reopening of this plant. I await the release of funding details. However, if this investment results in the creation of 300 good, quality jobs for workers who would otherwise be out of work, then this investment is worth making. But it doesn't go far enough; 40% of the people in that area are out of work. Three hundred jobs? Not enough.

That said, it is our belief that the McGuinty record has been completely inadequate, and there is no excuse for the loss of 200,000 jobs. We in the NDP have been clear that the job crisis in the manufacturing and resource sectors is the number one challenge of this House. Since Dalton McGuinty came to power, we've lost 18% of our high-paying manufacturing jobs. That is \$6.6 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy.

That very scary number of 18% sounds good compared to the absolute devastation of the manufacturing sectors that communities such as Hamilton have endured, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost—a disgrace. But all this pales in comparison to the hit that Windsor—the minister's home riding—has taken, where close to 40% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, and which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada.

1410

Recently, the NDP have proposed two ideas that won wide support from business, labour and economists: a manufacturing investment tax credit and an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles—which our member brought forward and which was shot down. These ideas were rejected by the McGuinty government.

The credit would be 10% of the investments in new machinery, buildings and equipment. An added incentive of 20% credit would be available for investments in green industry jobs. This is an idea that has been widely endorsed by economists and has been implemented with

impressive results, I might add, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and now Quebec is on board. What's wrong with Ontario? Why haven't we joined in?

The federal government also provides just this sort of credit in the Maritime provinces as well. And in its budget two weeks ago, Quebec became the third province to endorse the idea and will offer a provincial credit shortly. Apparently Mr. Ramsay, in his interim report on manufacturing, also endorses the concept. It's right there on page 28 of the budget.

Unfortunately, rather than simply introducing a provincial manufacturing credit in its budget, the government has reverted to its unfortunate habit of pointing fingers at Ottawa, and merely recommends that the federal government offer a credit for Ontario now.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to withdraw my request filed yesterday for a late show addressed to the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Renewal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a "no."

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to ask the table—I was just a little confused. I looked at the calendar today and it had a number of different dates: It's July, it's January, it's April; all say the first, though.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Erindale, we'd like to welcome Heather Sinclair and her students from John Fraser Secondary School in Mississauga, who are visiting in the west visitors' gallery. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member from London–Fanshawe, we'd like to welcome the grade 12 political science class from Clarke Road Secondary School in London today in the east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, we'd like to welcome Mr. Azm Hoque, the father of her legislative intern. Mr. Hoque is a former senior United Nations officer in Asia and Africa, and he's in the east members' gallery. Welcome today, sir.

On behalf of the member from Parkdale–High Park, we'd like to welcome her guests: Fahma Ali, Joan Taylor, Michael Taylor and Crystal Taylor in the east gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of the members from Kitchener Centre and Richmond Hill and all members in the House, we want to acknowledge the student representatives from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the college student association, who are here for their annual Queen's Park conference. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the members from Hamilton Centre and Timmins–James Bay, we would like to welcome, in the east members' gallery, Willamina McGrimmond, Nancy Coaster, Max Havin, Allison McReady and George Sorger. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

MEMBERS' HOCKEY GAME

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As Speaker, I would like to recognize those members who played last night for the Ontario Legiskaters—it's a hockey team—in a tune-up hockey game against the legislative staff and security. I want to thank them, and I will be naming the members by name: Jean-Marc Lalonde, the coach; Bob Delaney; Norm Miller; George Smitherman; John O'Toole; and Paul Miller. The staff won the game, 9-6. We want to congratulate both Norm Miller and Paul Miller for each scoring two goals last night as well.

To everyone who has not been recognized, welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. I'm going to ask him if he can remember a promise and commitment. In 2005, you very adamantly said to members of the media, and I'm quoting from the Toronto Star: "There'll be no tire tax." Got it?

I know the Premier has a hazy memory when it comes to many of his promises, and this may be a case in point because, Premier, you've now indicated you will be bringing in a tire tax. You made the announcement effectively under the cover of darkness when the Legislature wasn't sitting, three days after the budget was tabled.

Premier, will you stand up today and admit that this is a new tax on hard-working Ontarians and that you have once again broken a promise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's an important issue before us as a province. The fact of the matter is, we are the only province in Canada that does not have a formal tire recycling plan in place.

We are stockpiling them by the millions. They are wonderful breeding grounds for mosquitoes during the season, including the danger of West Nile virus. They tell me it takes about 100 years for a tire to begin to decompose, and we all understand the dangers associated with fires and tires.

I think the time has come for us to act responsibly and to put in place a formal tire recycling plan.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I didn't hear anything in reference to the promise that the Premier made in 2005. Perhaps he could have stood up and said it was an ill-thought-out slip of the tongue. No; he just declined to even comment on it.

This is the proposal that was talked about last Friday. It's the same proposal that was put forward in 2005. That's when the Premier responded with the words that I used earlier. We're talking about a \$60-million tab that hard-working Ontarians are going to have to pick up.

Once again, a broken promise, trying to slip it by Ontarians. I will ask the Premier, once again: Will you stand up today, admit this is a new tax on hard-working Ontarians and that you have once again broken a promise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Is the leader of the official opposition suggesting that we should not put in place a formal tire recycling plan in the province of Ontario? If that is his position, then obviously I take issue with that and he should just admit to that.

I think the responsible thing for us to do, given the information that we have, the knowledge at hand, our understanding of the damage that tires are causing to our natural environment—it's time for us to do something.

Is there going to be a cost associated with this? Yes, there's going to be a cost associated with it. It would be nice to pretend that there was no such cost going to be associated with it, but I think it's important for us to get on with this, to put in place a formal tire recycling plan and to assume our full responsibility as knowledgeable global citizens at the beginning of the 21st century.

We know the damage that tires are causing to our environment. It's time for us to own up to that and to do something about it.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier talks about "admitting." Why doesn't he admit that he has once again flip-flopped after an election on a very significant promise to Ontarians?

I want to read, for the Premier's benefit, the definition of the word "tax" as it appears in Webster's dictionary. Your minister declined to describe this as a tax: "Exact a contribution to the cost of government. A charge imposed. A burden."

Your proposed tire tax clearly fits that definition. You felt that way in 2005 when you described it as a tax. Premier, why was this \$60-million tax grab not included in your budget? Why did you try to sneak it by hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A few facts. Those are always of some modest benefit in this Legislature, I've always thought.

First of all, there is no proposal that we have yet received from Waste Diversion Ontario. We will be seeking a proposal from them.

Secondly, what we will do, if we receive a proposal that we think is workable, is put in place a program. There will be a cost associated with this. All of the costs—any monies received from Ontarians—will be exclusively devoted to the tire recycling plan.

In terms of the amount of that fee, somewhere between \$3 and \$6 per tire has been suggested in the past. We want to ensure that we are getting all the money we need, and no more money than we need, to have a formal tire recycling plan in place. We know the danger that tires in stockpiles present to our natural environment and

to our health. We think it's time for us to do something about that. We think it's time to move on with this, and we will.

1420

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier: Again, this sounds like an old, Bob Nixon, "This is not a tax grab," speech.

I want to go back to the Premier and his government's attempts to lowball a tax increase, to minimize public awareness of a new tax, and yet another McGuinty broken promise. This is really a tax hike by stealth, a calculated effort, I believe, to reduce public awareness, and again, a breach of parliamentary tradition. I'm giving you notice, Mr. Speaker, that tomorrow I will be filing a question of privilege with you on this issue.

Will the Premier please explain to Ontarians and to members of this House why this \$60-million cost to Ontarians was not even referenced in his budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, it's a proposal, which we have even yet to receive from Waste Diversion Ontario. We are doing this in a very public way, and I invite Ontarians to reflect on this issue. What do they think we should do with our used tires? Do they think we should continue to stockpile those? Do they think we should allow a danger to present itself? We had a fire in this province in the past, when it came to tires, and it took us a long time to put that fire out. There were tremendous toxic emissions that emanated from that fire. We're aware of the dangers constituted by stockpiling tires indefinitely. We think it's time for us to do something about that. We think that's in keeping with the values of Ontarians, and we want to give expression to that through our new plan.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier is asking us to reflect, and I would ask him to reflect on his promises. We had many promises broken in the last mandate after an election, especially on taxes, that have impacted Ontarians in a very negative way. I think many could argue that we, in this place, live something of a sheltered existence. Perhaps we're not aware of the many challenges that Ontarians are facing. We know we're going into an economic slowdown—the Minister of Finance has acknowledged that—perhaps even into a recession. People are facing higher energy costs, higher grocery costs and electricity prices, and outstanding mortgages. Personal bankruptcies set a record last year. These are real challenges facing real people outside the Queen's Park precinct. How can you have the nerve, the gall, to break yet another promise and put another burden on the backs of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's been said that the responsibility of leadership is to represent the future to the present.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, would you please withdraw the comment you just made.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Withdrawn.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I see a bright and promising future for Ontarians as we, among other things, assume our responsibility as global citizens. In fact, I'm convinced that we can create jobs, when it comes to recycling tires in the province of Ontario. I'm convinced that, with the benefit of our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund, we can find new opportunities as we take responsibility for being more responsible in the face of the environment and our understanding of the damage we're causing to it. It's not all doom and gloom. I think there's a way we can actually benefit the economy. We can grow this economy and create good, new, green jobs at the same time that we reduce toxic emissions into our environment. I think that's what Ontarians want us to pursue.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This is no April Fool's joke on Ontarians. A tax is a tax when the Liberals want to call it a tax. Regrettably, this is what's happening in this situation: You're once again breaking your promise in the aftermath of a provincial election. You've got no scapegoat to blame this time, but only semantics and the hope that Ontarians will not notice or not care—cynicism, I would suggest, at its finest.

I would ask the Premier, based on their actions here, their actions in the past and more specifically, yet again breaking another unequivocal promise to the people of Ontario, how does he define "honesty and integrity"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member mentioned that he hoped Ontarians notice and care, and I hope the same thing. I hope they notice what's happening with respect to stockpiling our used tires, and I hope they care about that. And I hope they will take the opportunity to reflect and to understand.

Given that we are certainly the most privileged generation in our history, in terms of being armed with information about the impact our activities are having on our natural environment, it's a sad reality that one in three Ontarians is now being diagnosed with cancer and one in four Ontarians is dying of cancer. We are having an impact on the quality of our environment, and it's affecting our health.

I know that what I'm asking families to do is not easy. This will impose additional costs on them. But at the same time, if we get this right, we can keep that cost minimal, we can keep it affordable, we can assume our responsibility as privileged global citizens and we can create new, green jobs. I think our times demand of us that we take on this challenge, that we grapple with it and that we get it right. We'll have a good conversation with Ontarians, but we will move forward.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a question of the Premier. This morning, we learned that another 124 working families in Kitchener are losing their pay-cheques because Gencor Foods has closed its doors. It's the latest in a lengthy list of plant closures, factory closures and loss of manufacturing jobs in the Kitchener-Cambridge area.

My question is: Will the McGuinty government admit that, even after your much-ballyhooed budget of last week, manufacturing jobs continue to be lost in Ontario at an alarming rate?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, our hearts go out to anybody who finds himself in a difficult position at this point in our history when they're losing a job. We understand that's really tough on the individuals and especially hard on their families. If I had a magic wand—perhaps the leader of the NDP has possession of such an instrument—that could ensure that we lost no more jobs at any time, I would gladly wave it and we wouldn't have to worry about that anymore. But I don't.

So what we've done is the best job we can in the circumstances. The fact is, we have cut taxes in a way that benefits manufacturers who find themselves in distress, and we have launched an unprecedented program, investing in new skills and education for our workers so they can get better jobs. We are eager to continue to work with the manufacturing sector. But we think investing in infrastructure creates jobs in the short term, investing in the skills and education of our workers improves their chances of getting a better job in the near future, and we also continue to believe that the tax cuts we made will stand our manufacturers in good stead.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The fact is, the budget didn't have a jobs plan, and that's part of the problem. I've outlined what other provinces are doing in terms of a jobs plan: bringing in buy-domestic policies that are greater than 25% content; bringing in a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit—things that are working in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in the province of Quebec.

But it's not just in Kitchener. The closure of the CanGro food processing facility in Niagara will throw 250 workers out of their livelihood, not to mention 150 fruit growers. How many numbers do there have to be—how many factories have to close, and how many workers have to lose their jobs in Ontario—before the McGuinty government actually comes forward with a jobs plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the leader of the NDP understands the consequences, on the ground here in Ontario, of the high dollar; he understands the impact of the high cost of oil; he understands the impact of a struggling US economy; and he understands the impact that the struggling US economy is having by way of reverberations on emerging economies. He understands all of that, and what it means to the people of Ontario.

But what he doesn't understand is the wisdom of the approach we are taking. It is thoughtful, it is progressive, it is compassionate and it's in keeping with the aspirations and values of the people of Ontario. That is why we are cutting business taxes in an effective way. That is why we will continue to invest in infrastructure.

1430

We've got a 10-year, \$60-billion plan that's creating all kinds of jobs immediately, when we need them, and enhancing our productivity in the long term. We are investing heavily in innovation, helping Ontarians turn those great ideas that they have into products and services for sale to the world. And, just as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a few moments ago, we had a great day yesterday in Windsor, partnering with Ford yet again to create still more jobs.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier might want to know that two thirds of the people who used to work in that plant are still out of a job; they're no longer working.

But the fact of the matter is this: Other provinces also face challenges, but they've brought in measures. Quebec adopted a manufacturing investment tax credit; Manitoba adopted a manufacturing investment tax credit, made it refundable and, in making it refundable, has helped to sustain manufacturing jobs there. Other jurisdictions have a buy-domestic policy, which creates and sustains manufacturing jobs in their jurisdiction. What do we see in Ontario? None of these measures.

So I ask the Premier again: How many tens of thousands of hard-working Ontario families have to lose their jobs before the McGuinty government actually comes forward with a jobs plan to do something about the problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the leader of the NDP champions this refundable tax credit approach. It has some merits and we have given it some thought, but we're doing something that's even better. In this budget, we are refunding capital taxes for our manufacturers and resource sector to the tune of \$190 million. As soon as the budget is passed, we want to get these cheques out the door. That's immediate. Beyond that, we have in place a new buy-Canada policy. It's not 25%; 82% of all the money that we're putting into public transit, for example, is going into the Ontario economy to create Ontario jobs.

We have carefully considered just how far we can go in that regard. We're proud of these initiatives. There's always more to be done. We look forward to more suggestions from the leader of the NDP. But I think it is simply inaccurate for him to suggest that we don't have the kind of plan in place that Ontario businesses and Ontario families have been looking for.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: I think the only plan that people see out of the McGuinty government is more unemployment.

I want to ask the Premier about the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who yesterday tried to tell Ontarians that the clawback of the national child benefit supplement will end this July. The fact of the matter is, the national child benefit supplement provides about \$100 per month to the lowest-income children. When you do the math, in July your government will only allow those children to keep about \$50 of that \$100, which means you'll still be taking \$50 a month away from those lowest-income kids.

My question to the Premier is this: Since you're still going to be taking \$50 a month from the lowest-income kids, how is that not a clawback?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have the opportunity again to explain what the Ontario child benefit will do for low-income Ontarians. Starting this July, parents in low-income families will receive up to \$50 per child, per month. That is in addition to the full NCBS, and those on social assistance will receive their social assistance cheque. There will not be a clawback of the NCBS.

As I explained yesterday, the beauty of the Ontario child benefit is that it speaks to the aspirations of people on social assistance who look to moving on, who look to entering the workforce. They will be able to take the full Ontario child benefit with them when they leave social assistance for employment.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think we've seen another exercise in McGuinty government doublespeak. The lowest-income kids are supposed to receive \$100 a month from the federal government to help them escape poverty. Instead, the McGuinty government is going to swim them through mounds of paperwork, and at the end of the mounds of paperwork those lowest-income kids are only going to get \$50 a month—and the McGuinty government is going to say, "You're better off."

Tell me, Minister, when is a low-income child, struggling in poverty, better off after you've taken \$50 a month off their kitchen table?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This question gives me an opportunity to say that we are spending another \$150 million this year on the Ontario child benefit. This is part of a very large investment and commitment.

The member opposite has asked about the application process. It's a good reminder. Parents must fill in their income tax, they must file their income taxes, to be eligible for the Ontario child benefit. It's a good reminder for parents to file their income taxes, to check off the appropriate box for the NCBS, and they will automatically receive the Ontario child benefit.

