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Wednesday 24 September 2008

Mercredi 24 septembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 septembre 2008

*The House met at 0900.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS
TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL INCLUSION
OF PERSONS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES SERVICES
ET SOUTIENS FAVORISANT
L'INCLUSION SOCIALE DES PERSONNES
AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE
INTELLECTUELLE

Mrs. Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes / *Projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, à abroger la Loi sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et à modifier d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please note that I will be sharing my time today with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for London–Fanshawe.

I rise in the House today in support of our government's proposed legislation to be called the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui afin d'appuyer le projet de loi 77 proposé par mon gouvernement, que nous appellerons dorénavant Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

You may notice that the title of this bill has changed since I introduced it last May.

À l'origine, ce projet de loi s'appelait la Loi de 2008 sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle.

Bill 77 was originally called the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, but families and partners felt that this title didn't capture the true spirit of this new legislation. We listened, and we agreed. Because

at its heart, this bill is about more than services. It is about people; it is about inclusion; it is about creating an Ontario where all people feel that they truly belong.

Le soutien et les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle ne sont pas une fin en soi. Ce sont plutôt et surtout des moyens pour inclure ces personnes dans tous les aspects de la vie et de la collectivité.

Developmental services and supports are not an end but a means—a means to include people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life. This is what our legislation will promote: social inclusion. I ask that the members of this Legislature consider how important it is to be included in society. As public representatives, we make careers out of participating in society and contributing to our communities. Most of us take inclusion for granted, but for people with a developmental disability, few things could be more precious. That's why our government believes that the time has come for people with a developmental disability to take their rightful place in Ontario's communities.

La loi que nous proposons aidera les personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle à vivre de façon autonome, à s'intégrer dans la vie de leur collectivité et à y participer pleinement.

Our proposed legislation will help people live more independently, participate more fully and be truly included in the community. It represents years of work, dedication and unprecedented co-operation among ministry staff, developmental services partners and families. I want to thank them today, especially all those who have participated so diligently to make this bill what it is today. I want to thank my staff Laura and Paulo; I want to thank Colette Kent from the ministry, and all her team; and all our partner agencies in the collectivity; and especially the families, who were very firm and very clear on what they wanted. For those of you who are here today, thank you.

More important, it represents a new beginning for people with a developmental disability in Ontario. Our current legislation came from a time when people with a developmental disability were placed in institutions away from the community. The walls of these vast institutions promised families safety and seclusion. Today, the writing is on these walls. We do not want seclusion; we demand inclusion. We do not hide our differences; we celebrate them. We don't believe disability means inability; we know it means other ability.

Distinguished geneticist Dr. Blumberg, who himself was blind in one eye, put it beautifully. He said, "It is just a mistake to think of people with a disability as lesser

than. There is no lesser than. There is just different from. It isn't just great minds that matter. It's great spirits too."

As Minister of Community and Social Services, I have been privileged to meet many people with developmental disabilities. I have been moved by their courage, their playfulness, their humility and their grace. I can tell you that their spirits have affected me more than the most persuasive arguments of eloquent words.

À titre de ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, j'ai eu le privilège de rencontrer plusieurs personnes qui ont un handicap intellectuel. Leur courage, leur humilité, leur sens de l'humour et leur charme m'ont beaucoup touchée. Je puis vous dire aussi que leur grandeur d'âme m'a marquée plus que n'importe quel argument et rhétorique.

0910

Ontario needs new legislation that honours the spirit of people with developmental disabilities; legislation that promotes their inclusion in society; legislation that gives them and their families control over their services and support; legislation that values them as individuals with distinct needs.

We've designed Bill 77 to do this. It reflects how we live today, in rich, diverse communities. We cannot build a new developmental services system on a crumbling foundation. Bill 77 is solid legislation for today and for tomorrow.

Le projet de Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle est une loi sûre et solide qui reflète nos besoins maintenant et pour l'avenir.

Already we have begun the groundwork to build a modern system, one that reflects our modern society. We have been developing a comprehensive plan for the future, one that leads us for the next 25 years and beyond. We are on track to closing Ontario's three remaining facilities for people with developmental disabilities by the end of March 2009. Closing Ontario's developmental service institutions is about giving people more opportunity to enjoy community life. We have put people, all people, first. We have been working with staff from our government facilities to place them in community jobs and help them to take the next step in their service career. We have collaborated with individuals, families and partners to give people with a developmental disability living arrangements tailored to their needs. It has not been easy. Families are worried about what this change could mean for their loved ones. But I am happy to say that families, even those initially against the change, have now told us that it was the right thing to do. Working side by side, we have helped more than 800 people move into communities across Ontario.

Je suis très heureuse de confirmer que les familles, même celles qui au début du processus de désinstitutionnalisation avaient des réticences, nous disent maintenant que c'était la bonne chose à faire. Nous avons réussi à aider plus de 800 personnes à quitter les établissements gouvernementaux et à s'établir dans des résidences dans la collectivité.

At a meeting with one of our partners, I shared a wonderful story about one man's experience in his new home. Let me share it with you today. After leaving Huronia Regional Centre, this gentleman moved to a Mississauga community. He is now a neighbourhood celebrity. When he attended a recent Community Living Mississauga meeting, he brought an entourage of his 30 new friends, including his bank teller, and the owner of a horseback riding stable where he now rides. This exceptional man's neighbours were there to share his success. Because as he grows, learns new things and makes new friends, his neighbours do too. The whole community is richer for his presence.

We want all Ontarians living with a developmental disability to enjoy this acceptance and make this kind of an impact. Ontario's developmental services system has more than 40,000 people like this gentleman, with a \$1.5-billion budget. Families and developmental service partners have told us they want a better system that is more flexible, fair and focused on people, not bureaucracy. We've listened.

Following a thorough clause-by-clause review, Bill 77 will create a consistent application process in each region of the province, make person-directed planning a ministry-funded service and require that all draft regulations be posted for families and partners to review.

This legislation demonstrates our commitment to partners, families and, most importantly, to people with a developmental disability. This is as it should be, because at its core this bill is about including people—all people—in the life of our province.

We are asking the members of this House to help us take this next step, to do their part to create an Ontario where everyone truly belongs. Together we have come far, and together we will go even further.

Franklin Roosevelt, the four-time American president who lived with a disability, once said, "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with a strong and active faith." This government has no doubt in people with a developmental disability, so let us move forward together with faith in a brighter tomorrow. Let us realize an Ontario that includes great minds and great spirits.

Notre gouvernement a confiance dans ses citoyens, peu importe leurs difficultés et leurs handicaps. Il nous incombe de faire de notre province un lieu inclusif où il fait bon vivre, maintenant et dans l'avenir.

I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured to rise in this House today, on behalf of our government, for third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes. If passed, this legislation will help us build rich, diverse Ontario communities where people of all abilities can participate and feel that they truly belong.

Ontario's previous developmental services legislation was designed to support people in institutions. It was a

product of its time, its face turned to the past, while Ontario looks forward to the future.

Les anciennes lois de l'Ontario concernant les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle étaient conçues pour soutenir ces personnes dans un cadre institutionnel. Ce n'est plus le cas. Nous n'avons donc plus besoin de ces lois qui sont maintenant désuètes. Aujourd'hui, ces personnes vivent dans la collectivité où nous vivons, vous et moi. Ils sont mes voisins, vos voisins. Pour mieux les soutenir, nos lois doivent être adaptées à la nouvelle réalité.

Today we support people with a developmental disability in homes, not facilities. Today we know that people with a developmental disability enjoy meaningful lives in the community. Today we know that people with a developmental disability give back to their communities as much as they receive. And so we must update our legislation to reflect our times and new ways of thinking.

Bill 77 would legislate a modern system of more fair, flexible and sustainable supports for people with a developmental disability. It would stamp fairness, dignity and inclusion for people with a developmental disability in the letter of law, so that our laws line up with our ideals.