Mr. Howard Hampton: More words to try to make it seem as if the McGuinty government isn't taking \$50 a month from the lowest-income kids. But it doesn't end there. The McGuinty government is also going to take away the back-to-school clothing benefit and the winter clothing benefit from those lowest-income kids. I don't know about members of the McGuinty government, but

we had lots of days this winter of 20 below zero, 30 below zero. Can you tell me how those lowest-income kids are going to have winter clothing when you're taking \$50 a month away from them off the top and then you're going to take their winter clothing allowance away from them as well?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Ontario child benefit goes way beyond simply ending the clawback. It goes way beyond the winter coat and back to school. This is a benefit that goes to all low-income families, regardless of the source of income; people on social assistance receive it and the working poor receive it. This is a very important policy shift for Ontario. It's an important component of our poverty-reduction platform.

I would ask that members opposite stand up and support the Ontario child benefit. It's an important benefit, and I do not understand their opposition to this very important piece of legislation.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question is to the Premier. Premier, members don't often get to use the word "gargantuan" in the Ontario Legislature, but the growth of government workers making more than \$100,000 per year under the McGuinty government has been nothing short of gargantuan. Your tax-and-spending policies have brought Ontario to the brink of recession. At a time when some 200,000 families have lost jobs in the manufacturing sector, including CanGro in Niagara, they see an extraordinary bloat, not in front-line workers, but in high-priced spin doctors making more than \$100,000 per year.

Premier, what direction have you given your ministries to control this excessive growth in those making more than \$100,000 per year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To respond to the question, this government has managed the affairs of the province prudently. That's why we've balanced our budget for the last three years. That's why we're paying down debt.

Unlike the member opposite, we don't want to dump on teachers, we don't want to make fun of public servants, we don't want to criticize our nurses, and we don't want to criticize public servants within the Ontario public service. Just last year, we found a billion dollars in savings with the help of those very public servants.

We believe in investing in health care. We believe in investing in public education. We have a balanced approach to the challenges that face our economy today. We look to our partners, our partners in the public service, our partners in the broader public service, to deliver, in an efficient way, the goods and services that the people of Ontario have come to expect.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I say to the minister, I don't know what circles he travels in, but I don't see many teachers, nurses or personal support care workers from long-term-care homes making \$100,000 per year. In fact, you're completely distorting what is on this list.

Let me put this in perspective. At this time, when Ontario's private sector job growth is dead last in all of Canada, you have added some 200,000 positions to government payrolls—approximately the size of the city of Kitchener.

1440

When it comes to the \$100,000-plus club, some 42,000—approximately the size of the city of the Welland—have been added of government workers making more than \$100,000 a year. By way of example, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. has added some 92 more people to the \$100,000 club.

At a time when front-line workers are being laid off and revenue has gone down, what direction has this minister given to crown agencies to control this runaway spending?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, there were 875 nurses on that list yesterday, and there are doctors on that list and there are others who are delivering important front-line services.

I should also remind the member that with the 1996 threshold, if you apply the simple consumer price index between then and now, we would have reduced the list by two thirds. So in fact, we've seen average salaries on the list over \$100,000 increase by 1%. This government has managed its resources in a prudent and appropriate fashion. It is investing in education; it is investing in public health care. It is balancing the budget—something that member knows very little about. It is paying down debt and continuing to provide the public with the services they've come to expect by a very high-quality, high-calibre Ontario public service.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Premier. It's on behalf of Fauma and Joan and women like them who've lived in shelters and struggled to survive on minimum wage. My question is a simple one. It's this: Why won't the government raise the minimum wage to the poverty line?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're proud to announce that the minimum wage just went up, effective midnight last night. It went up 9.3% overnight, in fact. It's up to \$8.75 an hour today. We started at \$6.85; before we formed the government, it was frozen for nine straight years. I think this is the fifth consecutive increase we've put in place. We hear regularly from the NDP that it's not enough; we hear regularly from the Conservatives that it's too much. We think we've got it just right.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, it's less than the poor were making in 1973 in real dollars. You can't survive on \$8.75. My question to the Premier is this one: Why won't this government raise the minimum wage to the poverty line? It's disgusting.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important for us to look at the minimum wage as an important issue for our working poor, but we also have to look beyond that. That's why we're proud of the fact that in this budget, for

the first time, we're putting in place a new Ontario dental program for children in low-income families. We're proud of our Ontario child benefit. We're proud of the investments that we've made in newborn screening, free vaccines for children, our school-based nutrition program, and the investments we're making in improving affordable housing in the province. All of those are dimensions to the quality of life for people who are growing up in Ontario in poverty.

I welcome the member's attention that she devotes to the minimum wage, but I'd ask her to look beyond that and to recognize some of the other efforts we're making in improving the quality of life for the poor in Ontario.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, as in other areas of Toronto and across the province, some youth face a lack of opportunity to become engaged in their community and find employment that offers them a future. Because of this, I was pleased to hear today about our government's initiative to provide over 800 youth in high-needs Toronto neighbourhoods with summer job opportunities.

Could the minister please elaborate on this program and explain how it will help strengthen communities such as mine and help young people achieve their full potential?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to talk about some of our investments in young people in this province. I'd like to start by commending the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for his tireless advocacy for youth in his community.

Yes, today I announced, with Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, the continued investments in the youth opportunity strategy. It will see 850 youth in Toronto—2000 province-wide—gain valuable work experience this summer. One hundred of those job opportunities are with the Toronto Police Service. These opportunities build strong relationships between communities, the youth taking part in the program and police services. I welcome this opportunity to talk about it and look forward to the supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm proud that we're reaching out to these youth to provide them with opportunities. While I think this program will go a long way, it's important to recognize that youth face challenges for many different reasons, and thus the solution isn't always the same.

Could the minister please outline what our government is doing to get at the root causes of why some youth are not able to achieve their potential and how we will move forward to tackle this difficult issue?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You're right: It is a difficult issue. As a first step, we've now got 35 youth outreach workers in Toronto—62 across the province—advocating for young people, helping them get involved

in programs and services that exist, and promoting engagement in their communities.

We know it's important to get to the root causes. We have to understand why some youth are unengaged and turning to violence or gangs. That's why the Premier has appointed Alvin Curling and Roy McMurtry to conduct a review of the roots of violence, to identify those root causes, and to provide recommendations to this government on how to continue building safer and stronger communities and schools. We look forward to receiving their review.

Finally, we know that poverty leads to wasted potential. That's why for the first time in Ontario we're developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to provide more youth with the opportunity they need to achieve their full potential.

GYPSY MOTH INFESTATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Natural Resources: The emerald ash borer has invaded Norfolk county, Canada's forest capital with 30% forest cover, and 25% of that is ash. The gypsy moth is chewing its way through the proud oak of Haldimand county, as well as Six Nations in Norfolk. The Norfolk Woodlot Owners Association are desperate to mitigate this destruction, but they're on their own.

The mayor of Norfolk county, Canada's forest capital, has written letters and met with you to request funding. I've written to you, and I have hundreds of names on petitions requesting financial aid to deal with these infestations—but yet again, nothing.

Minister, when can Haldimand, Norfolk and other areas expect you to step up with some money to stem the devastation of emerald ash and gypsy moth?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to remind the member that in fact spraying has not been happening in this province for some 19 years, which included the time that his government was involved.

We're more than prepared to offer the technical support, and we have done that, to the different municipalities. In fact, there are some pilot projects under way with gypsy moth, which is a new type of spray. All we're doing is actually doing the monitoring on this process, which will happen in three major areas in the province. Once we have an understanding of whether there's been some effectiveness of this particular new spray, then we'll be able to work even more closely with the municipalities as they determine what direction they wish to take with our technical support.

Mr. Toby Barrett: That's simply not quite good enough. You've inherited a proud ministry, the former department of lands and forests; it used to be known as the department of lands and forests. You're right, there is a precedent: Your ministry did fund the gypsy moth, up until 1992.

The BC Forest Service is actively fighting the mountain pine beetle. Your tax-and-spend government had an additional \$4.9 billion in unplanned revenue this past

year, yet you have allowed your ministry to be slashed by \$20 million. Minister, when will you redirect some of that unplanned revenue to fight both gypsy moths and emerald ash borers?

1450

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I say quite clearly that if the federal government would like to give me \$200 million, which is what they have given to the British Columbia government for the pine beetle, I would be more than happy to spray. They have not. As a matter of fact, they actually abdicate their responsibility, because once an invasive species becomes resident, they say, "Excuse me. It's not our problem anymore; it's yours." We're actually trying to change that strategy with the federal government.

Secondly, in terms of my budget, I would be more than happy to take that member through my budget so that he, in fact, does understand that it has increased, not decreased. The difference, of course, is firefighting, which is exactly what your government did and this government did and what we do: We put the money in when we need it.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday you ordered the Toronto District School Board to rearrange itself, or else. Tell us, Minister, how will the lobbing of this political hand grenade save any money or help reduce the board's deficit?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: A year ago, Joan Green and Brian Cain went in to the Toronto District School Board and wrote a report in which they said there were issues around the size of the board and the governance. I have served on this board. For a decade, people within the board and outside of it have talked about the size of the board being a problem.

Our fundamental concern is student achievement. We want to make sure that every board in this province has the resources and is able to focus on student achievement. I've been working with the board for the last year. I met with them on January 30; I met with the governance committee on March 6. All I've done is ask for some recommendations that they might make on how to align the board so it can be the most nimble, agile system possible to focus on student achievement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Ordering the Toronto District School Board to reorganize itself will do nothing for the child being denied ESL programs, for the children on the waiting list for special education, for the parents whose children in French programs are fighting for scarce resources or for children who are in schools that are crumbling because capital dollars had to be spent to cover your deficit. Your announcement would be okay as an April Fool's joke, but you're not proposing this political hand grenade as a serious solution to our underfunding problems, are you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since we came into office, this board has received \$359 million more. This year alone, this board is getting \$26 million more—2,423 school repairs have been undertaken; 1,175 new teachers since 2003.

The issue here is that this board itself has recognized that there needs to be governance changes. They are struggling with this, and it is beyond outrageous that the member opposite hasn't spoken to people within the board, who know that if the principals can't talk to each other, if there are too many layers of bureaucracy, if the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing, then students suffer.

I will continue working with this board. We will put children at the centre of this circle of care, and we will make sure, in a collaborative way, that we come up with an answer that is best for the kids in Toronto.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Our government is working on behalf of vulnerable workers in Ontario, and the government is following up on its commitment to increase the minimum wage so that all Ontarians have a living wage. The recent increase marks the fifth increase to the minimum wage since we were elected in 2003. Not as much can be said for the previous government's shameful record of freezing the minimum wage for nine years. Would the minister please tell this House how this government will be increasing the minimum wage in future years?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Essex for the question. I also want to thank him for his consistent advocacy on behalf of vulnerable workers in his riding and across the province.

I'm proud of what this government is doing and what this government has done since 2003 to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's lower-paid and most vulnerable workers. This week, as the Premier said earlier, workers across this province are going to wake up to a minimum wage that's now 9.3% higher; we've moved it from \$8 an hour to \$8.75. That's the highest minimum wage now in this country, something that we're very, very proud of. We're doing this in an aggressive but gradual manner, making sure that we're putting money back into the pockets of low-income workers, and at the same time protecting their jobs and ensuring that businesses have time to adjust.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I know that workers in my riding appreciate what this government is doing and applaud the increases to the minimum wage. Workers I've spoken to feel that the government is listening and does care about the contribution these workers make on a daily basis to our economy. I understand, however, that some people have expressed concerns about how the minimum wage is increased. I would like the Minister of Labour to tell this House how the government is dealing with these concerns.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member again for the question. He is correct: There has been a considerable amount of commentary about this particular issue. I just want to share with the Legislature some of the comments made by others on the issue.

Lindsay Boyd, chair-elect of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that the organization supported the gradual increase because it gives businesses time to adjust.

Len Crispino, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said that a staged approach is the fairest and most effective way to raise the minimum wage.

But most importantly of all, I read this morning in the Windsor Star a comment by a single mother working at a local Tim Hortons in Windsor. This is what she said: "Now I can afford a decent apartment."

That's what this policy is all about.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. Despite the widespread use of PET scans throughout the world—the United States, Australia, Europe—and certainly other provinces in Canada, there is a tremendous amount of frustration for both patients and doctors in Ontario at the lack of access to PET scans here.

In fact, Dr. Jean-Luc Urbain has said, "We know that we could save lives, avoid unnecessary surgery and optimize treatment by performing PET/CT scans on patients." He's the chief of nuclear medicine in London, and he goes on to say, "We used to say Ontario was on the cutting edge of the past. It is not even on the cutting edge of the past. Ontario right now is prehistory."

I ask you, Minister, when will you finally stand up for patients and provide access to PET scans?

Hon. George Smitherman: Well, it's very rich, very rich indeed, for the honourable member whose party today calls for a \$3-billion cut to health care to stand up and ask such a question, especially considering the record of treachery that was associated with their handling of the health file over those number of years. The longest-serving Minister of Health in the Harris government questions these things. I'm very proud of our cancer system in the province of Ontario and about the expansion which is ongoing.

With respect to PET scans, we have a clinical trial which is well complemented by many international experts and we have an access mechanism that is allowing Ontario patients today to access PET technology. Before we offer widespread access to PET scans, it's critically important that we know exactly those indications for which this is the most desirable form of diagnostic test to be utilized.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The minister knows full well that we are not going to cut health care. What a preposterous statement he continues to make. This is the same minister who is out there bullying stakeholders and

telling them to be quiet when they're not happy with the health care dollars that they receive.

I would say to you, Minister, we have Deborah Maskens, a Guelph resident and mother. Today, she has been able to use her own money—thankfully, she has money—and she has gone to the United States to get a PET scan, which her oncologist said was medically necessary to treat her ongoing kidney cancer. If you didn't have the money, you wouldn't be able to go. Here is a woman who is frustrated because she goes past a PET scanner every day at Princess Margaret when she gets treatment, but she can't use it.

1500

So I say to you today: The research has been done, the trials have been done; they're being used everywhere else in the world and in Canada. When are you finally going to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: The member's credibility is restricted on two points. Firstly, this issue that they don't intend to cut health care spending: No; they only intend to eliminate \$5 billion in revenue and not show anybody that there are implications. But people remember Mike Harris's commitment not to close hospitals, and they know the after-effect of that as well.

Here's a quote from Dr. Bill Evans, the chair of the Ontario PET steering committee. He's an oncologist. He's the president of Hamilton's Juravinski Cancer Centre. From the Globe and Mail: "There's been a criticism in Ontario in its seeming tardiness to adopt, but it's a decision taken by cancer specialists of the province, various surgeons and medical and radiation oncologists. In cancer we have to figure out how best to use it. When the clinical trials are completed, there will be a lot of people to thank us." We are not in a position to offer a technology without strict guidelines about its most appropriate use. This is the honourable member who led, as Minister of Health, an effort that saw people not even gaining access to MRIs in our province.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, on January 17 you were given a good-faith proposal by Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug to help resolve the dispute between Ontario and Platinex Incorporated mining exploration company on one hand, and the First Nation on the other. It was a detailed proposal given to you on January 17. At no time have you or anyone else in the McGuinty government responded to that proposal. Why has there been a failure to respond to a good-faith proposal put forward by the chief of the KI First Nation?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It was the first time, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, that I had been to that community on that date. I was there with Grand Chief Stan Beardy. The community was incredibly welcoming, and we had an excellent meeting where a good-faith pro-

posal was put together. Then what happened is, every single day—literally, every single day—either myself or a member of my office was on the phone with either Chief Morris or Councillor Sam McKay drafting and exchanging drafts of the government's response. Eventually the best-effort draft that the government had put together, which in my view responds to 95% of the KI proposal, was filed in court. So, in fact, the member has his facts wrong again.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I met with Chief Donny Morris just a few days ago at the jail in Thunder Bay, and he continues to dispute your version of events. He says you made one trip to the First Nation where you spent about an hour with some of the elders and had supper with them, but there was no discussion. You made another public relations visit on an entirely different issue, when there was no discussion about the proposal put forward by Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.

So my question is this: It is certainly not consultation to go in for a one-hour public relations visit. It's certainly not consultation to meet with elders in the community but fail to respond. When is the McGuinty government finally going to respond to the good-faith proposal put forward by Chief Donny Morris on January 17 of this year?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I think it's important for the Legislature to know that in addition to the letter of intent and the changes to the memorandum of understanding that were filed in court and were exchanged with Chief Morris and council several times by way of e-mail, by way of fax and by way of telephone conversation, there was an additional update to that response, and, in an effort to try and be helpful, we had it translated. So, in addition to the three versions that were eventually filed in the court, we also translated the response to the KI proposal that was put forward.

I do in fact look forward to visiting that community again in the future, and I also look forward to continuing to work with that community, because we will find a solution.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. In the McGuinty government's 2007 budget, we appointed Dr. Bob Rosehart, a former president of Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, as the northwestern Ontario economic facilitator. His mandate was to work with local people and businesses to help inspire a new generation of growth in the northwest. As we know, he delivered his report on March 20.