0920

Already, our government has laid the foundation to transform Ontario's developmental services system. We have invested an additional half a billion dollars in Ontario's developmental services system since taking office. Thanks to the co-operation of developmental service partners, families and the government, this investment has achieved remarkable results. Right now, our passport program is helping 2,200 young adults enjoy a bright future in their communities. We have served 8,400 more families through the special services at home program, a 40% increase since 2004.

Our four new community networks of specialized care are helping people with a dual diagnosis get the specialized care they need to thrive. And we haven't forgotten about the men and women who help people with a developmental disability reach their goals, so we have brought salaries for developmental services staff in line with other jobs in the social service field.

Ontario's developmental service system supports more than 40,000 people, with a vast \$1.5-billion budget. As we continue to invest in developmental services, we need new legislation to create a fair and sustainable system that puts people, not red tape, first, so that our developmental service system will be a leader for people with developmental disabilities, today and tomorrow. We know it's a bold vision, but we believe in it. We believe in it because of our dedicated developmental service partners. We believe in it because of the remarkable people with a developmental disability that our system is here to serve.

Nous y croyons à cause du travail acharné de nos partenaires communautaires et intervenants qui oeuvrent sans relâche dans les services aux personnes ayant une

déficience intellectuelle. Nous y croyons à cause de l'esprit remarquable des clients que nous servons.

Families and partners have told us they want service and supports that are easy to get, no matter where they live. They want more choice in the types of support they receive and greater control over how they receive them. They want to design life plans that lay out each person's distinct needs and goals. They want to be part of the process every step of the way, reviewing all the regulations before they become final. Families want the people working with their loved ones to be accountable, and our partner agencies want inspections to be conducted appropriately, with respect for the people they serve.

They talked and we listened, and I'm proud to say that our common goal of putting people with a developmental disability first led us to a consensus on most issues. After a thorough clause-by-clause review, we are confident this legislation provides better service so that people can get the service and supports they need more easily; more choice, so that people and families can tailor supports to their needs; and fairness so that everyone will be treated fairly across Ontario. With better services and supports, more choice and fairness, Ontarians with a developmental disability will be able to participate more fully in community life. This legislation has been a long time coming.

Ce projet de loi est l'aboutissement de nombreuses années de travail, de consultation, de planification et de vision. Si nous décidons de l'adopter, il mettra fin à une période, maintenant révolue, où les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle devaient vivre en institutions.

It is the hard work over the years, and the consultations, planning and vision—that's why we've reached this level. If this passes, it will become legislation we can look back upon and say, "With this bill, we closed the doors on Ontario's institutions."

Today we are asking the members of this House to help us close the doors on all the institutions in this beautiful province. Today we are asking the members of this House to help us open the doors to Ontario's communities for people with developmental disabilities. Today we can put the ideals of fairness, dignity and inclusion into action by passing this new law.

It's a sign of nobility to have lofty ideals, but it is a sign of greatness to put those ideals into action. Let's come together to show the world the greatness of Ontario. Also, I encourage all members from both sides of the House, when the vote comes, to stand and vote in support of this bill. I encourage all of us, because it's very important, as I mentioned, to close the doors on the facilities that have existed until now in our communities and give families who have a person, a loved one with a disability, living with them a choice.

When we travelled the province for many days in many jurisdictions, from Timmins to Ottawa to London, and also in Toronto, we heard from many different families and many different stakeholders. They told us, clearly and loudly, that they want a choice. They have a right to choose the service they think is good for their loved ones.

Before I finish, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the members from the Conservatives, the NDP and also our caucus who served on the committee. They gave us great ideas. They participated in a manner and in a fashion that helped us achieve our goal: a beautiful, good and great bill to serve people with disabilities across Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to reply briefly to the Minister of Community and Social Services and to her parliamentary assistant, the member for London-Fanshawe, with respect to third reading of Bill 77, An Act to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities, to repeal the Developmental Services Act and to amend certain other statutes.

I want to congratulate and thank the members of our caucus who participated on the standing committee that dealt with this bill over the summer break—the member for Dufferin-Caledon, our critic in this area, as well as the member for Whitby-Oshawa—who did an extraordinary job during four days of public hearings on this bill, listening to families, listening to the people who believe that this government could do more to help families with a member who has a developmental disability.

Certainly, in my riding of Wellington-Halton Hills, I have heard from people who support an organization called Families for a Secure Future. Friends of mine—Marv and Nancy McDougall of Hillsburgh—have been very active in that organization for many years. I believe the organization has existed for some 15 years, and it exists to ensure that there are planning supports in place for families who are in this situation. As you know, Mr. Speaker, because this has been raised in the House on a number of occasions, and as the Minister of Community and Social Services is well aware, this organization has been forced to seek private funding to continue its activities because of insufficient support from the government.

So I want to use this time to ask the minister one last time, in the context of this debate on Bill 77, if she is willing to inform the House that she will be coming forward with new initiatives that will address the concerns that have been identified and brought forward by Families for a Secure Future. I hope that the minister will be willing to re-evaluate their concerns and come forward with a plan that will address their concerns to ensure they can have confidence, going forward into the future, that their family members will be dealt with and looked after in the way they want and in the way they need. I ask the minister, in her response, to address this issue.

0930

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, I listened very carefully to your words. They were careful; they were well-chosen. But I am left with the feeling that these well-chosen words will not see action in the light of day.

I am reminded of what many of the participants, many of the people who came forward to the committee, had to

say over those four days of hearings in Toronto, in London, in Timmins and in Ottawa, and what they were really asking for: the changes that needed to take place in this bill to make it workable and to make it really dynamic and powerful.

Two of the things that were most common in the debate from those hundred or so individuals were that they wanted a preamble—and I listened intently to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, but there was nary a word about the government's refusal to include a preamble in this legislation, one that would enforce the strength of the legislation, one that would guide the courts and Parliament, or workers in the system. It's not there.

The minister included nothing in her statement—nor did the parliamentary assistant—about the waiting lists which remain in the bill, and I'm puzzled why they have not come forward and proudly proclaimed the need that they feel for waiting lists. There was nothing at all said, and I will be spending some time myself on that. There was nothing, of course, about the rights for workers, which was intended to be put in the bill, where some of these workers will be hired by families—the rights that they might have. It was not proclaimed or not part of the bill either.

So we have before us a bill, and we have very flowery and very nice language and hopes for the future. I have those and share those same hopes, but I'm hoping that during the course of the debate other government members will stand and defend what the government has done in committee and why the bill has not gone as far forward as it should have.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 77. I, along with many of my colleagues in this House, had the opportunity to travel with the committee during the months of summer across Toronto, Ottawa, Timmins and London, listening to the views of many of those people who are affected by this legislation or the previous legislation and will benefit from this legislation.

At the outset, I want to thank all the members who very thoroughly participated in the process during the committee, especially from the Progressive Conservative side and the NDP. We had some really good discussions to ensure that we do make this legislation better than what was in front of the committee.

There were two types of people whose submissions really struck me. One was people who do suffer from developmental disability, and their point of view matters most when considering the improvements to this legislation, and secondly, the parents who are really involved and engaged in the lives of their children who are suffering from developmental disability. Their comments and points of view are extremely helpful, and they were supportive of this legislation. One of the key reasons they were supportive of this legislation is the fact that it gives parents the choice as to how they will look after and care

for their family members. It gives them the choice to use the funding from the government to ensure that they have a life plan, that they have the services necessary to ensure that their loved ones are prospering and are equal members of this society and this community. That is the most fundamental thing about this legislation, and that's why I'm very proud to support this legislation. There were some concerns we heard, and in the clause-by-clause process, those decisions and changes were made. Thank you very much.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the minister and the parliamentary assistant on Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. I would like to speak about the experience I've had in my own constituency of Parry Sound–Muskoka to do with people applying for the individualized funding and the Passport funding. I have to tell you that I think it's safe to say in just about all cases, either the people are turned down or they get inadequate funding put forward. I would like to bring specific cases forward.

I had a constituent, Louisa Crosssthaite, come in and speak to me about her son David, who has acquired brain injury, and the northeast regional office had just not been helpful and they haven't been successful in getting the help they need. I've had Debbie Vernon, who has been advocating for her sister Karen Jobbins, who used to have individualized funding. That has now been taken away. Her mother was helping to look after Karen, who is roughly about 50 years old—I wouldn't want to guess too accurately. She used to have individualized funding. She is now in the Pines Long Term Care Home and that's not the right spot for Karen Jobbins. She could have a much better quality of life if she had proper individualized funding through the Passport program.

I had a family with an autistic child come into my office. They've not received adequate support from the northeast region. They've had to go south to Toronto, and it's making family life very difficult for them. One spouse has to drive to Toronto all the time to be able to get service. I would just comment that the current situation is not good. People are not receiving the funding they need, and there seems to be no willingness or capacity at least on the part of the northeast region to provide the help that people in the region of Parry Sound–Muskoka need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I thank the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Beaches–East York, Ottawa Centre and Parry Sound–Muskoka for their input into the debate.

I'm very proud to stand here today in support of Bill 77. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members from the opposition parties for all their input. I think that they will agree with me that their suggestions were taken into consideration. Most of them were included in the amended bill. We have listened to the families and we've listened to our partners in this mis-

sion. For instance, we had Christian Horizons, Autism Ontario, Community Living, Reena, OASIS, Family Alliance and the Provincial Network, and they all came with very good suggestions. We have heard people speaking from the opposition. They are not happy because some of their suggestions were not included. I think most of the suggestions were included.

I'm thinking about Lorraine, who was placed, when she was four years old, into Smiths Falls, not speaking a word of English. She was there because her mother had no other option. Imagine being in an institution where you cannot be understood and nobody understands you. I'm speaking on behalf of Catherine and her parents, who wanted to keep her at home or have her close to home. That's what this bill is doing. Thanks again to all of you for your input.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Caledon—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin–Caledon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Dufferin–Caledon. Thank you. It's been a long summer.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I will be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Whitby–Oshawa. We have both participated in the public hearings and the committee process, and it's important that she share her valuable insights into this legislation.

I must begin by saying that while I appreciate the minister's kind words about listening to the opposition, we did put forward 66 amendments in the committee clause-by-clause process, and not one was passed by the government members. It's passing strange that she would say our input was valuable when we made the effort to put forward 66 amendments, only to have them all turned down rather quickly and with very little debate.

Bill 77 has been quite an education for me. I was looking forward to participating in the updating and modernization of the Developmental Services Act. Many of us in this chamber were here when the minister stood during Community Living Day in May to announce her proposed bill. In fact, many of us saw it as an opportunity to make right some of the inequities that individuals with developmental disabilities experience at the hands of our government. Transformation agendas are very powerful words. They imply more than simply change. They convey the need of renewal or a complete makeover.

The Liberal government started this whole process with these two words: "transformation agenda." Families and stakeholders were told that real change was coming. After all, the act had not been rewritten since the 1970s. "Something must be done. We will transform." Expectations were built up. Everyone willingly participated in the consultations. Families thought that this was the opportunity to develop the needed life plan for their children. Then Bill 77 was tabled, and the ministry had not transformed; they had simply tinkered. A new category of service was added in words but not action—no additional funding, no additional supports.

0940

So instead of applause, the Liberal caucus heard concern. "Transformation agenda" had sounded so revolution-

ary, but Bill 77 only delivered disappointment. Another Liberal promise has been broken. As the concern mounted, the Liberal government response was to speed up the process: "A quick second reading, four days of committee, and we can get this thing done." It didn't matter that there were many more interested in presenting in Toronto than spaces available. People would simply need to travel. After all, you thought the consultation had already occurred.

Unfortunately, during the committee process you did not listen. Our party has heard from families who wanted real change, not just tinkering. They are the ones caring for their children at home and they are the ones we need to support. They gave us good advice during the public hearings, and when my colleagues and I tried to put their feedback into the bill, you defeated each and every one of their 66 suggestions.

Since becoming the Progressive Conservative critic for community and social services, I've had the opportunity to meet with many exceptional individuals, exceptional people who have been working hard to make sure that opportunities exist for their children after they reach the age of 21 and are no longer able to participate in their communities through the school system; families who were truly hoping for some legislation that acknowledged their work in the developmental disability sector and gave them the tools they needed to ensure their children's inclusion in our communities.

I was really very hopeful that by bringing forward this legislation the government had thought through how best to achieve some of the laudable goals that they speak of in their transformation agenda paper, the transformation agenda paper that Ernie Parsons presented to Minister Sandra Pupatello when she was the Minister of Community and Social Services. Instead, I see Bill 77 as a poorly worded, poorly thought-through example of a government that wants to say, "See. We did it. We reformed the Developmental Services Act." But please don't look too closely or you will see the gaping holes from their words to what's in the bill.

The minister speaks of wanting to assist families who chose to have their adult children live with them in the community, but Bill 77 does nothing to assist them in their desire to have lifelong planning included in the legislation. The minister speaks of wanting to assist families who choose to build a plan and hire their own support staff to assist them executing this plan but says nothing about how she intends to fund a program that is wholly inadequate for the number of individuals who wish to access it.

In the last session of this Legislature, during question period, I raised individual examples with the minister about the many families who have spent hundreds and hundreds of hours applying for the Passport funding, only to be told over and over again all across Ontario, "There is no more money to fund Passport." Families are trying to plan and families are frustrated because all the planning in the world isn't going to help them find meaningful engagement for their children as they age out of the school system.

I want to read you an excerpt from one letter I received, because in this chamber I think we can quickly insulate ourselves from the reality of what is happening in our communities and across Ontario and how our decisions truly impact families. This letter is from a father who had a son graduate from the school system in June. Patrick is 20 and has already been told by the school system that he's not welcome to return this fall, even though he does not turn 21 until December. The first door has been slammed shut. Then, because his father says staying home is simply not an option for Patrick's parents, he's trying to prepare Patrick for his future. Patrick's family began the process to apply for the Passport initiative. Actually, they were encouraged to apply for the Passport initiative. I don't know how many members of this chamber have received the forms necessary to complete a Passport application, but I can tell you it would be well worth your time to do so. The application is cumbersome, it is detailed and it is not a quick read. These applications are incredibly time-consuming for the family and detailed in the information they expect families to put together. Only after all of the hurdles were passed was there any indication that no new funding had been allocated for Passport—another door shut for Patrick.

Please keep in mind that this is one family that has been proactively working to ensure that their son has not been left out in the cold with no opportunity to be part of his community. In the words of Patrick's father, "I can't believe this is true—that the government would create a brand new process (no doubt costly) and provincial application for day supports and tell families about it, get our hopes [up] and then not provide funding for it!" Well, believe it. It is exactly what has happened. Family Alliance Ontario has released figures that 2,890 families applied for Passport funding and only 254 received it. With all due respect, I cannot think of another program where you would encourage families to apply, knowing full well that the chances of them actually receiving any funds is so poor. Talk about setting someone up for failure.

I could tell you many more stories about many more Patricks. As one mother described it to me, she has a daughter who is surfing the sofa because she cannot find opportunities in her community and her Passport application has been put into the "No funding available" file. It is dishonest for this government to encourage families to apply for Passports knowing that they have to and that there's no money in the fund. I cannot imagine why they thought they would get away with setting up a program with great fanfare, only to have it die on the vine because they won't fund it adequately. My understanding is that there are today over 3,000 families waiting for Passport funding—3,000 adult children sitting at home, surfing the sofa, waiting for this government to stop talking and actually fund a program that families want and families need.

The public hearings on Bill 77 were very useful to me. I was impressed with the level of consensus that came

from the presenters. We heard from organizations, from workers in the developmental disability sector, from family members struggling to work under the existing inadequate system and individuals living with the nightmare of no services and no action from this government. So many presenters spoke of their concern that the application centres would simply become another barrier to service. So what does this government do? They rename them “application entities.” That’s not responding to the concerns. Throwing out a new name is an insult to the people who raised their concerns that application centres would end up being another hurdle, another barrier for inadequate services.