Some of the louder naysayers across the aisle complained, as is their style, that it was too little too late, or that we were somehow trying to bury it in the lead-up to our budget. We simply won't share in their pessimism. But I do have to ask the minister: Now that the Rosehart report is in your hands, what specific actions are you going to take to address the recommendations in it?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question, and I want to compliment my colleague as well for the hard work that I see he does every day on behalf of economic revitalization in northern Ontario.

I'm very pleased to inform the House that our government has already begun work on several initiatives that directly respond to Dr. Rosehart's recommendations, some of which were included in our budget last week, including the acceleration of the business education tax reduction for northern municipalities, which will result in millions of dollars in savings for Thunder Bay businesses alone and over \$70 million for northern Ontario businesses across the north.

A \$25-million investment was announced towards the creation of a bio-economy research centre in Thunder Bay, creating great excitement in Thunder Bay, and one of the key recommendations of Dr. Rosehart related to investment in the research economy;

Also, a \$20-million, four-year investment in geological mapping, a tremendous investment in terms of future exploration. Dr. Rosehart focused on that, and certainly we're committed to following up and doing more in terms of Dr. Rosehart's recommendations.

Mr. Bill Mauro: These are important investments in the knowledge and resource economies in the northwest. I know that over the course of Dr. Rosehart's work, he conducted in excess of 120 meetings, including 16 municipalities and over 20 First Nations leaders.

I recall that Dr. Rosehart delivered another report to government in the late 1980s, and some of those recommendations helped in the development of the northern Ontario heritage fund, which I'm happy to see we will be increasing to \$100 million by 2011, as well as the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

I know there are some short-term and long-term recommendations in this current report. In that regard, Minister, what are your future intentions with the report, since we are already on the way to accomplishing some of those recommendations?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly we're all very excited about the work that Dr. Rosehart has done. He was absolutely the right person to ask to do the job.

I want to assure my colleague and all members of the House that initiatives such as the northern Ontario growth plan, and our record investments—again, a new record of investments—in northern highways will also respond to Dr. Rosehart's recommendations.

My ministry has also been working on a strategy to implement other aspects of the report. In that regard, I was pleased to officially open my satellite minister's office in Thunder Bay yesterday, which is also in keeping with Dr. Rosehart's recommendation to increase our government's presence in the north. The opening of that office speaks to the McGuinty government's continued commitment to work closely with northerners. It also provides the people of northwestern Ontario easier access to their Minister of Northern Development and Mines, which I believe will foster an even greater positive relationship.

Last week's budget clearly showed the McGuinty government's commitment to the north. Dr. Rosehart's work is another reflection of that commitment, as we are eager to move forward on developing a long-term vision for northern Ontario's economic growth—

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

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Are you aware that the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay has continued to accept new inmates, knowing that the facility has been in lockdown as a result of a contagious virus that has swept through the facility? Further, are you aware that since the facility is in lockdown, the inmates are not being transported to the courts to have their bail hearings?

Minister, could you explain to this House why healthy people are being exposed to a contagious virus, and why accused persons are being denied their constitutional right to have a bail hearing forthwith?

1510

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I look forward to answering the question. Certainly, there is a process in place to isolate those inmates who have come in contact with the illness. Ministry policy is designed to ensure that inmates are treated in a responsible way, and that those new inmates coming into the facility are not put in contact with those inmates with viruses. We are using modern technology, such as video recording, to ensure that the processes are maintained as normally as possible as we work through this virus, which we hope will only last between 24 and 48 hours.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the minister: The outbreak has been going on for five days, and as far as we know, you cannot do a bail-hearing-by-video remand. This complete disregard for public health and constitutional rights speaks to the government's complete disregard for Ontarians and the fact that they are completely unprepared to deal with a public health pandemic. What are you doing about this, Mr. Minister? What is your plan? Why are you still accepting inmates, as we speak, into a locked-down facility?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: In fact, the member isn't correct. With consent, you can have video bail hearings.

I want to congratulate the staff at the centre. They're doing a remarkable job. They're ensuring that any new inmates who come in are screened. I have to be perfectly honest with you, Speaker, and to the member: The staff at that facility are handling this outbreak in a very, very professional way. I would suggest he should get on his feet and thank those people who are working very, very hard to keep the system as normal as possible as we work through this virus, which we hope will be done within the next 24 to 48 hours.

CONSERVATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I've been asking earlier in the week—I didn't get an answer from the one minister for a health reason and I didn't get one from the other minister when he took over. I've been asking you about the Eramosa Karst, and I'm not getting any direct answers once again. Why is the McGuinty government, through its ORC public consultation, leaning toward selling these 80 acres for development, instead of doing what's right and donating it now to the Hamilton Conservation Authority to ensure long-term protection of this wonder, the karst?

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

Hon. David Caplan: The member has left out some critical information. The first is that the lands are already designated under the city of Hamilton. I believe the former municipal councillor in the city of Hamilton should know that the city of Hamilton official plan, Hamilton Conservation Authority and the province have established strict environmental criteria for permitting development in this area. The member knows this full well.

In fact, the Ontario Realty Corp. is currently studying the lands from a number of perspectives—certainly, environmental, archaeological, geological, hydrogeological—and trying to determine what, if any, provincial lands need to be protected and what the best use of those lands would be. Once the Ontario Realty Corp. has completed those studies, it will be working with the city, as we always do, and with the conservation authority and with the community to continue to ensure that, through the review of the ORC studies—to best decide the use of the provincial property, taking into account community concerns—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Unfortunately, the information is incorrect that the minister is telling us. Processes like the current ORC public consultation will allow well-financed developers' interests to overshadow those of the people who live near, support the designation and enjoy the unique features of this karst. When their interests are fully supported by experts in the environment, they should be paramount, not those of developers who do not live in the neighbourhood, do not seem to care about this unique geological feature and are driven only by money to be made at any cost.

Will you do the right thing for the Hamilton environment, forgo the money the government would get from the developers of this land, effectively putting the money back into the community, and announce now, Minister, that these lands are being transferred to the Hamilton Conservation Authority? Will you do this?

Hon. David Caplan: The member is quite woefully misinformed. In fact, the Ontario Realty Corp. is working very closely with the city, with the Hamilton Conservation Authority and, in fact, with the local residents. As I

have indicated, once the studies are completed we'll be working with those groups to ensure the thorough review of ORC studies to discuss the best use for this property, taking into account the community's concerns.

I know that, as I indicated earlier, the lands are currently designated in Hamilton's official plan for urban development. The member should know this, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Question period has expired.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York-Simcoe, to welcome the grade 11 class from Keswick High School to Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition from Full Gospel Temple in Warton. It's 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 of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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 signed this and I will give it to Alex to take for me.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from SEIU and from the people of Clinton, Seaforth, Goderich and Brucefield.

"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 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 support that petition and will affix my name to it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Charles Sousa: This is a petition in support of private 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 ... 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.”

I sign my name.

LORD’S PRAYER

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: One thousand, five hundred and forty-five people from the city of Ottawa have signed a petition calling on the McGuinty Liberals to retain the Lord’s Prayer.

“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 ... 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;

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

I will affix my signature with the other 1,545 people from the city of Ottawa and present it to page Samuel.

1520

HOME HEALTH CARE SUPPLIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the WSIB has changed their policies and now requires injured workers to purchase their health care equipment and supplies from one of only three suppliers; and

“Whereas none of these mandated suppliers can possibly provide the expertise, care, experience and personal knowledge that my current supplier offers;

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

“Rescind the WSIB purchasing policy that forces injured workers to leave their current health care supplier and purchase their health care supplies and equipment from only a list of three suppliers.”

I support this petition. I’ve signed it and send it to the table by way of page Michael.

ROUTE 17

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J’ai une pétition provenant de citoyens de Hawkesbury, Rockland, Vankleek Hill et L’Original.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que l’ancien gouvernement de l’Ontario a transféré la responsabilité de la route 17 aux municipalités, la ville d’Ottawa et des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell;

« Attendu que les municipalités n’ont pas les fonds suffisants pour l’entretien, la réfection de la route ou des ponts, sans mentionner d’élargissement;

« Attendu qu’en 2001, l’administration des comtés unis de Prescott et Russell a estimé à 21 000 véhicules par jour la circulation en semaine sur la 17 à l’entrée de la cité Clarence-Rockland et que depuis, ce chiffre a augmenté » à plus de 25 000;

« Attendu que cette artère principale transférée aux municipalités est une route transcanadienne dans un état lamentable et continue à souffrir du temps et de l’achalandage de plus en plus important;

« Attendu que les membres du personnel du MTO régional avaient recommandé et accepté tel que présenté par la commission de révision régionale en date du 27

avril 1992 que la route 17 soit retenue comme une route collectrice provinciale suivant l'achèvement de la route 417;

« Attendu que la ville d'Ottawa continue à émettre des permis de construire, ce qui devient une question de sécurité;

« Attendu que la population de l'est de l'Ontario exige les mêmes services de sécurité routière;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons au ministère des Transports de l'Ontario de reprendre immédiatement la responsabilité de la route 17/174 et de procéder à son élargissement de la cité Clarence-Rockland à la ville d'Ottawa ».

J'y ajoute ma signature avec fierté.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Frank Klees: I present this petition, which was delivered to me by the Reverend Mary E. Bowes of the Wexford Presbyterian Church and the Ghori family, including University of Toronto students Monica Ghori and Anita Ghori. The petition reads as follows:

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings.”

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

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I present to you today about 700 signatures which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

“Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

“Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

“Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as ‘surplus’ to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

“Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance” from being used as commercial development.

I'll sign it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Ms. Laurie Scott: “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 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 we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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.”

It's been signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I'll hand it over to page Adam.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here with several signatures on it. It was presented to me by Sonny Sansone, a community activist in my community. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Whereas over 60% 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 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 the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it page Charat, who is here with me today, also from Scarborough Southwest.

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 its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the 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 we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of 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 would like to add my signature to this and also thank those people from the communities of Keewatin and Kenora for bringing this to the House.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed 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 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."

I add my signature, and I'll have Alex deliver it to the table.

WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a petition from the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to sign this and hand it to Daniel to present to the table.

1530

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was mailed to me recently by the Westland family of Trelawny Circle in western Mississauga. I want to thank them for their efforts on behalf of our community. 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."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to support it, to affix my signature and to ask page Christopher to carry it.

EMERALD ASH BORER

Mr. Toby Barrett: The petition is entitled, "Stop the Emerald Ash Borer Invasion," and signatures have come in from Canfield, Port Rowan, Cayuga, Hagersville, Charlotteville, Windham and Simcoe.

“Whereas the emerald ash borer poses a dangerous threat to our forests in Norfolk county and across the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas if the emerald ash borer is not effectively controlled, it is expected to spread across the entire range of ash, causing widespread tree mortality; and

“Whereas the Canadian Food Inspection Agency has not yet determined a quarantine site; and

“Whereas there have not been any promises of financial aid to the municipalities dealing with the emerald ash borer;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources maintain pressure on the federal government of Canada to name the quarantine site and provide financial aid to the affected municipalities to stop the spread of the emerald ash borer.”

I sign this petition.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Premier in last Thursday’s question period to her question concerning affordable housing. This matter will be debated today at 6:10 p.m.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent with respect to an agreement in regard to a deferred vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move, in language that I’m sure will soon be corrected and formalized by the table, that the vote on the budget bill be deferred until tomorrow at deferred votes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2008, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It’s indeed my pleasure to rise today and offer my comments on our government’s budget, introduced just last week in this Legislature. I should advise the Chair at the beginning that I will be sharing my 20 minutes with the—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: There was an agreement that the time be divided equally

between the three parties, and I would ask that that be respected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am not aware of any such agreement. In order for that to happen, we would need the unanimous consent of the House.

I recognize the government House leader on this.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I’ll speak to the whip for the third party. We can bring the motion whenever, right, Speaker?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, we have to do it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): If you wish to do it, you can seek unanimous consent of the House to divide the time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay, I’ll do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay on his point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent that we split the time amongst the three parties in the rest of this debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay has sought the unanimous consent of the House to split the time equally amongst the three parties. Is there agreement in the House?

I hear a dissenting voice. I return to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, who has the floor.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Again, I will be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga–Erindale.

I do rise today to offer my support for our government’s budget, tabled here just last week. We on this side of the House are looking forward to the support of the two opposition parties opposite as we move forward.

At their core, these budgets are an allocation of resources that are provided to us by the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. As such, our budget particularly is a great reflection of the priorities of most of the people in the province of Ontario.

I want to highlight some of the broader themes that were in the budget that especially resonate for me in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, my riding, but I think also for most of the people across northwestern Ontario.

The business community, I must say, is extremely pleased with what we’ve done in this budget, especially on two components of it, one being the acceleration of the elimination of the business education tax, and I’ll speak a little bit more broadly on that in a little while; and the capital tax piece, which is primarily focused on the resource and manufacturing sector and is going to put \$190 million back into the pockets of those companies should this budget bill get passed. We look forward to the support of the opposition members in that regard.

Support for seniors: always something that we attempt to do in our budgets, a reflection of how we feel about the contribution that seniors have made to this province over the past number of years. I’ll speak a bit more to the specifics in that regard as well.

Major investments in infrastructure: I think many of us have had the opportunity to discuss these investments with our mayors and our reeves, and I know that those

whom I've discussed this with in northwestern Ontario are especially pleased with us finding the fiscal capacity and the fiscal room to ensure that we continue to invest in these much-needed projects. I have to tell you, coming from a large geographic riding where we have small municipalities with low assessments and low tax bases, that these investments in infrastructure are greatly appreciated.

Economic development was a theme in the budget as well.

MMRC in Thunder Bay—the Molecular Medicine Research Centre—and the Centre for Research and Innovation: great moves to try to diversify the economy of northwestern Ontario. I'll talk a bit more broadly about those as well.

I'm thrilled to see the increase and the commitment from our government to move the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$60 million up to \$100 million. I'm very happy to see that program growing. It's something that I had a hand in redesigning during our first mandate to engage and involve more private sector people in their ability to access the money that's in that fund.

Initiatives in our poverty reduction strategy: dental, food, nutrition and things like that.

These are some of the broad themes that we've addressed.

Of course, to do that, we had to have the fiscal capacity to allow us to make those investments in services, in infrastructure and economic development, and in our poverty reduction strategy. I contrast that with the landscape that we found when we came to government in October 2003 after eight or nine years of Conservative government. During that time, as many of us will remember, the American economy was very strong and Ontario was following right along as primarily an export-driven economy. The Conservatives made a decision to follow their ideological agenda of tax cuts. Most of us won't disagree that where we can, tax cuts are not a bad idea, but we have to pay for them somehow. They always come with a cost, and in that eight- or nine-year period, the cost associated with their tax cuts was a serious and severe reduction in services.

What did we see during those eight or nine years? We saw a significant downloading of the services onto the backs of municipalities. I was a municipal councillor. In October 2003—I think fully 38 of us came into this place as first-timers—many of us were municipal councillors who were prompted to run provincially for the first time directly as a result of our experience of the downloading exercise conducted by the Conservatives during those eight or nine years, that supposed revenue-neutral exercise that left Thunder Bay holding the bag on about \$7 million annually.

1540

I remember a specific experience when I visited Timmins in my capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, where he told me about the 30 miles of road that had been

downloaded to a municipality the size of Timmins—just drastic.

MNR offices: 70 of them closed, a 30% to 40% reduction in staff. Ministry of the Environment: 50%, 40% reduction in staff, and we saw the results of what happens when you're not careful with what you do at the Ministry of the Environment. That report drew a direct link between what happened in that ministry and Walkerton.

We saw a government that was selling off assets. They found it necessary to sell off assets at a time when the economy was doing well. Highway 407, of course, is the obvious example. It was sold for \$3 billion. Many people estimate the value at about \$8 billion, maybe as high as \$12 billion, but for some good reason, when all that news was going on, they found it necessary to sell off that asset.

This is the backdrop that we found when we came to government: a strong economy, with a low currency of a 62-cent Canadian dollar, cheap oil and a strong American economy—still downloading services, still selling off assets, still cutting public services while they downloaded services onto the backs of municipalities. And what did we end up with? A \$5.6-billion deficit. And as we all remember, we found out afterwards why they didn't want to present that budget in this Legislature—history will show it to be called the Magna budget—\$5.6 billion, as was documented for us by the former Provincial Auditor six months after the election. That was the big promise leading into the 2003 election. We found out exactly what that meant.

Of course, we know we had the backdrop of what was left to us by the NDP as well. Once in a while, it's funny to look across the room when they try to give us a bit of a lesson on how to manage an economy when they left us with about a \$50-billion or \$55-billion debt in their five years of governing in the province of Ontario.