Person-directed planning was another request that families and organizations wanted included in this legislation—person-directed planning that would allow individuals their circle of support, to work through what was the best way to ensure an individual’s inclusion in our communities. Person-directed planning has been happening across Ontario for years. Individualized plans showed people’s desire to have an ordinary life living in the community. It’s not about which bed is available in which group home, which day program is available in which community. It’s a desire for true inclusion, true community engagement, not filling the few spots and beds that are available.

There is an excellent study prepared by John Lord that shows individualized funding has many benefits, but specifically highlights the need for planning to ensure its success. If I was a cynical person, I might question whether this government is trying to make the Passport initiative program fail, because they’re not prepared to fund it adequately or legislate the need for individualized planning. Once again, the Liberal government added the words “person-directed funding” into the legislation but didn’t explain how it would work or who would pay for it.

We need to keep in mind that for the vast majority of individuals living with a developmental disability, these are very real issues that they deal with every day. Eighty per cent of individuals living with developmental disabilities do so with the support of their families, not government. As legislators, we need to start figuring out how to help these families thrive, not simply survive. Let’s come up with some proactive, family-friendly—to borrow a phrase—policies that can actually make life better for individuals living in Ontario, and better for all Ontarians. Everyone benefits.

0950

I was interested in something I read recently that said, “Organizations whose workforces mirror the communities are better positioned to understand the needs of their customers.... Studies show that when employees with disabilities are hired, there is a corresponding increase in worker morale, teamwork and employee satisfaction that correlates with better product and service quality.” There’s no mention in Bill 77 of how we can link or connect to the community. If we’ve got this legislation right, it’s not only the individuals and families who are going to benefit, it is all of us.

I’d now like to specifically raise a few of the issues that my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa and I raised in committee and were shot down, for lack of a better word—voted down very quickly without debate. One of the sections refers to waiting lists—it has been raised already, but I think it’s important to point it out again. In Bill 77, there is a section that says, “A funding entity may establish waiting lists for services and supports provided by service agencies under this act and for direct funding and shall manage those lists in accordance with any applicable policy directives.” Based on what I’m hearing from the Family Alliance organization, that waiting list is already going to have 2,000 people on it only for the Passport funding. I can’t imagine what it’s going to be for group home beds and day program supports. They are instituting waiting lists in Bill 77 when the reality is that the waiting lists are what need to be solved, not the wording in Bill 77.

The second issue I’d like to talk about, which has not been raised, is that we heard from a number of individuals living in group homes who are very concerned about a section in the bill that deals with what I’ll call warrantless entry—inspections without warrant. It essentially will allow ministry staff to walk into their homes without any agreement on their part. I’ll read the pertinent section: “An inspector may carry out an inspection under this act in order to determine if a service agency, an application entity or a funding entity is complying with this act, the regulations....”

“Subject to subsection (3), at any reasonable time, an inspector may, without warrant and in accordance with the prescribed criteria, enter premises that are owned or operated by a service agency, an application entity or a funding entity in order to carry out an inspection.”

I, and members of the Progressive Conservative Party, have a real problem when we are making a second class of citizens. I have the ability to refuse entry to my home, yet we are saying to people who have developmental disabilities, “You are not going to be afforded the same rights and courtesies as the rest of society.” I would like to highlight subsection 143(2) in the Long-Term Care Homes Act: “No inspector shall enter a place that is not in a long-term-care home and that is being used as a dwelling, except with the consent of the occupier of the place or under the authority of a warrant.”

If it’s good enough for us in the general population, if it’s good enough for individuals who live in long-term-care facilities, why isn’t it good enough for people who are living in group homes? These are their homes, and they should be afforded the same rights and courtesies as the rest of society.

The last point I would like to raise deals with regulations. There has been a lot of discussion with Bill 77, and quite frankly with many of the bills that have come forward recently, about how much is left to regulation, how the bills themselves speak in very general, generic language and the proof is in the pudding, as they say, when you get to the regulation stage, where of course there is no clause-by-clause and there are no public hearings.

There are a myriad of regulations that will be put in place to go with Bill 77. Just looking at the end of the act, there are 17 sections, and of course each section could have a number of different regulations, where regulations will be put in place after the fact. So after we've debated it, after we've had our public hearings, then the cabinet is going to be making the detailed decisions about how Bill 77 will be implemented. While I would acknowledge, after a lot of pressure from groups concerned about how much is left to regulation, the ministry has now said that they will post the regulations, there is no obligation on behalf of the ministry to justify what those regulations will be and why they're bringing them forward. Yes, they've agreed to post them on the site.

For anyone who is interested in this sector, I would encourage you to monitor that quite closely because it is something that may not happen all at once; they'll trickle them out over months and years. It is a great concern to me that we in this chamber, as legislators, are expected to vote on Bill 77 and yet we do not have the detail that is really needed because so much of it has been left to regulation. I know I've spoken of my concerns with how this government is using regulations as a backdoor way of passing legislation and getting the detail in, but I think it's important to raise it in the context of Bill 77 because so much of it has been there.

I think I will wrap up with that, but I would like to very much thank all of the families, the organizations and the communities. When I did those four days of public hearings, it impressed me to no end how much detail, how much studying they had done of the bill before they presented. Keep in mind, these were five-minute presentations, so they were able to dissect the bill and highlight the issues that were of concern to them very quickly.

Another thing that I think we should remember: If you look at the presentations and if you look at the written submissions that were brought to the committee, there is a very consistent theme throughout. This is not a case of the workers wanting something very different from the families, who wanted something very different from the organizations. There is without a doubt a theme of people who had a true desire to have Bill 77 be more than just words. They wanted the action behind it. I would submit to you that we haven't achieved it with Bill 77.

On that note, I will pass the debate on to my capable colleague from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you to my colleague the member from Dufferin-Caledon for sharing her time with me on this important piece of legislation, which, in my view, had the potential to become one of the most transformative and important pieces of legislation that we've had the opportunity to deal with in this Legislature in a very long time, and certainly during my time in the Legislature.

I say "had the potential" because, to the tremendous disappointment of many groups and individuals, including myself, Bill 77 has failed to set out the framework to achieve the transformation of the developmental services sector that the minister touted during the introduction of the bill last May.

It's true that in providing for direct funding of services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families, Bill 77 provides for a range of options besides the traditional group home. I applaud this initiative being taken by the minister, and certainly the time had come for us to deal with that because the Developmental Services Act was badly out of date with life in the 21st century. It hadn't been improved since 1974 and reflected a view of people with developmental disabilities rooted in the past.

At the hearings before the social policy committee, many families told us that they wanted to either keep their children at home with them, with supports, or wanted to be able to plan as independent a life for them in their community as possible. Clearly, significant amendments to the Developmental Services Act were going to be necessary in order to achieve those goals. But whatever choice is to be made, whether to choose a group home, whether to live at home with supports or live independently in the community, it all takes money.

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We heard from many individuals and groups as we travelled with the social policy committee from Toronto to London, to Timmins and to Ottawa. Virtually, to a person, all of the presenters stated that this bill was going to be doomed to failure without a massive influx of funds into this sector. One parent actually told us that the parents over the years had saved the government hundreds of millions of dollars because they had kept their children at home and cared for them and never asked for anything, and I believe this to be true. But we also heard from many of the parents that they were growing older; many were no longer able to care for their children at home, and it was time for the government to come to their assistance.

There was one woman in particular who stood out in my mind. She was probably around 75 years old, and she was literally in tears as she was describing what her life was like caring for her now middle-aged daughter in an old farmhouse in a rural area. Her husband was now disabled because of years of hard work, farming. Between them, they had cared for her daughter. She was crying as she told us about the tremendous strain, both emotional and physical, it had taken on her. And it wasn't because she begrudged her life. It was more that she was really, truly frightened about what was going to happen to her child in the future, when she and her husband were gone. She was concerned about where she would live, but more important than that, who was going to love and care for her daughter. I think that's what this bill was meant to be all about. In my view, this question remains outstanding, and that, in my opinion, is why Bill 77 remains fundamentally flawed.