I want to read into the record, in the last two or three minutes that I have, some of the great investments that we made in infrastructure in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan. Two programs—the \$400 million that was announced in the budget—led directly to these investments: in the city of Thunder Bay, \$2 million; in the community of Atikokan, \$146,000; in the community of Neebing, \$198,000; O'Connor, \$45,000; Oliver Paipoonge, \$476,000; Gillies, \$35,000; and for Conmee, \$52,000. That was the budgeted allocation of \$400 million.

On the MIII program, the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, the city of Thunder Bay received an additional \$1 million for the Harbour Expressway bridge; the township of Atikokan received \$1.6 million for downtown revitalization; the township of Gillies received \$40,000 for a community recycling centre; the municipality of Neebing received \$1.6 million for the realignment of Sturgeon Bay Road; and the municipality of Oliver Paipoonge received \$1.4 million for the Nor-West rec centre.

I can tell you, in discussion with my northern mayors and reeves—Mayor Brown in Atikokan, Harasen in

Neebing, Nelson in O'Connor, Kloosterhuis in Oliver Paipoonge, Vanlenthe in Gillies and Rydholm in Connee—they expressed a deep sense of satisfaction and thanks for the investments that we've made. Those large geographic semi-rural areas that have the small assessment bases and the small tax bases are extremely appreciative when governments find the fiscal capacity to make investments in infrastructure which are drastically needed.

A couple of quick things before I close; I only have about a minute left. I want to thank the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and the Premier for committing in this budget to the funding of the PSA test for men. I introduced two private member's bills in that regard, and I want to thank our government for moving forward on that, with this policy piece coming forward on January 1, in short order; an issue widely regarded, widely respected, widely supported all across Ontario. And I want to thank them once again for the capacity we've had to make continued investments in health care for increased volumes in cancer, cardiac, cataract, hips and knees, MRIs and especially the angioplasty program in Thunder Bay, a commitment that I made leading up to the election in 2003, a program that is now up and running and enabling 400 to 500 people in the riding of the Thunder Bay–Atikokan, when fully operational, to no longer have to leave Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre—a service they can get in their home community and not have to travel. They'll be able to have their loved ones around them when they're having this very emotional intervention conducted.

My time is up. I look forward to the support of all in the House when our budget is presented. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Small Business.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm actually very pleased to be following my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He has briefly touched on how this budget affects businesses. I want to talk about how this budget really affects small and medium-sized businesses, but before I do that, I want to talk about what small and medium-sized businesses really mean to us and our economy.

Some 99% of all businesses in Ontario employ less than 500 people, and that is the definition: less than 500 people and we consider them under small and medium-sized businesses. They represent about 99%, or 360,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Ontario. They employ about 2.8 million Ontarians, and they create about \$230 billion in economic activity. So small and medium-sized businesses are really important to our economy, and that's why I want to talk about how this budget actually addresses some of the issues that have been facing our small businesses for a very, very long time.

It is a fact that since our government took power, we have created about 456,000 jobs. In fact, I should say that the businesses have created that many jobs. This has happened in spite of the fact that our Canadian dollar has

moved up almost 30% to 40% in the last few years, that our oil prices are at \$100 a barrel, and that the US economy is showing signs of some problems, especially in their home-building sector and also in their financial sector. But our economy has been very resilient, and it has proven that we have been much more successful in the reshaping of our economy, in that it has continued to create jobs.

I want to talk about four different points on how this budget addresses the issues that are facing small and medium-sized businesses.

Number one is training and assistance to workers impacted. Whenever anybody loses a job—and it has happened to all of us in our families—it is a painful experience. The first thing workers look for when they lose their jobs is if there is any assistance available for them to actually start a career again. In this budget, the Minister of Finance has been able to allocate about \$355 million for a Second Career strategy. This is specially designed to assist the workers who have been in the manufacturing industry. It will support about 20,000 people. What this does is, if somebody wants to take a course—whether it's a four-semester or two-year course in a college or university, a recognized course—and they want to improve their skills, they are eligible to get up to \$25,000 towards their tuition and travel fees. That will assist the people who have lost jobs and are in the middle of their careers at this point in time, so that they can actually get settled again in good, well-paying jobs.

The second issue is, sometimes people say, "Hey, can we afford four semesters?" and "Can we afford two years?" In order to address that issue, there is a \$75-million fund that has been created to actually assist people with the apprenticeship programs. That will increase apprenticeship spaces up to 32,000. But in addition to creating more spaces, another \$45 million has been set aside in this budget to enhance our current apprenticeship programs. So what we're really doing is saying that we realize that the manufacturing sector is having some challenges because of the competition from other countries like India and China, and also the economy in the US is facing some challenges, and as a result, our manufacturing sector is facing some challenges. Our Second Career strategy fund and our apprenticeship program fund will help them to resettle their careers again.

The second question then becomes, if the companies are facing some challenges, how can we really help them to move forward? So the strategy I want to talk about is, how do you position firms going forward so that they can be successful?

1550

I actually had the chance to visit the Middle East in December, and I had the chance to go to India in January. During those two trips, I had the chance to go and visit the trade shows.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What did that cost us?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We'll talk about that later.

The trade show that I attended in Dubai is the largest trade show that is held there for construction. What I experienced was that, even though we had the presence of our good companies there, the presence was not to the scale that we really should have there.

It was the same thing when I attended the auto expo in New Delhi. Again, I more or less experienced—at least I got the feeling that we need to assist our companies to showcase our technologies, to showcase our products, in these developing markets. They represent a tremendous opportunity to us, and it also shifts a little bit of our trade from relying on the US to some other countries. So in this budget, we have set aside a \$5-million fund that we have given to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce so that they can actually help these companies to attend the trade shows and showcase their technology.

The second step that we have taken is to address some of the issues facing manufacturing, saying, “If you need assistance with manufacturing, then we will assist you in that regard.” So we have given money to the Canadian export and manufacturing association to help them improve the processes and systems that are needed. And then there’s the \$300 million set aside for innovation as well.

We also looked at our AMIS program and said, “How we can make it more fruitful and worthwhile for our struggling companies?” That program has also helped them to acquire more equipment and so on.

This brings me to the third issue: How can we make our businesses more cost-effective? In order to do that, the first thing we have done is the elimination of the capital tax, going back to January 2007. That was actually supposed to happen this year, but we have gone back a year, to 2007, and eliminated the tax. That will put about \$190 million into our businesses, which will help them.

The second thing is, if you buy new equipment or new machinery—which manufacturers need to do in order to increase their productivity, and which will also help us—what we have done is given them a faster write-off of their equipment, which is the capital cost allowance.

The third thing we’re working on is modernizing our rules and regulations. What we are saying is that if any ministry wants to bring a rule and regulation, they should actually bring one that they will eliminate.

Those are some of the things that we have done. In addition to that, my colleague David Ramsay has made some very strong recommendations to suggest what to do for small and medium-sized businesses, especially in manufacturing. He also attended some of the sessions that I had with the small and medium-sized businesses to see what some of the challenges are that they’re facing. So I want to thank my colleague David Ramsay as well, and say that he did a tremendous job in meeting with the people and making recommendations that have been made part of our budget.

Let me just talk about another issue. If somebody has a really, really brilliant idea, and they work with a university to take their brilliant idea and commercialize it,

for the first time ever in this province we’re actually going to give them a 10-year tax holiday so that they actually keep all those jobs, keep all those ideas, right here in Ontario, which will create more jobs and prosperity for our province.

I’m very proud of this budget, and I really want to thank the Minister of Finance for doing a wonderful job taking all the priorities, all the challenges and balancing them.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to respond to the budget speech that came from the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

We held pre-budget hearings in northwestern Ontario and Thunder Bay, and over the past several years we’ve certainly visited Kenora and Atikokan. When I mention Atikokan and Thunder Bay, it does bring to mind the information we received from deputations that this provincial government does have the ability to help out with respect to the tough economic times, not only in the forest industry but other related industries in northwestern Ontario. One thing is to do a better job as far as competitive electricity rates. Obviously, the call from the north is to not close the coal plant in Atikokan and to not close the coal plant in Thunder Bay.

The other real hindrances to any kind of economic recovery in the north, and northwestern Ontario in particular, are the rules, red tape, forms that have to be filled out, and all the things that basically take the fun out of doing business.

Previously, the Minister of Natural Resources responded to questions in this House, and one issue that came up was the mountain pine beetle that is presently being fought by the provincial government in British Columbia. A word of warning: That beetle is moving east and may well be affecting fibre in northwestern Ontario. The BC Forest Service is actively fighting this pest with assistance from the federal government.

What’s good for the north is good for the south. We have tree diseases in the south, and we call again on this Ontario government to come up with the funding and the financial assistance needed to fight not only the emerald ash borer, but also the gypsy moth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to the presentation by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, because I expected that he was going to speak in some detail about the need to bring legislation into this Legislature and to pass legislation that deals with Canadian content in the manufacturing of transit vehicles. He comes from a riding, as you know, where there’s a great number of people who are employed by Bombardier, who basically make GO trains and other equipment for the city of Toronto and others.

I had a bill in the House that unfortunately was defeated about two weeks ago asking the government to make sure that that content be at 50%. I was looking forward to, this Thursday, having a debate on the 60% content rule that the member was proposing. Quite frankly, I

was going to speak in favour of that and support that legislation along with their caucus, but I note that it's no longer on the order paper, so we're not going to have the opportunity to debate that on Thursday.

So I wonder why he would take so much time in a budget bill to talk about congratulating himself and his government on things that they did or didn't do with municipalities, and wouldn't speak about an issue that's so important to the people who work at Bombardier in Thunder Bay and people who work in the transit industry across this province.

People can draw their own conclusions. It's not for me to say he did this or did that or whatever. At the end of the day, all I know is that I was looking forward to Thursday morning; I was going to be here with bells on. I was going to be here to support my colleague from northern Ontario, to support the workers in the transit industry who build the buses, who build the streetcars, who build the subways in this province, many of whom live in his riding. Unfortunately, we're not going to have an opportunity because the government member, Mr. Mauro from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, decided to withdraw the spot and to give it to somebody else to be debated, hopefully, sometime next winter. I would think that probably that bill is never going to see the light of day.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to say that I am pleased with the budget our government presented last week. I believe the budget sets forward some initiatives that are long overdue, and I have great hopes that many of the proposals will benefit the people in the riding of York South—Weston, which I represent here.

I am very encouraged that there will be new investments in health care. I know that my constituents welcome increased attention and funding to efforts to bring emergency room wait times down. I'm also encouraged by two other health initiatives: the proposal to provide dental services to low-income Ontarians, and the chronic disease prevention strategy, starting with diabetes.

I am pleased that we are continuing also to invest in education, offering students a well-rounded program through arts and music, and physical and outdoor education. I believe it's important to motivate kids to stay in school. This is particularly important for kids who are at risk of dropping out, which, in a knowledge economy, we simply can't afford.

1600

I also welcome our investments in English as a second language. Through this budget, the government is making a commitment to improving the quality of life of Ontarians.

Some initiatives are new, such as the property tax grant for seniors, which the residents of York South—Weston are welcoming very warmly, and the funding to rehabilitate existing social housing.

In other cases, the government is building on the approach that developed in our first term, such as the Ontario child benefit. Also, we're doubling the annual funding for the student nutrition program because kids

who arrive at school hungry suffer academic as well as social consequences.

We're also investing in infrastructure. In York South—Weston we're looking forward to the Move Ontario 2020 plan, which will see the Eglinton light rail built.

We are also in need of initiatives that will provide training to individuals, helping them to shift into the new economy through the skills-to-jobs action plan.

I am very pleased to support this budget bill.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It disturbs me listening to this budget debate because, as I hear one thing from the government side of the House, I see the actions of the government in my riding. This government speaks of jobs and the need to retrain, but their actions do everything to prevent jobs and to prevent retraining.

I'd like to read a letter that I have from an electrical contractor near my riding who employs people in my riding. He says: "I am constantly turning away young people eager to start in the electrical trade. They are dismayed and, to say the least, disappointed when I tell them about the ratios and that I am unable to sign them up.

"These young people are constantly hearing in the media that there is a shortage of skilled trades and that they are being encouraged to seek employment. But when they do so, they are prevented. The government red tape, restrictions and regulations prevent contractors from hiring our youth and our children and denying them opportunities."

That is not a unique letter. This binder is full of letters that the ministry has received of contractors and our youth looking for work, but being deprived. And it's not just that. There are many reports from the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario's Workforce Shortage Coalition—they're all saying the same thing.

What does the government do? It spends significant amounts of money to train people and then slams the door on them when they want to become productive, responsible members of this province and our society.

The government speaks of showcasing their budget. What they are doing is showcasing their red tape, their restrictions and their regulations that are killing this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I'll turn to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank all the members who participated in this discussion. I want to talk about two points. If you really want to say whether the budget has been accepted well or not, you really see what happens within your own communities.

I want to give you two examples. My colleague from Brampton West actually called Catholic Family Services and told them the kind of assistance we were going to provide to Catholic Family Services in Brampton. Actually, the executive director and the chair called all of us to thank us for what we have done in the budget for them.

The other point is Erinoak. Most of the people who live in Mississauga and York know how wonderful a service they provide to our community. We have been able to actually assist them with a \$1-million fund to do the feasibility study for the building that they wanted built in which to expand services.

Again, all these people were so delighted and so pleased that this budget has at least addressed some of the issues that have been long, long outstanding in this province.

I also want to talk a little bit about what we are doing up north. The business education tax has been a burden in some of these communities, and we have decided that rather than phasing it in over seven years, we're going to phase it in over four years in the northern communities. It will give them \$70 million worth of savings, so that the business environment up north also becomes very competitive. This is in addition to the millions we have taken to eliminate the capital tax on the manufacturing and resource industries, and also providing a capital cost allowance and matching it with the feds.

We are really looking forward to creating an environment in which we can create more jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget bill. I want to start by way of a correction, and due to the fact that the member is in the House, I feel comfortable in doing that. Yesterday, the member for Huron-Bruce spoke theatrically about this government being the first government since 1908 to have three consecutive balanced budgets, and I do want to correct her on that. The previous government balanced four consecutive budgets and would have balanced a fifth. However, this government took over halfway through that budgetary year and ended up with a deficit at the end of the year. Had the previous government won the election of 2003, they would have balanced a fifth consecutive budget, and in fact that would have been the first time since 1908 that five consecutive budgets would have been balanced.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the government members to come to order so as to allow the member to make his presentation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. Having clarified that, we will move on in the budget debate.

I did want to touch on a couple of things that the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship spoke about. He spoke about what they are doing for small business and his position that small business and business had created 400,000 jobs in this province under the McGuinty mandate. Well, since 2004, we know that we've lost 194,000 manufacturing jobs in this province. In fact, of the 400,000 net jobs that have been created in this province, fully half of them are in the public sector, fully half of them are government jobs being paid for by the taxpayer—not created in private industry, but by the

taxpayer. Those jobs, we know, are not sustainable in the long term if you don't have a strong economy. That's the problem with this budget: It is not doing what needs to be done to sustain a strong economy.

Some 194,000 manufacturing jobs lost, and the McGuinty government did very little to change the feelings of business and manufacturers in this province about whether or not this is a good, poor or indifferent place to make their investments. That's something they have not addressed, yet they spend huge amounts of money. That is one of the concerns that business actually has: the growth of government.

When this government was elected, the budget in this province was \$68 billion. With this budget, it's \$96 billion. That's a growth rate of 48% between that and capital spending in this province. That exceeds even the growth rate in the David Peterson days—

Mr. Tim Hudak: No.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes—when, if something moved, they taxed it, and they spent money like there was no tomorrow. They actually created the climate. A lot of people talk about the NDP from 1990-95 and how bad it was, with four consecutive budget deficits of over \$10 billion, but in fact, in fairness to the NDP, most of the seeds for that were sown by the Peterson government and their absolutely out-of-control approach to spending the taxpayers' money. We're going down that same road.

I know we hear the jibes over there about, "Well, do you not want us to spend money? You want us to cut this and cut that." That has never, ever been said by people on this side of the House. What we want is responsibility and accountability. It is not about how much money you spend; it's how you spend it and the value you get for the money being spent.

1610

A case in point: a \$5-billion surplus that they didn't project. If you're running a business and you're that poor at forecasting what your revenues and expenditures are going to be over a fiscal period, you're not likely to be in business very long, because you would be considered incompetent—over \$5 billion in revenues that were "unexpected." Are you going to tell me that they didn't know three months ago that they were going to have this money? Of course they did. It didn't show up in the last week. Of course they did.

So they put out an infrastructure program. Of course, people and municipal leaders in my riding are very happy to be getting this money. They can use the money. But they're asking me, "Why? What happened? Where did it come from? What's it for?"

That's the kind of planning that leads to failure. There's an old carpenter's saying: "Measure twice, cut once." What happened to these guys here is that they forgot to measure, they didn't forecast and they cut cheques at the end of the year, just so they could throw the money out the door. So what happened?

In the city of Ottawa they got \$14.6 million under an infrastructure program entitled municipal roads and bridges. That's what it's entitled. But we find that that

money is not going to roads and bridges in the city of Ottawa, because there are no conditions attached to this money by this government: “Here it is; there you go.” They go out and the member from Ottawa Centre has big press releases about how this was going to be positive for the city of Ottawa and its roads and bridges. But then we find out that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who is also the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, is in a bit of an embarrassing situation. He’s got to answer questions in the press as to what’s happening with this money in Ottawa.

What we’re finding out is that part of it is going to be used for slush. Now we know that this government specializes in slush, but this is literally going to be used for slush. It’s going to be used to clear slush and snow that they didn’t budget for, as opposed to fixing potholes. I would suggest that the government is again engaging in its practice of slush funds, and the taxpayers got a snow job.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Literally.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Literally.

I want to talk about some of the things the government failed to do in this budget and some of the things we hoped to see. I believe one of the big failures in this budget is what they failed to do in long-term care. I believe that the people who are residents of long-term care in this province are clearly among our most vulnerable.

I say to the member for Brant that when you talk to long-term-care people in this province, they will say that no government in their memory has treated long-term care poorer than this government right now. In fact, the previous government redeveloped 20,000 beds in this province. This government is only going to start to do it with this budget. As I said, people in long-term care are among our most vulnerable. They needed funds to cure the problems and ailments in long-term care, and what do we get? We get stunts. We get publicity stunts with diapers and other incontinence products.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Who talked about diapers?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Health made a big deal about putting on a diaper, when what he should have been doing is dealing with the real crisis in long-term care. This budget has failed to do that.

They talk about hours of care, etc. When you look at people in a long-term care 30 years ago and compare them to residents in a long-term-care home today, it’s night and day, it’s apples and oranges. Thirty years ago, many of them drove to the long-term-care home in their own cars, walked in with their own suitcases and wondered where the activities room was. Now, the average age in those long-terms is 85. A good percentage of the people are incontinent, a good percentage of them have cognitive issues, and a large percentage are simply immobile and require assistance; they’re not ambulatory on their own in any way, shape or form. You can imagine the care needs for the people in those homes today versus the people who occupied those homes some 30 years ago, or even 20 years ago.

One of the real failures of this government in this budget is the fact that when they had \$5 billion to plan for and work with long-term care, they didn’t deal with it. In essence, they did nothing. Yes, there is \$107 million to hire 2,500 personal support workers, but that doesn’t even address the deficit they have in personal support workers currently. So long-term care would have to be considered an abject failure on the part of this government in this budget.

The minister spoke about the skills-to-jobs fund—\$1.5 billion in this budget. That sounds like a tremendous amount of money, but when you cipher it all down, you have to ask yourself where the planning was as well. Who are we training the people for? If you’re going to be part of creating an environment in this province that actually chases jobs out of the province, maybe we should get Alberta to pay \$1.5 billion to help us retrain them. We can retrain them, but maybe we’d like Alberta to pay for it because, unless we can offer these people employment in this province, that’s where they’re going.

What are we supposed to do? Give people three months, four months, six months, whatever, of training and a map to Alberta and get back in return a thank-you card from Ed Stelmach saying, “I really appreciate it. These guys are pretty skilled. Nice to have them on the job”? We’d like to have them on the job here in Ontario. But as my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington spoke about earlier, how are you supposed to get people on the job when you’ve got in place a restrictive, strangling regulatory process that when you’d like to build and create some new engineers or some new electricians, you can’t get them a job because of the regulations, and this government doesn’t seem to want to do anything about it—although I will in fairness say, the Premier said he is going to take a look at it, but I’ve heard him say that many times, “We’re going to take a look at things.” He takes a look at the sunrise in the morning, too, I’m sure, but it still comes up in the same spot. We really need to see some action in that regard from that side of the House.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I lost my train for a second. I thought the member from Brant was saying something that I would be interested in.

So what are we going to do here? A guy wants to take on some new apprentices and he can’t, because the only way to take on one apprentice is to have three journeymen. It takes three journeymen to teach one apprentice. Can you imagine if we had that ratio in all of our educational ventures or institutions or whatever, taking three people to teach one person? Jeez, do you think we’d be in a little bit of trouble? We are in trouble at times, there’s no question about that, thanks to this government, but we would be in grave trouble if that was the premise we worked on.

So how are you going to give these people an opportunity? It’s sort of that Catch-22: You can’t get the work; we need you to get some experience. How in the name of God do you ever get experience if you can’t get

the job? Those are the challenges. I think this government must, if you really want to improve those prospects, change that regulation. You've got to get out from under the blankets with the unions and really look at what it takes to create meaningful employment in this province.

1620

The minister is right about one thing: It's small business that creates the opportunities in this province. You've got to stop strangling them and constricting them. Help them and give them the opportunity to do what they do best, and that is create jobs and create wealth. Wealth is what you're going to need in this province and wealth is what you're going to be looking for as a result of your out-of-control spending habits. What happens is, you lock yourself in on the spending side. That's what you've done here and that's what you've done since you got into office. You lock yourself in on the spending side, and what happens when the revenue isn't there? That's when governments run into problems.

That's why prudence should be the order of the day, not blowing it out the door at the last minute without proper accounting standards, something that the Auditor General has chastised this government for every year—the lack of accountability at the end of the fiscal year for the money that you put out the door. That is not the way you run a business. It simply won't work.

In the time I have left I do want to talk about a couple of things as well. The Ministry of Natural Resources: It's very disappointing to see that ministry's budget cut yet again under the McGuinty regime. We expect and we ask for the Minister of Natural Resources to do more and more every day. We have some very successful wildlife reintroductions in the province that create a great deal more work for the people in the Ministry of Natural Resources, both from a monitoring point of view and from an enforcement point of view, but we continue to cut their budget. We continue to have challenges with regard to the health of trees in areas of this province and we continue to cut the MNR's budget.

We still have the outstanding issue at the MNR of why you're not putting all monies collected in fees and licences into fish and wildlife programs. When you talk to people in the fish and game clubs, they ask, "Where are the restocking programs that used to be there for the lakes, the good ones?" It's not just today that that's going to be a problem. What about your tourism business down the road? I would expect that the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Fonseca, would have some concerns about that as well because that is a big part of what—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the standing orders prohibit a member from referring to another member by name, but by ministry and/or riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member is quite correct in the sense that we, from the chair, ask members to refer to other members by the name of their riding or by their ministry. I don't think it's in the standing orders but I will remind the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and return to him because he has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Gosh, I'm glad you told me about that, Speaker. It's really good to hear that Mr. Delaney is listening to the speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to refer to other members of the House by their riding names—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's clever.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I'll tell you. That is important.

Anyway, the Minister of Tourism, I'm sure, is concerned about the budget cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Another thing that I did not see in the budget was the eastern Ontario development fund. It was promised. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says, "Refer to page 40." I've sent a letter asking for clarification on that. They attach a dollar figure to every other item in the budget, but in the case of the eastern Ontario development fund, they simply go on to say that they're going to develop the fund. I think what we need is a clarification that the \$20-million commitment for this year will in fact be forwarded in this fiscal 2008-09 year. I think that is important and it does require some clarification because those people in eastern Ontario are depending on that.

Another issue I wanted to talk about that is very important in my riding—I go back to the skills to jobs—is that there a significant amount of money in this budget for places that teach the new skills. I think that one of the most important places where we could be doing this is Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

There is no higher priority, in my opinion, than a college that has made the argument justifying the replacement of their campus. I would encourage all members to take a look at the proposal for a new campus by Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley. When you have a riding where there is a single post-secondary institution, I don't think it's a stretch to say that if we don't see a new college there at some point in the near future, we could be without one at some point not too much further down the road.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Just a couple of comments on the presentation. I concur with my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke in reference to apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are an important part of our society, and they've been lacking indeed. I'll give an example: I have a couple of trades myself, and in the 32 years I practised these trades in the Hamilton area, I had a total of five apprentices. Why? Because our society has geared schooling and our kids toward the leather chair and the computer, and not skilled trades.

Skilled trades are the backbone of this country. We're 200,000 tradesmen short right now, and it's getting worse every day. We have to encourage youth, through our col-

leges, through our student groups, to move toward these types of skilled trades, which pay well; they're high middle-class paying jobs. Obviously, they will be the engine to help stimulate and bring Ontario back to where it belongs.

I haven't seen a lot on forestry in this budget; the previous member didn't mention forestry. I haven't seen a lot on steel. I do see a lot on the auto sector, and I would like to speak to that further.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm delighted to make some comments on the budget. Just a couple of corrections: It was the Auditor General, after we took power in 2003, who made those decisions about your shortfall and your budget; it wasn't us.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not true.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's true; it was the Auditor General. And the other thing, for clarification: The eastern Ontario development fund, which the previous government cut, is in this budget. It was in the throne speech, and it's double what the federal folks have delivered for eastern Ontario. So stay tuned it; it's there.

We heard some comments from members of the opposition. I'm just going to read a couple of comments about our budget, from the press in my riding, at a budget breakfast in the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West.

“From farmers to Northumberland county politicians, it was a bit of a lovefest at Thursday's joint Northumberland central and Port Hope and district chambers of commerce, post-provincial budget breakfast as people thanked Northumberland–Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi for a variety of provincial budget windfalls affecting rural and small-town Ontario.”

Let me tell you what a farmer at that breakfast said: “Northumberland Federation of Agriculture representative John Boughen said he welcomed the \$56 million for the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy and the same amount of funding for animal husbandry research at the University of Guelph for the Ontario Veterinary College.” After that, he turned to the federal member at the breakfast and urged him to make sure they come to the table to help do what the province did in their budget. So that is what the people on the streets in my riding—the business people and farmers—are saying.

1630

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for the remarks he made today. I think they're right on. He covered a number of subjects that needed to be addressed.

Just yesterday, I had the privilege of being in eastern Ontario, in the riding of Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I had an opportunity to meet with a number of small business people there, small and medium-sized businesses. At that time, they talked about the problems and issues they had dealing with government red tape and regulations that are just strangling their businesses: The WSIB and the Ministry of Labour overreacting, in their opinion, in a number of cases and restricting their right to

do business and their opportunities to make a living and provide employment to a number of people.

Also, when we talk about a number of people trying to enter the trades in Ontario, there is a real issue with the ratio. Their argument is that we should go to a one-to-one ratio so that they can get more people. There are young people who want to work. They are being encouraged through the education sector, through ads by the government, that there are opportunities, and there certainly are opportunities in construction and in many other fields in this province. But then when they get the education, when they leave school and go there, they cannot get into these trades because of the ratios. So we need to work on that issue. That's an issue we can work on with both employers and union groups. This government should be encouraged to do that as well.

Again, I'd like to commend the speaker from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on his remarks today. I think he was right on. Thank you very much.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member opposite speaking about many different things, and he was talking about our initiative in this government and this budget. I don't know—probably he didn't read it very well. I hope you go back and read it because there are a lot of good things in this budget. It focuses on manufacturing jobs, retraining people and investing in the next generation. We believe strongly in this province and this government that the only way we can proceed in the future is by investing in our people, in education, in innovation and research, in colleges and universities, in all these aspects of this society and this community, in order to compete in the future.

I want to give you some examples from my riding of London–Fanshawe. We have a great college and a great university, and they partner with industry—companies and factories—in order to work together to enhance their product, to be able to compete on a national and international level. It is the only way we can compete and maintain our edge in this province.

I think we have a great budget. I'm proud of this budget. We went on the second day to London, myself and my colleagues Deb Matthews and Chris Bentley, and we had a breakfast meeting in the morning. We invited the media and the people of London, and they came and they asked us. They found a lot of support for many different aspects of their needs. For example, we invested \$56 million to clean a contaminated area in my riding. Also, we invested a lot of money in the university for research and innovation. We invested money in roads and bridges. We invested \$11 million in a place called Innovation Industrial Park to support companies and factories that want to come to London. This park would be prepared and ready to host any company, small or large, to come to London, open and hire people from that area, to help our economy and also the economy of the region.

I want to tell you something: Because of that park, because of that initiative we made a long time ago, the city of London was able to invite a company like Original Cakerie from British Columbia to come and open in

my riding of London–Fanshawe. They are going to hire 400 people. The same place was able to attract another company from Korea called Hanwha. They want to invest \$171 million.

All those initiatives wouldn't happen without the support of the province of Ontario, of this government, because we believe strongly that we have to plan for the future. How do you plan for the future? By partnering with municipalities, with communities, with colleges and universities, by creating skilled workers and training them very well for the future, and that's what we do in this budget. Especially, we have a great initiative, with a strategy to train people for the long term to have a better job, a good job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time available for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to respond.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Northumberland–Quinte West, Sarnia–Lambton and London–Fanshawe for their comments.

It looks like we have a tie vote. We had two people in favour of the budget, two people against, and if I could only get to cast the deciding vote and we could settle this whole matter, it would be wonderful. Unfortunately, we will have further debate.

I do want to make one more comment about the ability of businesses to create jobs. When the CFIB had their survey, the number one priority they had was taxes and regulations on small business. This government hasn't done anything to alleviate that load on them.

If you're going to create jobs and improve the jobs that you have, you have to have the ability and the resources to do that. When the government is taking it away, you don't have that. So how do you keep the jobs, let alone improve the jobs for those people who are finding themselves burdened extremely heavily this year on, for example, the cost of heating their home? There was about a 30% rise in home heating cost for fuel oil this year. Seniors, people on fixed income and families with children, who are already on the edge under the McGuinty regime because of the tax burden that has been placed on those people over the four years that they've been in power—the largest tax increases in the province's history. With \$5 billion at their disposal, you'd think one of the things they might have looked at was some relief for the individual taxpayer who's burdened by these things, and the small businessman. But no, no; that's not there. What we have is just: "Out the door; get rid of it. If you want to put it into your local slush fund, that's okay. Your local snow job: That's okay. We call it infrastructure; you can do whatever you want with it." That's not the way you run a business and that's not the way you should run a province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first of all tell you that I'm splitting my time with the member from Timmins–James Bay. He'll be here.

I'm going to approach this with a little bit of a different angle today. In the budget book that the government put out:

"Collective bargaining is never easy, particularly at a time when the economy is challenged. We look forward to negotiating new collective agreements this year with our partner unions that honour the contribution of their members and respect the needs of all Ontarians.

"As we move forward, we want to build new partnerships."

I find this statement really interesting. Yesterday, I brought a bill forward to the committee in reference to protecting Ontarians—union and non-union Ontarians. When a company folds and leaves this province, for whatever reason, back to their country of origin or back to the States or wherever they go—and what do they do? They rip off the employees for their severance, their back pay and their holiday pay.

It's bad enough that these people have to go home—and it's happening all over the province—and tell their spouse, "Oh, by the way, dear, I've lost my job. The two weeks' holiday pay that I'm entitled to, my severance I'm entitled to—one week for every year of service, depending on the agreement—I'm not getting that. So now, I'm 50 years old, I have two kids in college; we can't pay for that. We're going to lose the house if I don't get a similar job, because I'm the only money-earner in the home. At 51 years old, I'll be lucky if I can get another job."

Yesterday, the Liberal contingent of this House—I had support from my friends from the Conservatives, who, I must say, are very lenient when it comes to helping people in Ontario. They at least realize that if someone works for you for 30 years in a company, they should be entitled to their severance and what's coming to them before the banks, creditors and things like that. It was a refreshing moment from the Conservatives. They supported me.

1640

But the Liberals—five of them—shame. They shot down my bill after they passed it in second reading—which I thought was great, and I thought it was going somewhere. I thought they really had a heart. They got me there yesterday, and do you know what their excuse was? They didn't even deal with my bill; they didn't even talk about it; they didn't even ask me a question on it, which I found highly irregular. What did they say to me? They said, "Oh, you didn't follow the proper procedure." I said, "What was that?" "Oh, the House leaders have to talk about it before we agree to do anything." Well, my House leader told me that that's nonsense. This is a self-governing body, a subcommittee, which recommends to the main committee, and the recommendations went forward in support of this bill to at least have hearings and allow the people of Ontario to speak—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Who said that, Paul? We want names.

Mr. Paul Miller: You'll get them later.

Hearings—it doesn't mean the bill is going to be passed; it doesn't mean there couldn't be adjustments made to the bill; it doesn't mean the bill didn't need some tailoring, so to speak. But people didn't even get that chance, because they killed it and they threw it on the back burner because it wasn't a government bill.

I thought, from the throne speech, from the speeches from the members over there, that when we got to this House as a group, whether we were opposition or not, we were going to work as a team for the people of Ontario. Right here in their own presentation it says, "We're going to work with unions. We're going to work with the people of Ontario." Let me make it clear, these are government unions, but that's only 30% of our total situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to caution the member. You're not allowed to use your budget document as a prop.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw that. My apologies; I'm sorry it's a prop. I won't use the prop; I'll talk.