When she introduced the bill in this Legislature on May 15, the minister stated, "If this bill is passed, we will be able to look back and say, 'We took a giant step forward in building stronger and more inclusive communities for all Ontarians.'" Sadly, Bill 77 takes only a small step forward and fails to establish the framework necessary for full inclusion in our communities.

Many people at the committee noted that people with an intellectual disability had very few social, recreational and vocational opportunities after they turned 21. Most have finished school, and there are still very few employers who are willing to take the time and trouble to train and assist people with a developmental disability. Moreover, there are significant restrictions on the amount that people with a developmental disability can earn if they are able to secure employment because of the restrictions placed on them by the Ontario disability support program.

Many people reported that their children's lives were very isolated and that they spent their days watching television, sitting on the couch, because they were unable to access the Passport funding which would allow them access to community supports. My colleague has spoken quite extensively about the lack of money available for Passport funding, and while it was touted as being a great solution and certainly has the ability to do that, it's so hugely underfunded that all it ended up doing was allowing a few people supports in the community. But it almost pitted parent against parent because it was like a lottery as to who was going to get to be chosen to receive the Passport funding.

Bill 77 was supposed to change that. It was supposed to get people off the couch and into the community. It was supposed to shift the paradigm to focus on abilities and not disabilities and to achieve the goals of independence and acceptance. But it does not, and that, to me, is a great pity, given the enormous opportunity presented by this bill.

In my view, there are three principal reasons why Bill 77 has failed to meet its goal. First, as has been noted by several members, the bill fails to set out its guiding principles in a preamble or purpose clause. In failing to accept the many recommendations in support of such a clause, the government members stated in the clause-by-clause review at committee that it was unnecessary because the bill itself demonstrated the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities, and so no more really needed to be said. Yet when we in the Progressive Conservative Party attempted to introduce an amendment that would have changed the short title of the bill to the "Services and supports to promote the inclusion of persons with developmental disabilities act," we were advised by legislative counsel that this absolutely could not be done, because nowhere was inclusion mentioned in the body of the act—so much for wanting to achieve inclusion. It wasn't even mentioned, and therefore the title couldn't be changed.

Nonetheless, the government pushed through an amendment that changed the name to the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008. So we have a bill that mentions inclusion—one of its purported fundamental goals—only in its short title.

It's significant to note that at least 25 individuals and organizations spoke quite passionately at committee about the need to include a preamble or purpose clause in

Bill 77. And I would like to take a moment to quote from a few of the presenters. Family Alliance Ontario, through Ms. Cathy Calligan and Ms. Janice Strickland, made a compelling presentation to the social policy committee in London, Ontario, on August 6. They stated that Family Alliance Ontario feels that this legislation in its current form lacks philosophy and is wide open to interpretation. A preamble is needed to document the spirit and intent of this legislation. A preamble would serve as a compass pointing the Ministry of Community and Social Services towards its stated goal and would ensure that the legislation and its ensuing regulations achieve the intent of the values and principles in Opportunities and Action. This preamble should clearly state the intention to move from historical approaches such as services and programs to inclusion and valued lives in the community.

Similarly, Community Living Ontario, in its response to the amendments to Bill 77, stated:

"It is when we consider the United Nations Convention"—which I would like to come back to in a moment—"that we see most clearly the opportunity that has been missed by not including a preamble or purpose clause in the legislation. The supports and services available through this act can provide practical mechanisms for ensuring that people who have an intellectual disability have access to all elements of society, including education, health, transportation, justice systems and other parts of society. The legislation as it is drafted, without a preamble, could result in a range of outcomes. It could simply result in a future that looks much like the present (without large institutions, of course), or the legislation could help to facilitate the kind of future envisioned by the UN convention, one in which people who have an intellectual disability are supported to live autonomous lives and enjoy their rights as full citizens in our society. A preamble to the legislation would have gone a long way to describing and pointing the way to that future. We remain optimistic that we through our collective efforts will achieve such a future, but we are saddened that the opportunity was lost to boldly spell out our intention within the legislation."

Clearly, the addition of a preamble or purpose clause was seen by many as an important element to Bill 77, an important element that unfortunately the government chose to ignore.

The second reason, in my view, that Bill 77 has failed to meet its goal is its failure to honour the principles established by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect on May 3, 2008. Canada has yet to ratify this agreement, and therefore it's not binding on either our country or our province, yet it sets out a bold vision that should not have been discounted. The general principles of the convention are:

"(a) Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;

"(b) Non-discrimination;

"(c) Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;

- “(d) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;
- “(e) Equality of opportunity;
- “(f) Accessibility;
- “(g) Equality between men and women;
- “(h) Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.”

More particularly, article 12 deals with the principle of equal recognition before the law and states that persons with disabilities have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law, enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, and that all parties supporting the convention “shall take appropriate measures to provide access by persons with disabilities to the support they may require in exercising their legal capacity.”

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Mr. Speaker, 23 presenters at committee spoke about the need for the bill to include the concept of supported decision-making in the context of the UN convention and, though the amended bill mentions the need to confer with the individual and their family members about their wishes for their life, little more than lip service is paid to this concept.

Supported decision-making permits persons with disabilities to exercise their legal capacity to make decisions to the fullest extent possible. A Handbook for Parliamentarians on the UN convention says this: “With supported decision-making, the presumption is always in favour of the person with a disability who will be affected by the decision. The individual is the decision-maker; the support person(s) explain(s) the issues, when necessary, and interpret(s) the signs and preferences of the individual.

“Even when an individual with a disability requires total support, the support person(s) should enable the individual to exercise his/her legal capacity to the greatest extent possible, according to the wishes of the individual.”

One of the most poignant presentations made to the committee was by a group of representatives from an organization called People First of Ontario, which is a province-wide organization made up of and run by people who have been labelled with a developmental disability. The representatives stated that one of the most important things People First does is to assist people who are labelled to have a voice and be heard. They reminded the committee: “The government really needs to remember we are the ones directly affected by the proposed changes to this act. At the end of the day, government people and agency staff go home to a life that they have tried to make good. We go home to what we have been able to get. The more this act and the government of Ontario begin to see us as individuals who want to live in the community with proper supports, the better that home and life will be.”

Unfortunately, the individual’s involvement in decision-making seems to have been largely overlooked in this bill.

The third key element for success in achieving inclusion that was missed in Bill 77 is that of person-directed planning. Here, a full 36 presenters commented at committee about the need to include person-directed planning as a funded element in the act. Many of the presenters, which included family members of persons with a developmental disability, commented that independent planning assistance was necessary, particularly in the context of direct or individualized funding, in order for them and their family members to understand simply what supports were out in the community for them to access. More than once we heard that the daily demands upon family members were so significant that they simply were overwhelmed by having to deal with making a plan for their family member. As much as they wanted to do so and felt that it was necessary, they simply didn’t know and couldn’t deal with it.

To some extent, the government heard what the presenters were saying and included a provision allowing for some funded planning supports. However, in the words of Community Living Ontario, “The amendments did not, however, make planning an entitlement for all people who are determined eligible for services and supports, which we had called for. The amendment also did not specify that planning would be available to a person prior to applying for services in order to assist the person to complete an application in an informed fashion,” although they hoped that this could be addressed through regulation and policy.

We in the PC Party are not so hopeful. In our view, the concept of person-directed planning to assist in the development of a life plan for the individual is essential and should have been featured prominently in the legislation and not simply included as an afterthought. It is the key to the success of the so-called transformation of developmental services as it focuses on the needs of the individual and is the bridge between the individual and the community that brings about true inclusion.