As a new member coming to this House, hoping that we could work together as a team to pass things to help the people of Ontario, I was set back. I was actually upset because I felt, at least give them their day in court. They didn't even get that. It's disgusting, unbelievable—and those five members should hang their heads and should be ashamed.

The bill's not dead. This government has an opportunity to bring that bill forward like they should have and at least talk about it. It's still sitting there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Give us an opportunity to debate it in committee.

Mr. Paul Miller: Give us an opportunity.

I'd like to talk about the budget a little bit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bring it to committee.

Mr. Paul Miller: Bring it to committee.

They brag about job creation: 160,000 jobs. That's absolutely correct, 160,000 new jobs. Where? In the service industry, for \$8 to \$11, \$12 an hour—not the 17,000 jobs that our people have lost in Hamilton, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 jobs. These \$8.95 McDonald's jobs or whatever don't cut it. They don't buy stoves, they don't buy fridges, they don't buy cars and they don't buy houses. To me, these job creations are—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's another trick.

Mr. Paul Miller: —another faux pas.

The most recent victim in Hamilton was Ancam. It's been there for 60 years, a proud company employing 1,000 people in Burlington and Hamilton. It's been shut down. They're going to have to fight for their severance, fight for their pensions and fight for their benefits. And where did the company go? Some went back to the States; some went back to Germany. They took the equipment that they could use. Mind you, the employees didn't get any of that. They didn't get anything in bank-

ruptcy receivership; they got nothing in bankruptcy—nothing. Now they've got to fight for everything.

But this isn't just here. I could name 130 different companies in southern Ontario and about 50 in Hamilton, major employers that have left this province for several reasons. It's got to be the economic policies of the last few years; it's got to be. This goes on and on.

Let's talk about the auto sector. I've sat here and listened to the House members talk about all the money they're sinking into the auto sector. That's true; they are sinking money into it. What are they doing? They're putting bad money in after bad money. Why? Because these jobs—where is the security? Where is the security on these jobs when they bring them forward?

They give them the money because the companies fail to stay in the area. And what do they do? They hold us hostage: "If you don't give us \$100 million, we're going to move to Mexico or across the ocean." So they're holding the taxpayers of this country hostage, which is incorrect. Why isn't this government smart enough to put in clauses that make these companies stick around for a minimum of 10 years or 20 years? Because they won't do it—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble hearing. Maybe you could help me out with this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the government members to refrain from heckling and allow the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek to come forward and make his presentation.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the members a second time to please refrain from heckling and not ignore the Speaker.

Mr. Paul Miller: Let's talk about health. Let's talk about long-term care. Let's talk about the reinstatement of physiotherapy and chiropractic services—preventive services that help the elderly, help young people, help injured sports figures so they don't have to go into the hospital for long terms.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not as injured as your whip will be in 50 seconds.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's right. The whip's got his 50 seconds coming up.

In conclusion—I've been notified—there are so many things in this budget that weren't there, from environment to money into the steel sector and the forestry sector. They've dabbled in it. They've touched on certain areas. When you put \$1 billion into infrastructure when we're \$65 billion short, you might be able to fix one large bridge like the Skyway in Hamilton and then you're going to run out of money. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank my colleague the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for being so timely in remembering that his whip would like to have some time in this debate. I've got to say, he was bang on.

He gave me an extra 15 seconds. I want to thank him a lot.

I want to speak to a couple of issues that weren't in the budget that I think should have been there. The government announced a number of measures in its budget. Some of them, I'm going to say outright, were okay. I don't have a great objection to them. Some of them may not have gone as far as they could, but governments do what governments do and what they can.

I want to talk specifically on a couple of issues. One is health care. There are a number of communities around Ontario, including mine—the city of Timmins—that have a huge problem when it comes to not enough long-term-care beds to care for people who live in the community. Currently our hospital, the Timmins and District Hospital, carries about 40 to 50 patients—out of a hospital that has about 100-and-some-odd beds—who are basically LC patients. They are people who enter the emergency department, or by other means, who are not able to be released back to their home because their physical condition doesn't allow them to do that, but they can't stay in the hospital because what they really need is a long-term-care bed. The city of Timmins has got a huge problem when it comes to an aging population and not enough beds to house those people who are needing a place to stay, such as Golden Manor or Extencicare in the city of Timmins.

We have been after the provincial government now for some years to do a number of things. I'll give the government some credit. It's done some of the things we called for. We sat down with the government—Mayor Tom Laughren, myself and people from the health sector—about three or four years ago and said, “We need to do a number of things.” We recognize it's not just putting in long-term-care beds that's a solution to this problem. It's got to be a continuum of care, to make sure that people are able to stay at home as long as humanly possible, with support, so that in the end they don't need a long-term care bed, hopefully, and if they do, it's much later in their life. The government has accepted some of our propositions.

Eventually the aging-at-home strategy was one of the things that was brought forward by the city of Timmins. I was there prior to the last election when Minister Smithe-rcman came to Timmins and made the announcement. That was something that grew out of the city of Timmins and the health care workers there. I think we should applaud the work that the people in the city of Timmins did in proposing that. I'm not going to take all the credit—I'm sure other people spoke to the minister—but that's something that was important to us.

The other thing we've talked about is that we need to have transitional housing, in the sense that when a person is no longer able to stay at home with good community support—by way of somebody to help them with their shopping or whatever it might be, in order to keep them in their home independently—we need to have an apartment building that's tied to the Golden Manor or the Extencicare as a way of having a place where people can

stay, people who need a little bit of extra help, who can't get it in the community but certainly would rather not be in a long-term-care facility and should not be there. For example, we did that as a government in the town of Iroquois Falls, where we got a great facility that was built and connected to the North Centennial Manor. It works perfectly.

1650

But even with all that, long-term-care beds are needed. Even though the city of Timmins, the Timmins and District Hospital, the CCAC, and all those people who are involved in long-term care and health care generally within the city of Timmins, support the initiative of doing things in the community, we are still short of beds. And one of the things that we didn't see in this budget was an initiative to say, “Here's the government's response to the aging population that we have in the province and what we need to do in order to make sure that people in their golden years are taken care of and not left in a hospital bed at the Timmins and District Hospital, as they are now.”

Just in passing, my mother-in-law has been in and out of the hospital since January with some physical conditions. As members of the family, we've seen her being admitted into the hospital as other people have been, through the emergency department, with no bed and having to sleep on a stretcher in emergency or in the hall for a period of three or four days. The hospitals make great strides to try to alleviate those kinds of conditions for people, but it still speaks to the shortage of long-term-care beds we have. We are still calling on this government to do something in order to respond to what is a crisis in long-term-care beds in the city of Timmins.

The other thing I want to speak to is the municipal infrastructure, and my good friend Mr. Miller raised this earlier. That is, the need to support our communities with the money they need in order to do the things they've got to do: fix the potholes, fix the roof on the arena, make sure that the windows and doors on our municipal buildings are in good repair and that water and sewer are fixed to the degree that they need to be, to be safe and to supply the services that people need.

Listen, there's been a huge downloading exercise, started by the Conservatives and somewhat precipitated by the Liberal government in the last term, that has left municipalities in a really tough spot. They're having to pay for things they never had to pay before. They're having to pay for things like welfare, where they didn't have to pay before to the same degree. A number of other services have been downloaded—some of the court services etc. That means that municipalities have to take money they used to use to fix the potholes in order to keep the courtroom open for provincial offences or to make sure that they have money at the DSSAB when it comes to soft services such as housing or social services such as welfare. That means that potholes get bigger, that municipal buildings fall into greater disrepair, and as time goes by, it's going to cost us way more money than

we would have to pay now, because costs will be more in the years to come.

The government tried to do the right thing. Prior to the budget, they announced that they were possibly going to have a surplus, and if there was a surplus, there was legislation coming that was going to guarantee that everything above \$800 million, I believe, would be given to municipalities to fix their infrastructure problem. What a big fanfare. It was like a press conference that municipalities took seriously and said, "Oh, this is going to be great." Then the government comes in, fully knowing they're not going to have a surplus. They come in with a surplus of \$600,000 rather than \$800,000, so there was no money in that fund to assist municipalities.

Then, to make matters worse, the government announced what could have been a good program: roads and bridges funding that applies to cities outside the city of Toronto, some \$300 million—I forget the exact number. Was it \$300 million or \$400 million?

Interjection: It was \$400 million.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's a good thing.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It was \$450 million.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't argue for a second that \$450 million is a bad thing. That goes a long way with a lot of municipalities. I accept and support the premise that it's on a formula basis; so much for each community, based on the population of the community and their needs. But I want to put this caveat. One is you need to make sure that it's not just population, but also the needs of the community. The town of Hearst, as a good example, has spent a lot of money to maintain their infrastructure, and they're being penalized in the MIII funding that we just had now. They're not getting the money they applied for, because they're seen as a community that's not as needy. We need to have a formula that makes sure that all municipalities are treated fairly.

But the other thing is that we have to annualize this funding. If I'm the mayor of the town of Hearst, Smooth Rock, Kapuskasing, Timmins or whatever, I need to know that I'm going to get so many dollars per year over a period of five or 10 years—whatever the amount of time we can commit to—so that you can do some planning. For example, if the town of Hearst knew it was going to get \$125,000 a year for infrastructure from this fund—in one year you can't do a heck of a lot with \$125,000; you might fix a couple of sidewalks, a few streets. You probably couldn't even do a whole city block. But if you knew you had this funding over a period of time, say five or 10 years, you could then amortize—I can't say that right. You could put it on time, amortize—do you ever get that sometimes, where the word just doesn't want to come out?

The point is, the municipality would be able to plan, and they could say, "Okay, over a period of five years, we know we're getting \$125,000. That equals X amount of dollars at the end of five years," which would be \$625,000—a little bit of quick math. To boot, the municipality would be able to put up their share and say, "All right, what can we do in our community that's worth,

let's say, \$1 million?" You get the point: They're better able to plan. The money for the community of Hearst might be more than \$125,000, but I'm just using that as an example. So, I say to the government across the way, we could have at least done this initiative on an annualized basis and not just made it a one-time sort of slush fund at the end of the year.

I end on this point, because I've only got a minute, and unfortunately I'm not going to have enough time to get all of it in: I was really looking forward to the government, or Mr. Mauro, coming forward with a bill that would support what we, as New Democrats, put forward, which was the Buy Ontario bill that basically said money that's spent for transit in Ontario, that comes from the province to build buses and streetcars and subways—50% of the construction of those products and materials has to be in Ontario. On behalf of New Democrats, we brought forward such a bill in this Legislature. Unfortunately, it was defeated. I was looking forward to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan having his bill come forward this Thursday, which calls for 60%, which I would have supported, because at the end of the day we've got to do what's right for the people of Thunder Bay. Unfortunately, he has decided not to call that bill and traded off his spot. Now we're waiting for the government to take action on probably what's going to be 25%, which is far short of what the Canadian Manufacturers' Association is calling for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm very pleased to join this debate on the budget.

When I read the budget last week, I felt it was extremely well balanced, a very prudent budget. I represent the good people of Oak Ridges—Markham, so of course I've spent the last week trying to find out how my constituents feel about this budget. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker and members of this House, that I am simply getting the most positive response possible from the mayors and councillors of the four municipalities I represent, and many others, actually, in the whole region of York. They're simply delighted with our government's recognition of the growth in our region.

I've been interviewed by many reporters from both the local newspapers and the local cable, and they have asked for my opinion, but I've been turning the tables on them and asking for their opinion. I must say that in rural areas in my riding, I'm getting responses like, "a very responsible budget," "no surprises," and the understanding that we're addressing the economic downturn that we see.

One of the endorsements I was most pleased to hear was that of the Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce. The CEO, Leslie Walker, had this to say: "This budget begins to lay a stronger foundation for a more productive economy with certain targeted measures to improve our infrastructure, strengthen our labour force, and reduce the cost of doing business. These maintenance strategies will help to put Ontario on more solid footing and, we hope,

will pave the way for a more aggressive strategy down the road to assist the sectors hardest hit by the economic slowdown south of the border.”

I'm very pleased about this budget, because it addresses the needs of the people of my riding.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to comment on the speeches by the members for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Timmins–James Bay. They made some good points and some strong observations about what was missing in the most recent provincial budget, which has gone over with a bit of a thud across Ontario; you don't see much about the budget in the media after the first day.

1700

There are a few things I want to correct as part of the correcting of the record that's been part of the debate today. The member for Northumberland said that it was the Auditor General who went through the books and had pronounced on the so-called hidden deficit. That's not factual; that's just plain wrong. A consultant was hired and was told to give the worst possible scenario: presume a recession, no savings made, no assets. The Liberals did cook the books in order to come up with that number. The PCs were only in office for about five months of that year; the Liberals were in the rest, and therefore came up with what is actually a fairy tale. I want to make sure the member for Northumberland understands that it wasn't the Auditor General, as he had said.

They also talk about cuts in spending. Program spending under the PC government went up from \$50 billion to \$59 billion in 2002–03. That's about an 18% increase in government spending over its eight-year mandate. When the Bob Rae Liberals were in office, they were often accused of ratcheting up the spending. They did get off to a start of 12.9%—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sorry. I should clarify: When Bob Rae was Premier, the last Liberal Premier before Dalton McGuinty, they ratcheted up spending by 12.9% and 12.7% in the first year, and then they actually slowed down spending as the economy went into an even deeper recession. Their total program spending increase was only 15%. Shockingly, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals have increased program spending by some 48% in the first four years alone. That's a record in the province of Ontario in runaway spending.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Since questions and comments are supposed to relate to the speech that was given by the member, I would like to comment specifically about that given by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I just want to tell him, when he criticized giving companies like the Ford Motor Co.—investing \$17 million will turn into \$170 million by the Ford Motor Co. I am shocked that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek didn't acknowledge how good that is. I was proud to sit next to Buzz Hargrove when Buzz got up and said that it's this kind of investment that's needed in the auto sector, in the Big Three, at this time in our economy.

Interjection.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is still objecting to it. Apparently he objects to Buzz Hargrove's comments on it, when I said was proud to sit next to Buzz Hargrove.

You talked about working with the people of Ontario. Who would have thought, 10 years ago, five years ago, that a Liberal would say who they were proud to sit next to and who they were not? We might not have been sitting there. But do you know what Buzz Hargrove has said? That the Ontario Liberals under Dalton McGuinty have got it; they understand.

So I'm going to say this to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I dare you to come down to Windsor, come down to Essex county and say that you think the \$17-million investment in the Ford Motor Co. was a bad deal for those 300 workers who are going to be called back into the plant that is sitting dark today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speeches by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Timmins–James Bay. I wasn't here for the entire speech made by the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek but I know that he spoke to a certain degree about his private member's bill, which he successfully got before a committee of the Legislature. The subcommittee agreed to have that bill come before it. Really, not much has been going on around this place in terms of legislative action in terms of committees. The committees are not overloaded with work.

I think the government ended up using their majority on the committee to change the will of the subcommittee and not deal with this member's private member's bill. I know that some of the government members, including the member for Huron–Bruce, led that charge to have this bill kicked out of the committee so it wouldn't be dealt with. It just shows that this government is not interested in democracy. There's no reason in the world why this private member's bill should not be dealt with. The government was using a line that this would normally be dealt with by the House leaders. That is not correct. The subcommittee of the Legislature would normally decide what bills they would deal with. I think it very unfortunate. I don't necessarily support the member's bill, but I think it should have at least gotten public hearing and been dealt with, especially when the committee has no work before it, or nothing that's substantial.

In terms of the member—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member for Huron–Bruce to please come to order.

Mr. Norm Miller: I see my time is almost up. I did want to add some comments to do with the member for Timmins–James Bay and the games the government was playing to do with sharing the surplus, which they knew before budget day was not going to meet the threshold, and there's no planned surplus for next year in terms of sharing with municipalities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must reply to the challenge from the member. I'd be more than happy to go down to his area and talk to those people in that plant because what the government is saying is, "We sunk a lot of money into this, and we've created 300 jobs." Whoopee—300 jobs. With all due respect, 17,000 jobs were lost in Hamilton—300 jobs.

And I'd like to answer the challenge from the member about Buzz Hargrove. Maybe the member over there can refresh my memory. If I remember correctly, Buzz Hargrove supported Paul Martin and all the Liberals, and he was a former NDP member, so they must be doing something really wonderful. However, what he did in that thing was set back the labour unions. Some 20 years that man set us back in the steel sector and all other sectors. Let's look at the Magna deal. Now unions cannot negotiate contracts. The stewards are appointed by the company, but they have the right to work. They can still keep working with no negotiation skills, and that's an advantage to the company. What Mr. Hargrove has done has set us back 20 to 25 years in the labour movement. So if you want to call him your friend and you want to talk with him, I'd be more than happy to negotiate a discussion with you and him. And believe me, you're not going to win this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the House come to order, please. Will the two members please come to order or chat about this out in the corridor.

Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This afternoon I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

It is with great humility that I stand in this Legislature for my inaugural address on behalf of the constituents of Mississauga–Brampton South. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate newly and re-elected members in this House on their election wins. Each of us took a different path to get here, but regardless of our political stripes, I believe that all of us have a shared belief in the values of democracy, our service to our community and a common purpose to do the best we can for the people of Ontario.

I immigrated to Canada 16 years ago with the dream of a better life and the goal of building a brighter future for my family. I was born in Jagroan, then a small town in the Indian state of Punjab. My parents were expatriates from what is now known as Pakistan, after India's partition in 1947. They had sought refuge in India, penniless, leaving all their possessions and property behind. They had to work hard to rebuild their life.

1710

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to share a very private story. My father passed away when I was only nine. He was a heart patient and bedridden. My family had to borrow money from my maternal uncles and help from others for his treatment and our family's survival. A few days before his death, when he was aware and he sensed that it was his time to go, he called all members of the family to his bedside and in a very sweet voice he said, "After I leave, always stick together, work hard, pay all family debts and obligations, and be law-abiding citizens." Then he turned to me, then a little girl, and said, "Get lots of education and become a strong woman. It is only through education that families can grow healthier, happier and prosperous." My mother raised me as a single parent with the help of my 13-year-old brother.

With this background, it is with great pride and utter humility that I stand here before this House the product of unity, struggle, hard work, and the vision of my parents, who could not afford a lot, but knew the importance of education if I were to succeed.

I arrived in Canada with two master's degrees and 10 years of experience as an educator. Like many immigrants, I faced several barriers to finding employment and having my qualifications recognized. In spite of the challenges, my family and I continued to hope and persevere, making Canada our home. My first jobs in Canada were working in my husband's office and at a gas station, our family-owned business.

The legacy of the fine values from my parents, my humble beginnings and my experiences are where I gained a passion for serving people. My story is not unique. It is similar to the experience of many families across Ontario, especially Mississauga–Brampton South, an ethnically diverse riding where more than half the constituents are immigrants. It is a story of people facing challenges head-on, with an entrenched belief that, with hope, a better future is ahead.

I stand here today because of volunteers who helped me during my journey to this Legislature, many supporters and concerned citizens who shared this hope and believe that inclusiveness and a sense of common purpose will move our province forward. It is this same hope that motivated me to run as a member of provincial Parliament in order to fight for better health care, a better education system, a strong economy and a prosperous Ontario.

This hope says that there should be no lack in our society and that, by working together, we can conquer poverty. This hope says that it is not okay for us to give up on our future, our children, or allow them to give up on themselves.

I stand here not for myself, but for the young people in my riding who believe in a better future. I stand here for the seniors whose sacrifices have made this province one of the best places in the world to live. I stand here for those who believe in a strong economy and a healthy and greener environment. I stand here for the foreign-trained

professionals who hope to use their education and skills to be a blessing to this province. I stand here for those who believe in an inclusive society that respects and celebrates difference.

The people of Mississauga–Brampton South have given me the privilege to serve them with a great responsibility. They have chosen me to advocate for our local school boards, such as the Peel board of education and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic schools, both of which have their headquarters in my riding. They have sent me here to ensure that the Peel Memorial site remains a part of the foundation of health care in Brampton and to ensure that Credit Valley Hospital, Brampton Civic Hospital and the Trillium Health Centre continue to grow and prosper. They have chosen me to ensure that businesses continue to grow and flourish. They have chosen me to improve public transportation and help solve gridlock. They have chosen me to help decrease poverty in Ontario and ensure that students at post-secondary institutions like the Sheridan Institute of Technology get the best possible education at a price they can afford. They have chosen me to ensure that our government continues to build and nurture partnerships with businesses, municipalities, unions and the federal government.

I wouldn't be here if it was not for many key individuals, supporters and my family members. I thank all of them for their contribution and look forward to their continued friendship and support as we move our province forward. As well, I would like to especially recognize and thank my husband, Jaswant Mangat, who is in the members' gallery today. I'm truly blessed to have such a wonderful husband whose advice, support, love, dedication and ongoing encouragement have been invaluable to me. Thank you, Mr. Mangat.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that has set forth a vision that addresses the aspirations of the people in my riding. The 2008 budget is an investment in this vision and in Ontario's future. I look forward to implementing this vision with my fellow colleagues in the Legislature, with the local representatives in Brampton and Mississauga, and with the citizens of Mississauga–Brampton South.

To the residents of Mississauga–Brampton South, I'm truly thankful for the confidence that you have entrusted in me to make our community and our province a better place in which to live. Please be assured that I take the responsibility that you have given to me seriously, and I will work hard to represent your interests here at Queen's Park.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, with humility and pride, I say in the memory of my parents, "This day belongs to you and your sacrifices." Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I recognize the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I join with my fellow MPPs in congratulating the member for Mississauga–Brampton South not merely on her election, but certainly on her

very moving inaugural remarks to the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to add a final Mississauga voice to today's debate on the government's 2008-09 budget. The city of Mississauga is home to nearly 700,000 people. We are about 15% larger than Manitoba's capital city of Winnipeg. In Ontario, only Ottawa and Toronto are larger cities than the city of Mississauga.

1720

Mississauga is an economic unit larger than the province of New Brunswick, both in population and economic output. Roughly one in nine of Canada's Fortune 500 firms makes Mississauga its head office city.

The city of Mississauga grows by some 20,000 people each year and, in fact, in decades past, our city has built such great neighbourhoods as Streetsville, Erin Mills, Meadowvale, Lisgar and Churchill Meadows to welcome our newcomers and enable them to build homes, families, businesses and communities.

When Churchill Meadows, Mississauga's last large greenfield development, is finished within the next few years, Mississauga will be fully built out. Our expansion then will be through what is called brownfield redevelopment. In our city, this means taking land once used for things like industrial purposes and rezoning and redeveloping it for other purposes.

Additionally, Mississauga is going up in the air. Our city centre neighbourhood is increasingly comprised of high-rise developments. If the streets were narrower and the buildings were twice as tall, it could easily be mistaken for a Hong Kong residential neighbourhood.

Ours is a dynamic and growing city, and its infrastructure needs are similarly critical. That is why our government is carefully and prudently investing Ontario's funds in infrastructure in the city of Mississauga. Infrastructure means that firms that choose Mississauga need ways to get their people from where they live to where their employer is located. That is why Ontario has invested \$65 million in the Mississauga Transitway, to cut commute times.

That's \$65 million that Mississauga has had in its bank account for the past two years. It's cash delivered, not an IOU like the federal government pledges. Not a dime of Ottawa's contribution to the Mississauga Transitway has actually shown up in Mississauga. That's one solid reason why Mississauga–Streetsville will soon be represented once again by a federal Liberal, Bonnie Crombie, who lives in Mississauga, not a Tory carpet-bagger who commutes to photo ops every now and then.

Transit infrastructure also means devoting two cents per litre from the gas tax to Mississauga Transit. That two cents can be used for operating expenses, not just capital expenses. Moreover, Ontario's new bill to invest in Ontario allows some of the budget surplus after the end of the fiscal year to be used for municipal infrastructure projects. Just last week, one such grant enabled Mississauga to build a new training centre for firefighters.

To my opposition colleagues, such an investment is, and I'll use the member's words, "Shovelling it out the door." To the citizens of Mississauga, such projects as the Mississauga Transitway and the new firefighter training centre represent essential infrastructure that is far more important than a tax cut that may amount to saving a penny or two on your cup of coffee at Tim Hortons.

Investing in Ontario prudently means allocating funds for Mississauga's capital projects without last-minute, end-of-the-year pressure to evaluate projects or estimate the exact surplus. Ontario has moved swiftly and decisively to address expenses dumped by the former Conservative government onto municipal taxpayers in cities like Mississauga and Brampton.

The Ontario drug plan and the Ontario disability support payments plan have both been uploaded to the provincial tax base where they belong, not on the municipal tax base. That's the sensible thing to do, and Ontario can't upload those expenses with a tax cut.

Another thing Ontario can't do with a tax cut is eliminate the much-hated GTA pooling, in which tax funds are siphoned from cities like Mississauga and Brampton—some \$65 million last year—and sent to the city of Toronto without accountability, which then is able to tax its citizens at an artificial rate lower than in the 905 belt, because the 905 communities subsidize low Toronto taxes with their much higher property taxes.

Our budgets last year and this year started and continue with this phase-out of GTA pooling, and we can't do it right for our cities east and north and west of Toronto with a tax cut. In contrast to the hidden deficit of some \$5.6 billion that Ontario's former Auditor General reported before our government was even sworn in in October 2003, our budget has been balanced for three years.

We need infrastructure funding to build what the Move Ontario plan calls "capacity expansion" on the Milton GO line. At present, we have six trains Toronto-bound in the morning, the last one leaving Meadowvale at 8:07. At the other end of the day, the first train out of Toronto Union westward is at 4:30, and the last one leaves at 7 pm. We need much more. All of those trains are filled to capacity, and with the new locomotives and the new 12-car trains, they'll still be filled to capacity—every train, every day. We need much more, but for most of the past 60 years the Milton line has had just two tracks. Its owner, CP Rail, uses those two tracks at full capacity. The only way for GO Transit, a tenant on CP's line, to run more trains is to build more capacity, which means a third track, and to partner with the line's owner, CP Rail, to make the pie larger to be able to run all-day train service to and from the western GTA, in areas like Mississauga.

What does that mean to Mississauga? Ours is a city with a daily labour shortage of some 50,000 people. We have to help 50,000 people each day get into Mississauga to work and to support their families, and we can't build the capacity to get those people into Mississauga with a tax cut.

This month, Credit Valley Hospital breaks ground on phase two, a project begun on this government's watch and a project that will be completed on this government's second mandate. Phase two is going to greatly expand our hospital, by some 140 beds. It'll immensely increase our capacity to deal with our seniors through expansion in complex continuing care. We will greatly expand our overcrowded maternity suite, which currently handles more than 5,400 births each year in a facility designed for only 2,700 births per year. We can't build phase two with a tax cut.

Nor can we build the ambulatory surgery centre that the western GTA desperately needs to meet this government's wait time reduction strategy with a tax cut. That will be a facility that will enable some four fifths of surgical procedures, if approved, to be moved outside the hospital into a facility that will enable our surgeons to operate at something close to their capacity and help alleviate the wait times that simply cannot come down any other way.

The 2008-09 government budget is a budget that western Mississauga and all Ontarians need badly and need now. The things that drive our communities, that move Ontario forward, the infrastructure that our cities need to progress in the 21st century, can't be built by cutting taxes to a level that amounts to a penny or two on your cup of coffee at Tim Hortons.

This is a budget that Ontario badly needs. Let's pass this budget. Let's keep Ontario moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to comment on the speeches by the member for Mississauga-Brampton South and the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, particularly the member for Mississauga-Brampton South. I congratulate her on her remarks: very touching, with her husband here in the gallery as well, who should be very proud of his wife's accomplishments in being here in the Legislature. It was certainly a very touching story about her father and the kind of motivation he gave to her that resulted in a lot of success in being here in the Ontario Legislature.

I can understand that from my own family's background as well—now second generation, but my grandparents had come from some similar challenges as new immigrants to this country not too long ago. I know they were very proud when they saw that a grandson had the chance to serve as a member of the Ontario Legislature. So I can understand where my colleague is coming from, and I congratulate her. No doubt her father would be very proud as well of her accomplishments in being here today.

1730

One thing I had hoped I'd hear more of, and maybe we will later in the debate, from the government members who are asking us to vote for their budget holus-bolus is the very concerning growth in the \$100,000 club. This is the number of government workers who are making more than \$100,000. I described it in question period today.

That growth under the McGuinty government has been simply gargantuan: a 110% increase in the number of government workers making more than \$100,000. I do hope that maybe, behind the scenes, some of the Liberal members here today are going after the finance minister or the ministers and saying that this is extraordinary growth in these, certainly not front-line, workers. Not too many nurses or teachers or personal support workers in long-term-care facilities are on that list, but a lot of high-priced spin doctors are. So I do hope I'll see some of my colleagues raising these issues in the House and asking the ministers to curtail the runaway growth in the \$100,000 club.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to replace the Premier in the late show that is to occur this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has sought unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to replace the Premier during the late show this evening. Agreed? Agreed.

Questions and comments. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was leaning over and talking to my colleague.

I just want to, as well, congratulate the member. I didn't realize this was her maiden speech. Unfortunately, we haven't had as much House time since the last election—three weeks last fall, and I think we're into our second or third week this spring—so obviously, it's hard to get on the agenda. I would congratulate her.

I agree with her on the comments she made. People come to this place from different experiences. Some of us come out of a business background, others a labour background, a law background, whatever it might be, but that's the beauty of the Legislature. That's the beauty of elections. Imagine a Legislature that was just made up of lawyers. It would be absolutely great for lawyers, but it wouldn't be very good, I think, for a whole bunch of other people. Imagine a Legislature that's only made up of people like my good friend Mr. Crozier. Oh Lord, that would be just unacceptable. All of them coming in with bow ties. The place would just go absolutely wonk.

What makes this Legislature just a great place is that all of us come from different backgrounds. We have different perspectives on often the same points as far as legislation we're debating, and we bring what is, I believe, the important thing, which is a reflection of what we should see in the province of Ontario. We have people from nursing backgrounds; teaching backgrounds; people out of the trade/labour movement—I'm an electrician by trade—lawyers. I think that makes for a good mix.

So I want to congratulate the member and say that I agree with her on that point. This will probably not be the last time I'm nice to her, but I just want her to know that I'm nicer than normal because this is her maiden speech and we always should be respectful of that.

I look forward to the continued work that we're going to have over the next three and a half years. I look forward to her support on many important issues that we find important as New Democrats who may have a different point of view of this government on many issues.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to add my congratulations to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South. I think her inaugural speech was very inspiring. It reminds us all of why we're here and the fact that, in our hearts, we really are not partisan. We are here to help our own constituents and to help the residents and citizens of Ontario and the citizens of Canada.

I also rise to talk about the reaction in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to the budget. To a great extent, there was a very positive response to the skills-to-jobs action plan and our second-career strategy.

In my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, which is very rural, the agriculture and the manufacturing aspects kind of interchange in terms of their economic contribution to the riding. We have had, over the years, a strong auto parts manufacturing environment. Over the last few years, that has had its evolution, as is happening right across the province, and we are seeing a change in the types of jobs. We have people now who arrive and find that they have no job. It's very difficult for them when they go home and have to tell their families that the job is finished.

Certainly when they do that in a riding like mine, where we have a very strong work ethic—and I think that comes, as the member from Mississauga–Brampton South talks about the work ethic that her family instilled in her—in my communities in my riding, there is definitely a strong work ethic.

This plan allows them to rebuild their self-esteem; it allows them to have hope again, a purpose in getting up in the morning; and it restores their confidence and their self-respect. I'm very proud of this budget.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to once again, with everybody else, congratulate the member on her maiden speech today. Like her, I had my maiden speech just a short while ago. But I think I'd like to address my comments to this debate on the budget and what I've been hearing on the other side of the House.

One of the things that I've really seen in my time here—it amazes me—is how the members opposite can, with a straight face, stand up and speak out of both sides of their mouths on this debate. One of the things that has been a recurring theme is this shovelling of money out the door without regard to objectives. It's cutting a cheque and nothing more.

I had a community forum a little while ago in my riding where I had about 70 families who have children with intellectual disabilities. Out of those families, the hardship and the stories were very compelling. But one of the things that illustrates this is, we hired many people to find out what the problems are with these people. We have a planning and pressures committee. They identified 634 people who needed help in one area; 235 of them needed homes. But when it came to budget time, all the

pressures and priorities and all the planning was thrown out the window, and this government did per capita funding for people with intellectual disabilities. There was no regard for all the work that went into finding out who needed what help, whether they needed homes or whether they needed respite care. There was total disregard, and those people are suffering because of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to acknowledge the comments of the members from Niagara West–Glanbrook, Timmins–James Bay, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox–Addington.

To the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, if the \$100,000-a-year club had been inflation-adjusted, its numbers this year would have actually shrunk. However, I do want to thank you for your very generous comments on the inaugural speech of the member for Mississauga–Brampton South.

To the member for Timmins–James Bay, I certainly applaud your comments to the member for Mississauga–Brampton South and her unique background. I say to you, sir, across the floor and across party lines, that we are similarly enriched by having at least one electrician representing the people of Ontario.

To the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who points out accurately that the budget works for cities and for the rural areas of Ontario as well. It's a good budget for students. It helps students with a grant for textbooks and for technology, the computer that you now need for all intents and purposes to pursue any type of post-secondary education at all. It's a good budget for families. It's a good budget for the unemployed in some of the help it gives them for retraining. It is especially a good budget for seniors. Across Ontario, to use the member's words exactly, "It helps people to rebuild their self-esteem."