One presenter, Ms. Sherri Kroll, who is the director of organizational development with Middlesex Community Living in Strathroy, made the case most eloquently when she stated, “The entire system envisioned by Bill 77 can only have integrity if persons seeking support services under the new legislation are clear about what it is they wish to apply for. Without that, they will face the same situation that has prevailed down through the years; namely, they will be offered services from a list that has been identified by someone else as appropriate in general terms for an entire population. People need supports that are uniquely appropriate to their personal needs at a particular stage of their lives. True person-directed planning looks not only at supports that may be accessed under the provisions of this legislation, but also at supports that are available in the context of the individual’s family, community and natural supports, which can often be accessed without government funding or other intervention.”

Indeed, one of the independent planning groups spoke quite passionately about this at committee, the group that was referred to earlier called Families for a Secure

Future, which spoke about building circles of support around the individuals and their families that were both paid and unpaid circles. This support would assist in integrating the individual truly into the community and would continue for the individual's lifetime, which gave great comfort to the family members, particularly the parents, because that, of course, is one of their greatest fears: What will happen to my child after I've left?

Through planning supports such as this, which is more than just the coordination of service agencies—and when I say this, I appreciate very much the work that has been done and the passion that the presenters from the community organizations brought forward, groups like Family Alliance Ontario, Community Living and all of the ad hoc groups that have gotten together to bring about the best supports that they can for the people in their community. They have done a wonderful job, but they need to have more help. I know that they want to help achieve this inclusionary piece, but there's a huge, big planning component there that really has been overlooked and really needs to be included in this legislation. To me, it's the linchpin of success, and that's what brings the individual into the community and achieves the reverse effect: It allows members of the community to be more aware of, and compassionate about, the needs of the individual and the communities. So it helps the individual, but to my mind, it helps the community so much more because it makes all of us such better people as a result. But it's very unfortunate that the government failed to see the significance of these planning supports, and although they're mentioned, they are not really given the importance and the pre-eminence in the legislation that they deserve.

I'd like to close my comments by quoting a recent article by Mr. Ian Brown that was written for the *Globe and Mail*. The article appeared in the newspaper on September 6 of this year and was about Jean Vanier, who, many members will know, is the founder of L'Arche. L'Arche was founded over 44 years ago and is based on the principles of inclusion. All those years ago, Jean Vanier bought a house for himself to live in, along with two profoundly developmentally delayed men, with no other plan than to live together, travel and have fun. Little did he know at the time he started L'Arche that it would some day become an international movement that is the very embodiment of inclusion. In any event, the article starts with the following:

"Everybody with a seriously handicapped person in their life knows this fantasy. The fantasy is a place, somewhere the handicapped person will be able to live and be cared for, not as someone handicapped but as a participating member of the world for as long as they survive.

"It's a fantasy, but a compelling one.

"In the fantasy, there are no run-down group homes on the edges of cities, out where the housing is cheap but not exactly uplifting, where there are always too many extension cords shaking across the floor.

"Instead, in the fantasy, there are communities of people, preferably in the country or perhaps by the sea,

living in gorgeous, architected houses because (fantasy thinking goes) the handicapped have so few satisfactions, don't they deserve to live in a beautiful place as much as any of us?

"Another thing about the fantasy is that there are no distinctions between the handicapped and the professional social workers who care for them, between the normal and the broken, no wall between Them and Us.

"They are simply people who live together and they help each other. The workers do the physical work, the handicapped do the work of the heart."

That's indeed a compelling vision, but I very much regret to say that I don't believe this vision can be achieved through Bill 77. Therefore, unfortunately, I cannot support it.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's a pleasure to answer to the comments made by the honourable member from Dufferin-Caledon and the honourable member from Whitby-Oshawa.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon started by mentioning that her party had presented 66 amendments to the bill in clause-by-clause, and although the member of the government mentioned that they appreciated the feedback, they accepted zero of their amendments. For the New Democrats, we presented 32 amendments to this act and two of them were accepted. I guess this is a little bit of feedback, but very little.

Du côté des néo-démocrates, le projet de loi 77, Loi visant à prévoir des services pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, est un projet de loi important pour nous. Les services aux personnes ayant des déficiences intellectuelles en ce moment sont défaillants. Groupe après groupe est venu devant le comité cet été pour dire que ces personnes n'ont pas les ressources suffisantes pour pouvoir vivre en communauté et pouvoir faire vraiment partie des communautés. Donc on aurait aimé, avec les 32 modifications que nous avons proposées, renforcer le projet de loi pour vraiment aller au cœur des demandes des gens qui vivent avec des déficiences intellectuelles.

People after people who came to present clearly made the case that the funding for people with developmental disabilities is inadequate. This bill had an opportunity to change things, but right now it contains very little.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to highlight in the few moments that I have the importance of the steps that this government is taking. The current Developmental Services Act is almost 35 years old. Those who sit on the opposite benches in this House governed this province for many of those 35 years, and they chose not to make it a priority to overhaul or update this legislation. I say to Ontarians: We have. We have made it a priority to modernize the developmental services system, to improve the services, to increase choice, to improve fairness, to update the language that we use, amongst many other

changes that are rooted in this very important piece of legislation.

It's a piece of legislation that's moved forward under the leadership of our minister, Madame Meilleur, and her parliamentary assistant, Khalil Ramal, who have been working actively with those in this community to engage them, to seek their advice, to solicit their comments, to make sure that this new bill reflected the reality of their lives. We spoke to the people of Ontario, we listened to them and we made many changes to the bill at their request.

Parties opposite have talked this morning about 66 amendments coming forward. I think it's important for Ontarians to understand that that is not 66 concepts or 66 ideas, but 66 words—because ideas flow, and legislation, if anybody's ever picked up a bill, knows that they're not user-friendly in the way that we draft legislation. But ultimately, this bill is about moving the developmental services sector forward, to help families that we all meet with in our constituency offices every day. It has the support of the members on this side of the House. We will continue to work with those families to make sure that further changes are put in place. This bill will help set the foundation so that we can continue to do the important work that needs to be done in this sector.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to congratulate everyone who worked on this bill. It's a hugely important subject; the folks who are actually challenged with going through life in a challenged way need advocates. So I congratulate everybody who worked on the bill and tried to make it as good as possible.

However, I really believe that what we have here is an opportunity lost. We had a good start, and we had people who have had experience, who live with issues every day, who were generous enough and courageous enough to come and present before the committee, present ideas from their own personal opinions, their own personal experiences, with heart and with passion. Unfortunately, it fell mostly on deaf ears with the government members of that committee.

It's unfortunate because once this opportunity passes, it will be quite some time before it can be resurrected and some meaningful changes put into the bill that really work for people.

So this isn't about photo ops; this isn't about taking glory in a campaign pamphlet. This is about people who live every day of their lives in a challenged situation. They thought they were coming here to this House to contribute, and the door was shut for them. It was nothing but words, and I am very sorry for that. I have to go back to my community, as do many others, to say yes, we had an opportunity but the opportunity was lost.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening carefully to the members from Dufferin-Caledon and Whitby-Oshawa speaking on this bill.

First, I want to thank them very much for their ideas and their input on this bill during the consultation process across the province of Ontario. But it's unfair to say we don't listen. We listened to many different stakeholders;

we listened to families; we listened to people with disabilities. They told us many different things and they advised us.

After we came back to discuss it through the clause-by-clause, we made a lot of changes to reflect their needs, their suggestions and their ideas. We talked about application centres. People said application centres weren't a good idea. We changed it to a different system—entities, two entities, one for processing the application and another one to decide the funding, because we thought it was very important to make people accountable and make it a transparent issue.

We talked about inspections, and many people came and told us they needed inspection because they wanted their loved ones to be protected; they don't want them to be subjected to abuse. All of these elements were addressed through the bill, through our consultations when the people came to us and spoke many different times.

Talking about the details in the regulations, as you know, all the bills come before this House. It's impossible for all the bills to include all the details. That's why we decided to talk about the general ideas and the principles. When we go back to the civil servants and the follow-up, and they put in all the regulations, in consultation with the stakeholders—and I hope many of the stakeholders who presented to us during the consultations come forward and support our ministry to put in the regulations they think are important to strengthen this bill.

In the end, this bill is about people. It's about people with disabilities; it's about their families, who will care for their loved ones for many years. We want to give them the choice, the choice they need, the choice they think is important for them and for their families.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm very happy that the member from Whitby-Oshawa ended by talking about Jean Vanier, because to me, if we lose sight of why we're debating Bill 77, and why we're trying to improve the developmental disability sector, then we're all here for the wrong reason. Thank you for your comments, the members from Nickel Belt, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, London-Fanshawe, and my seatmate from Burlington.

While I am obviously disappointed that 66 Progressive Conservative amendments were voted down in committee, I should clarify by saying they weren't 66 Progressive Conservative amendments. These were amendments that were brought forward by organizations like Community Living, OASIS, People First—families who have been living in the sector and trying to work within the existing rules for 10 or 20 years.

1030

So while they went under our banner, they were certainly not our ideas. I and my colleague from Whitby-Oshawa worked very hard to try to translate what we had heard at the committee level into concrete legislative amendments that we felt would bring forward the ideas

they had raised. Changing the application centre to an application entity, with all due respect, does not accomplish that goal. Including “person-directed planning” as a phrase without talking about how you’re going to fund it and implement it does not achieve that goal. Concerns about entrenching waiting lists are still in the legislation, so I do still have a lot of concerns with it.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed a privilege to be here today to talk about this bill. As I said earlier this morning, I listened intently to what the minister and parliamentary assistant had to say and I have to commend them for the language, for the hope that was conveyed, but I think there’s a whole lot more that needs to be said about this bill. I don’t think I could say it any better than one of the deputants had to say on the very first day of public hearings in Toronto. He encapsulated in terse and correct language exactly what the community is expecting, and I would like to quote him verbatim. His name is Mr. Ronald Pruessen, and I take this from the Hansard of that day of the committee. He is from the group known as Opportunities Mississauga for 21 Plus—in abbreviated short form, OM21.

“It is a wonderful thing that you have worked with families and agencies to chart a road forward, but it is an achievement that now carries serious responsibilities with it. Do not imagine that the admiration that has been generated by the transformation effort to date will either linger or quietly fade away if words do not translate into deeds. There will almost surely be a whirlwind of disappointment and anger if the government sees the essentially preparatory provisions of Bill 77 as sufficient or if the government believes that the template or shell conceptualized in this bill will allow the transformation effort to quietly come to rest on a back burner.

“Do not imagine, either, that tiny funding increases will allow achievement of a necessarily ambitious vision, especially if minimalist new funding is dedicated primarily to administrative procedures, application centres and the like. If this happens, then the template or the shell that Bill 77 is designed to create will be seen as the set-up for a shell game, and ‘shell game’ will be a fair and loudly proclaimed label.

“To conclude, we urge the government to continue as it has begun—to continue boldly as it has admirably begun. Take the splendid impulse to transform the services provided to Ontario citizens whose needs and vulnerabilities have been neglected for decades and match fine words with powerful actions.”

Mr. Pruessen said what everyone in the community was hoping this bill would do, and he has indeed immense hopes for what I’m sure will happen in the weeks and months that pass after the passage of this bill in the next few days. But he is also mindful of the fact that what has been put forward in this bill is going to require a fundamental shift in government philosophy, especially when it comes to funding.

This is not an inexpensive proposition. This is a proposition that is literally going to have to pay for

hundreds or thousands of people if they are to be serviced in the manner this bill envisages. The money is going to have to be found. The support workers are going to have to be found. The training is going to have to be undertaken. The opportunities for families are going to have to suddenly materialize where they have not been found in the past.

I can’t state because I don’t know, and I think probably no one knows, not even the Premier or the finance minister at this point, whether or not there are going to be opportunities. But we have heard from the finance minister that he intends to make a fall economic statement in about another month, that he is going to come before this House and he is going to explain whether or not the province of Ontario is going to have the resources to continue with the programs that are extant. He is going to tell us at that point whether or not there will be monies or perceived monies for any other initiatives that this government might wish to undertake.

Last week, the Premier talked about another issue. He talked about poverty reduction and how it is his intention at this point to come out with a plan—which has been widely expected, which he promised to have within a year of the last election, which in a couple of weeks will be up—and that poverty plan will indicate the direction that the government is going to take over the course of the rest of its mandate. However, he also said something on this issue that was very chilling to me and I’m sure will be chilling to the families of people with developmental disabilities; that is, he is not sure that his poverty plan, in terms of implementation, will be able to take place in the current economic climate. I was not present today—I was here in the House for this debate and as well downstairs at a media conference—but it is reported to me that the Premier was in scrums this morning at the Royal Ontario Museum and he further elaborated on the statement that he made last week, that in fact there is not going to be money for the poverty plan this year. He further elaborated that it is the intention of the government by the end of the year to come up with a plan on poverty but that the implementation may have to wait for times of better economic certainty.

I say that because this is what is going to, I’m afraid, fall to those from Community Living and all of those who have such enormous hope that this legislation will in fact do something. As Mr. Pruessen so correctly identified back when the hearings were taking place, this plan, as well-meaning as it appears on paper, will not do what it is supposed to do and will not live up to the expectations of those in Community Living and the many other wonderful groups unless there are resources to go with it.

Having said that, we await the fall budget statement, and I think everyone should be watching this very carefully to see in fact whether this legislation will be any different than the legislation before. Because without the resources to go with it, it will be impossible to move forward; without the resources that the government needs to commit, the lofty-sounding words of the minister and the parliamentary assistant, quite frankly, cannot come to bear.

The second point that I want to talk about is the entire time of debate and listening to groups across the province and what transpired with the many ideas they had. I listened to my colleague briefly here and then further downstairs in my room in advance of me going to a press conference, and I listened to the frustrations that the Progressive Conservative members had sitting on this committee. I will reiterate: They deserve to be frustrated. They deserve to be frustrated because some 60 of their amendments that were put forward were voted down. I did not agree with all of their amendments and I voted against some of them as well. But certainly some of them had merit and I did support some of the amendments that they were trying to make, not in a way to delay the bill, not to be dilatory in any way, not in a way that would harm the bill or its grand scheme and its great future, but in a way I thought was intended to make it better. The government chose to vote every one of their amendments down. I'm not sure how participatory that was towards the Progressive Conservative members and I'm not sure how participatory it was towards the hundred or so deputants who came forward and who were the genesis of the ideas that I saw them try to put forward.

I would commend the government because they did listen to two of my amendments, and I would like to commend the government because I thought those two amendments were crucial to the success of the bill. I'd just like, if I could, for a couple of minutes, to talk about those two amendments and why I support the government on those two amendments for moving forward and how valuable they will be to the families and to those with developmental disabilities.

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The first one, and I think the most important one—or perhaps I'll deal with the least important or the less important one. It was a notice that will be put up in agencies so that people with developmental disabilities and their families will see what is expected of those agencies—a sort of code of conduct, if you will, that will be put on the walls so that people will know what to expect from the agency, will know what to do if they are not being treated properly, will know of the right of redress and the right of appeal, will know how to take the case further up the line. That will be posted prominently in all offices and all office spaces and will be available to all.

I think this is very important, and I know that in many social institutions, including public housing, you see these same framed documents put on the walls so that the residents who live in those agencies know that if they are not satisfied, they do have redress. I commend the government for including that amendment within the body of the bill.

The second one is the one that I think is more crucial, and quite frankly, it surprised me that the government okayed it, because it is highly unusual. Governments and ministers have the right to make regulations consistent with the passage of the bill. Very often, bills say next to nothing, and all of the meat of the bill, as it were, comes

down to regulation. What the government agreed to in the second motion that I put forward was heartening to me. It certainly showed the government's willingness to go slowly on this matter until people are satisfied with how the bill will unfold, their fears may be assuaged, and that is to allow the regulations to be posted for 45 days for public comment before they're actually implemented.