Finally, to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I'd like to join with the members here in congratulating him on his maiden speech. We listened carefully to his maiden speech, to the direction he came from and to the things he brings to this House. I disagree entirely with his suggestions that he made with regard to our investing-in-cities program, but this is the time to be magnanimous and on behalf of the government members to say welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be part of this budget motion debate. I'd like to kick off by highlighting the fact that our great province of Ontario is blessed with very smart, hard-working people—as we see with respect to the newly elected MPP for Mississauga–Brampton South—a province with tremendous resources, not only in the north but right across this great province, and an unbeatable location. I will say

that's also reflected in the inaugural speech that we just heard this afternoon from the member for Mississauga–Brampton South as she described her voyage from the Punjab to Ontario. Clearly Ontario should be leading Canada, given the natural resources, both human and otherwise, that we possess. We did lead Canada; regrettably now we are trailing Canada. Ontario is now losing ground to nearly every province across the Dominion of Canada. In a sense, we are observing what could be described as a riches-to-rags story.

True to form, we are now debating the fifth budget of this provincial government, and it's a budget that represents no change in policy. I regret to report that this government is staying the course, if you will, and spelling another year of decline for Ontario's economy. The McGuinty approach to government finances and the economy remains tax-and-spend, staying the course with respect to taxing and spending. In Ontario, we now have some of the highest taxes in the country, and spending, as we all know, is up almost 40% since 2003. And in this last fiscal year we have seen an unexpected revenue increase of \$4.9 billion.

One way that I like to put this budget, this planning document, in perspective is to take a look at what's going on south of the border. The American economy is teetering. They are using the R word. They are flirting with a subprime-mortgage-lending recession. I will mention as well that even in Ontario now people are using that R word, and I really find that quite regrettable. In the United States we've seen a recent bank collapse. Many of us recall the stories of bank collapses in the 1930s. Bear Stearns, the fifth largest US investment bank, is essentially out of business. Given some of these dire indications from our largest trading partner, one would have thought that the Premier would have been at least making some contingency plans in this budget, at minimum heeding some of the warnings that would have made use of this budget plan for some possible future. Such is not the case.

Locally, in my neck of the woods, in Haldimand and Norfolk, we are very concerned at the direction of this government with respect to issues financial. The issues in my counties of Norfolk and Haldimand are essentially the same as they were a year ago, essentially the same as two years ago, for that matter. As I indicated this afternoon, Norfolk county is in need of a cash infusion to help with an emerald ash borer invasion. Our forests, which represent 30% of the land mass in Norfolk county, will yet again be subjected to the gypsy moth, as will Haldimand county, Six Nations, and areas throughout the Niagara region. Tim Hudak has been doing a lot of work on that as well.

Also in Norfolk, we have an ongoing tobacco crisis. I understand that there was a meeting in Ottawa yesterday. I trust there was provincial representation at this Ottawa tobacco meeting. I have not heard the results of the deliberations in Ottawa. We can only hope that assistance is forthcoming for our beleaguered tobacco farmers.

It goes without saying that Haldimand is a beleaguered county that has been brought to its knees with respect to the land dispute—we have now passed the two-year anniversary—an issue that has yet to be addressed by this government in any meaningful way.

I stood in the House this afternoon to get the attention of the Minister of Natural Resources and to ask her to address the needs for funding to mitigate the devastation that we are seeing in our trees, our forests. We certainly have seen the gypsy moth devastation for three summers now and, regrettably, we are going to see a total devastation of our ash forest. I know in my bush—25% ash—for as long as I can remember, I have been cutting out dead elm. My father, certainly my grandfather, unfortunately had to cut chestnut out of the bush, given the total destruction of our chestnut species in the 1920s. Stay tuned: Virtually every ash tree in the province of Ontario will be dead by the time this infestation runs its course.

What is sad in a way is that this year Norfolk county received the honour of the title of Canada's forest capital. Yet those very same forests are now at risk due to inaction, I would suggest, by both levels of government and certainly a lack of support in the financial end of things from this particular government. Instead of stepping up with funding to help mitigate this devastation, the impact on our trees, this government has provided nothing in the wake of the budget. It also came to be known that the Ministry of Natural Resources budget had been slashed by \$20 million in this present round. I find that really passing strange, given the \$4.9-billion unexpected revenue that accrued in the past year. Out of \$4.9 billion, I would think that a government and a Minister of Natural Resources would be able to come up with \$20 million to balance the books for her particular ministry.

Norfolk county has suffered a meltdown in its tobacco market. That has a direct impact on the Main Streets—I think of Delhi, I think of Courtland and I think of Tillsonburg, on the border of Norfolk—and it has obviously put a lot of pressure on that tax revenue that always came forward from the farm community, money needed for water and sewer, money needed to accommodate new development. The McGuinty government policy clearly helped force this meltdown in the tobacco market. This is a government that declared war on tobacco, and therefore, when one declares war, one realizes there is always collateral damage and there is also a requirement, if you will, for reparations to be paid as a result of any repercussions from eliminating a market for this particular commodity. Again, this budget has left farmers out in the cold and has left their families out in the cold.

I did mention the land dispute situation not only in Caledonia, but in Haldimand county and up and down what is described as the former Haldimand tract. This is unconscionable, and I find, despite their best efforts to convince the Ontario government that long-awaited support for the impact of this land dispute is needed—and it is needed immediately—people, businesses and the

municipalities in Haldimand county have walked away from this 2008 budget with little more than scraps on their plate.

1750

I was just speaking with a Haldimand county councillor. He indicated that he has received zero dollars for the water and sewer system request for the town of Hagersville. Citizens have testified at pre-budget hearings, the county submitted a recovery plan to this provincial government and residents have come to Queen's Park; again, no mention in the budget. No mention of Caledonia; I guess that's the C-word for this particular government. However, we have seen a meagre offering, through roads and bridges, in their year-end spending.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

On March 25, 2008, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the agreement earlier today, this vote is deferred until tomorrow during deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been put.

The member for Parkdale–High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given to the Premier. The House has given consent to allow the Minister of Municipal Affairs to respond on behalf of the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to give a little background, what I'm disputing is the Premier's answer when he stated that 18,000 units of affordable housing are currently being built. But to set the backdrop to this, we've also heard this week in the House that \$100 million of the new budget has gone to new affordable housing, which is absolutely incorrect. The \$100 million has gone to the repair of existing affordable housing, and it's for the entire province, whereas Save Our Structures specifically requested of this government that \$300 million go for the repair of affordable housing held by the government in the GTA alone. So it doesn't fulfill their request. It certainly is not money for new affordable housing units. By the way, again a form of correction: In our campaign, we promised \$30 million a year for the

repair of existing structures and 7,000 new units of affordable housing to be built every year.

Again, a little bit of background to this: In February of last year, we submitted a freedom of information request to discover how many actual units of affordable housing this government has provided. The answer came back: 285. Let's define what affordable housing is, because that's where they're going to obfuscate. Affordable housing, for those on minimum wage, on OW or ODSP, is 30% of their income. That means affordable housing has to rent at \$500 or less per month. We knew last February that they provided 285. So it's passing strange that somehow, instantly, we've got 18,000 being built as we speak. That's one of the backdrops to this.

Another backdrop, of course, is the federal dollars that have been left on the table, which are not being spent. I look at the Star editorial on Sunday. They point out that there are two federal trust funds: one, with \$80 million, to build desperately needed off-reserve aboriginal housing, and the other, with about \$85 million, to provide \$100-a-month rent supplements, neither of which has been spent. There's a time limit on this. The time limit is March 2009. So again, backdrop: There are 170,000 households—not individuals, households—on the waiting list for affordable housing, and the average wait is eight to 10 years.

This is a crisis. I'm not here, and I'm not keeping the honourable member across from me here, out of anything petty. This is serious. We have one in five children living in poverty in the province of Ontario. We have 170,000 households waiting for affordable housing, and we see no money in the new budget for new affordable housing units—no money. We see that they still haven't even come remotely close to their original promise back in 2003 of 20,000 units.

Now, when the Premier promises that we are actually building 18,000 units of affordable housing, I want to know a few things. I want to know this: Where are the 18,000 units of affordable housing? What will they rent for? When will they be ready?

I'd also like to ask a personal question. Green Phoenix in South Parkdale, which has been lobbying this government for money ever since I've been in this House, has not received anything—has received federal dollars, has received municipal dollars, but the province is missing in action. Where is the money for Green Phoenix? Most of the units are already built. They just need a top-up, and this government can't even come up with money for the Green Phoenix development, which everyone universally has said is a good project and should get the green light, should go ahead.

Finally, I want to know where these so-called 18,000 units are. Where are they, what will they rent for and when will they be ready? I'll be the first one there for the ribbon-cutting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to thank the honourable member opposite for coming to the Legislature to talk

about housing. This is my first adjournment debate, so I'm very delighted to be here.

I know a couple of days ago the honourable member called our \$100-million investment in affordable housing "meagre," but I was expecting at least an acknowledgment of the progress this government has made on the housing file to date. I want to start with that \$100-million investment that we're very proud of. While the member may call this "meagre," housing advocates are recognizing the significance of this investment. Let me quote two people.

Sharad Kerur, who is the executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, said, "While no one government can solve decades of issues affecting the current state and need for more affordable housing, this government is leading the way in finding solutions to improve affordable housing in Ontario. [This] announcement will make a real difference and demonstrates that the government has been listening to ONPHA's concerns."

Michael Shapcott from the Wellesley Institute said, "The \$100 million that the Ontario government will be sending to municipal service managers to repair rundown social housing is a smart and sensible investment and a good down payment on a long-overdue concern. It makes more sense to invest in improving the existing homes than to wait until they fall apart, then spend even bigger dollars to replace them. Municipalities were stuck with a huge unfunded liability for repairs in social housing when the Ontario government downloaded the cost and administration of housing to local governments starting in 1998. Investing in improving the province's affordable homes is a good first step."

It's not just the big housing gurus who appreciate what we're doing. Just today, Dan Best, director of community services for the county of Dufferin, said that the \$261,000 in provincial capital funding is "welcome funding." He went on to say, "It's a good start for the province to start reinvesting in some of the downloaded services, such as social housing."

I want the member to know about a recent announcement my colleague Jeff Leal made in Peterborough last week. The announcement recognized four affordable housing projects in Peterborough funded by the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program, totalling \$9 million in capital costs, including an 11-unit conversion project, now officially open, and a 48-unit project now under construction; the \$5.5-million project will be occupied by low-income residents, some with special needs.

Since the member across the way is from Toronto, I wanted to reiterate Toronto's share of the \$100 million. It's over \$36 million this year, and that's significant because her own leader in the last election campaign committed to providing only \$30 million this year. We are providing \$36 million. My math tells me that \$36 million is more than \$30 million.

Now, that's the pattern of the NDP. They don't know how to do anything but call for more money, so even

when they do, they're committed to simply moving the goalpost and calling for more money.

It's important to put our investments in historical context. The McGuinty government is investing, on average, \$111 million per year in capital housing dollars. This past year, we're investing \$189 million. The Tories, in their last year in government, invested only \$7 million. The NDP did better than the Tories, but they invested \$52.5 million. So as members and the public who are watching this late show can see, the NDP's credibility on affordable housing is, number one, paper-thin; and secondly, housing advocates know that deeds speak louder than words, and we're proud of our deeds.

For instance, tomorrow I'm going to Ottawa, to Gatineau, to meet for the first time in two years with the Harper government's housing minister with all of the other provincial and territorial ministers. After two years, we finally received a meeting with Mr. Solberg, and we're going to press Mr. Solberg to recognize that the federal government has to be back at the table. This government, under my predecessor John Gerretsen, signed the affordable housing agreement with the previous, Paul

Martin government. It was a good deal for Ontario—\$301 million that we put on the table.

Housing construction is taking place all throughout the province. We have a very exciting and successful ROOF program; already 14,000 people in the province of Ontario have received \$100 cheques, starting on January 1. The application process for the second round now goes to June 30, and we're excited about the opportunity that we are giving to make housing more affordable for some of the most vulnerable and poorest people in our community.

We have to do more—there's no question about that—but we're proud of the fact that the McGuinty government is back in the affordable housing business. We want the federal government to get back in there, in partnership with us and with municipalities. I look forward to future questions from my critic across the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney,
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Helena Jaczek, Dave Levac, Shafiq Qadri,
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman
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Continued from back cover

Minimum wage

Mr. Bruce Crozier	652
Hon. Brad Duguid	652

Access to health care

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	652
Hon. George Smitherman	652

Aboriginal rights

Mr. Howard Hampton	653
Hon. Michael Bryant	653

Northern economy

Mr. Bill Mauro	653
Hon. Michael Gravelle	654

Correctional facilities

Ms. Laurie Scott	654
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	654
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	654

Conservation

Mr. Paul Miller	655
Hon. David Caplan	655

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	655
---------------------------------------	-----

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Lord's Prayer

Mr. Bill Murdoch	655
------------------------	-----

Home care

Mme France Gélinas	655
--------------------------	-----

Anti-smoking legislation

Mr. Charles Sousa	656
-------------------------	-----

Lord's Prayer

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	656
------------------------	-----

Home health care supplies

Ms. Andrea Horwath	656
--------------------------	-----

Route 17

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde	656
----------------------------	-----

Lord's Prayer

Mr. Frank Klees	657
-----------------------	-----

David Dunlap Observatory

Mr. Reza Moridi	657
-----------------------	-----

Lord's Prayer

Ms. Laurie Scott	657
------------------------	-----

Employment insurance

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	657
--------------------------------	-----

Lord's Prayer

Mrs. Julia Munro	658
------------------------	-----

Employment insurance

Mr. Lou Rinaldi	658
-----------------------	-----

Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	658
---------------------------	-----

Hospital funding

Mr. Bob Delaney	658
-----------------------	-----

Emerald ash borer

Mr. Toby Barrett	658
------------------------	-----

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	659
---------------------------------------	-----

Order of business

Hon. Michael Bryant	659
---------------------------	-----

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

2008 Ontario budget

Mr. Bill Mauro	659
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	661
Mr. Toby Barrett	662
Mr. Gilles Bisson	662
Mrs. Laura Albanese	663
Mr. Randy Hillier	663
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	663
Mr. John Yakabuski	664
Mr. Paul Miller	666
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	667
Mr. Robert Bailey	667
Mr. Khalil Ramal	667
Mr. John Yakabuski	668
Mr. Paul Miller	668
Mr. Gilles Bisson	669
Ms. Helena Jaczek	671
Mr. Tim Hudak	672
Mr. Bruce Crozier	672
Mr. Norm Miller	672
Mr. Paul Miller	673
Mrs. Amrit Mangat	673
Mr. Bob Delaney	674
Mr. Tim Hudak	675
Mr. Gilles Bisson	676
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	676
Mr. Randy Hillier	676
Mr. Bob Delaney	677
Mr. Toby Barrett	677
Vote deferred	678

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR
LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT**

Affordable housing

Ms. Cheri DiNovo	678
Hon. Jim Watson	679

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 1 April 2008 / Mardi 1^{er} avril 2008

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Environmental club of Cameron Street Public School	
Mr. Jim Wilson.....	639
Riding of Oakville	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	639
Assistance to farmers	
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	639
Communities in action fund	
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	640
Ontario economy	
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	640
Climate change	
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	640
Blueberry pickers	
Mr. David Ramsay.....	640
Ontario budget	
Mr. Dave Levac.....	641
Ontario budget	
Ms. Leeanna Pendergast.....	641
Royal assent / Sanction royale	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	641
Legislative interns	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	641
Visitor	
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	641

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Raising the Minimum Wage), 2008, Bill 49, Ms. DiNovo / Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (augmentation du salaire minimum), projet de loi 49, Mme DiNovo	
First reading agreed to.....	642
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	642

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

First Nations Technical Institute	
Hon. John Milloy.....	642
First Nations Technical Institute	
Hon. Michael Bryant.....	642

Government investments	
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	643
Government investments	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	643
First Nations Technical Institute	
Mr. Norm Miller.....	644
First Nations Technical Institute	
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	644
Government investments	
Mr. Paul Miller.....	645
Adjournment debate	
Mr. Bill Murdoch.....	645
Agreed to.....	645
Visitors	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	645
Members' hockey game	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	646

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Tire disposal	
Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	646
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	646
Tire disposal	
Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	647
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	647
Manufacturing jobs	
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	648
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	648
National child benefit supplement	
Mr. Howard Hampton.....	648
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	649
Government spending	
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	649
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	649
Minimum wage	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	650
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	650
Youth employment	
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	650
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	650
Gypsy moth infestation	
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	651
Hon. Donna H. Cansfield.....	651
School boards	
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	651
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	651

Continued on inside back cover