This is a huge step forward, not only in this bill, but I would hope in future bills as well. But in this bill particularly, it will allow people with developmental disabilities and their families and their caregivers and social agencies that care for them to take a good, hard look at what is going to happen, at how it's going to unfold and how people are going to be better looked after in terms of the bill itself. Those 45 days will be a time, I guess, of incubation, a time of thought, a time of reflection, so that those who are reading it can come forward to their members of provincial Parliament with any suggestions they may have. There could even possibly be further debate within this House to direct the minister if some of them appear to be onerous or unworkable.

So I would like to take this opportunity, because oftentimes in opposition you criticize government, and that of course is our role. But the government on these two issues at least has got it right. They have got it right by publishing in a prominent place people's rights to complain and to appeal, and they have got it right in terms of the regulation and allowing further public debate within the community that is so desperate to have that debate and really needs that debate.

There are a number of things, though, that I was not happy with—and I'm mindful of the time. Is this a good opportunity or should I continue?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: One minute? Okay.

I don't know what I can say in one minute, other than to say that what I want to talk about on the next date is the whole issue of the preamble. I have to state for the record that I was disappointed that the motion made on the preamble did not carry. The preamble was requested by some 25 deputants over four cities. It was requested by many written papers that people wanted to see a preamble to the legislation, a preamble that is found in many pieces of legislation that the province has promulgated in the past, a preamble which would set out the rights and duties and obligations, that would allow families to understand how the act is to be interpreted, that would tell social service agencies precisely how they were going to deal with people with whom they work and that could be interpreted by the courts so that there could be no mistake.

The preamble that we set forward was a 12-point preamble, and I'm going to spend some time going through that. I have to state for the record, I was extremely disappointed when the government, who agreed with 11 of the 12 points, turned it down. Had they said, "We disagree with the 12th one," I would have gladly withdrawn it. I would gladly have withdrawn that 12th one, but that opportunity was not made available,

and a preamble is essential if this legislation is to be given the weight that is intended. I will continue on the next date. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for debate has ended.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a number of introductions this morning we would like to make.

On behalf of the member from Willowdale, a number of individuals from Professional Engineers Ontario are here today in the east members' gallery. We welcome Johnny Zuccon, Catherine Karakatanis, Walter Bilanski and Kim Allen.

On behalf of the member from York South–Weston—I just met these students downstairs—we'd like to welcome the grade 5 students from Roselands Junior Public School.

As well, on behalf of page Michael Hyer, we would like to welcome his mother, Margaret Wanlin, who is here in the public galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills raised a point of order with respect to a question asked by the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, and whether it amounted to a personal attack on another member of the House. It is true that Speakers have, on numerous occasions, implored members and will continue to implore members not to engage in personal attacks on each other. I have made that plea in the past and will continue to make that plea. By this, the Speaker is referring to remarks that question another member's honesty, integrity or character, or those that are personally offensive or accusatory.

I've had the opportunity to review the Hansard from yesterday, and I do not see that these comments made would fit that classification. Having said that, though, I remind all members that we are in an adversarial business. Temperate language and mutual respect will go a long way to making this the kind of debating chamber the people of the province expect it to be. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Premier, this past Monday, your health minister, outside this House, said that he supported the Prime Minister's commitment to call an inquiry into the listeriosis outbreak that has killed 17 people. Why, then,

will you not call an investigation—not an inquiry—into C. difficile, a deadly infectious disease that has killed more than 500 people in only 22 of Ontario's 157 hospitals? I ask you today, are you prepared to get to the root of the problem and then take swift, decisive and persistent action to ensure no future outbreaks and deaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know that the issue of C. difficile has become something that has received greater prominence. It has been given a great deal of attention by the media, families are concerned about it, and it's only right that my colleague raises this issue.

To give you some sense of the challenge it presents, recently the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control confirmed that C. difficile played a role in 300,000 hospitalizations in the US, and about 5,500 deaths in 2005, which is more than double those numbers in 2000. So it is a real and pressing issue throughout North America.

We believe that we have taken the responsible path forward on this. We've asked an independent expert, Dr. Baker, to give us his best advice, and we intend to follow through on that advice by making information public beginning this Friday.

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Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yes, Mr. Premier, it is a very, very serious and deadly infectious disease. However, other countries have taken decisive, swift and persistent action, which you and your government have not. Reporting is a critical first step, but it is not enough because this is only looking forward and not back at the root problem. We don't know how big the problem is. This isn't going to talk about how many deaths there are. You have a duty to protect the public in the province of Ontario. You've known since the deaths at Peterborough hospital in the fall of 2003, when 17 people died, that there is a problem. When SARS killed 44 people, you screamed for an inquiry, and there was one. We now know of at least 500 deaths, so I ask you today, will you finally commit to an investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't agree with my colleague when she leaves the inference that we've done nothing. She will know that in 2004 we established the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee; there have been three separate independent investigations; a coroner's jury has made recommendations; there's been an investigation into the Joseph Brant outbreak; and our own medical expert advisory committee has made recommendations.

Dr. Richard Schabas, the former Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, said, "I'm not sure a public inquiry is necessarily the logical next step. They often make for good theatre but they don't get us where we need to go, which is to address this problem in a vigorous and effective way, and I think largely we already know what the underlying problems are with C. difficile."

That expert committee we established in 2004 has provided significant new advice to our hospitals. I know they're acting on that, and we look forward to making information public as of this writing.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I find it unbelievable that this Premier is so insensitive to the people behind the deaths, the people who died without dignity, the families who are demanding answers and the public that is concerned about this infectious disease which we know is only going to get worse. How can you in good conscience stand here today and deny that the deaths of over 500 people in your publicly funded institutions don't warrant an independent investigation? You are responsible for the hospitals. Surely you know that this is the right thing to do. Why are you stonewalling? Will you commit today to an investigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I can't help but agree with Dr. Richard Schabas and his advice.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: A good Liberal.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Shame on you. Apologize to Dr. Schabas.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If the honourable member is looking for expert corroboration of Dr. Schabas's opinion, she should also know that the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario and the associate deputy chief coroner have both said that further investigation would not offer anything new. We're going to act on the basis of the information received.

One of the things we've done—

Mr. Jim Wilson: Cover up.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have 137 new—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member for Simcoe-Grey to withdraw his comment, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm sorry.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The final point I'll make as we await the publication of that information to which we believe Ontarians are entitled is that we have hired 137 new infection control people working—

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

C. DIFFICILE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: To the Premier: It's obvious that the Premier is afraid of what he will find in the past. Premier, on September 15, your Minister of Health told the press that he expected death rates from *C. difficile* to drop once the infection rates are made public this week. He said that Quebec had a drop in the deaths once it required hospitals to start reporting its rates four years ago. What your minister is really saying is that in the last four years, the thousands of deaths of people who probably died from *C. difficile* could have been prevented if your government had only brought in mandatory reporting earlier, as Quebec did. Are you prepared to accept responsibility for these hundreds and thousands of deaths?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, my heart goes out to all the families which have been affected by the

pain and suffering associated with a death or even a sickness caused by *C. difficile*. It is something that hospitals throughout North America have been grappling with for a long time now. As I said just a moment ago, the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control says that they're looking at 300,000 cases on an annual basis in the United States of America.

Recently, the chief executive of the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology said in May of this year, "This is not a time for alarm, but more a time for educating health professionals to understand this particular pathogen." That is why our PIDAC committee, the Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee, has put in handwashing guidelines. It seems like a such a simple thing, but it is absolutely essential in preventing the spread of *C. difficile*.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: You refer to what's happening elsewhere in the world. I can tell you that the response in other parts of the world, in other provinces, in North America, has been much different than yours. They have acknowledged that they have a problem and they have taken swift, decisive and persistent action, unlike your government, who just turned a blind eye because you didn't want to deal with the consequences. It's now up to you to give Ontarians a complete picture and a complete plan of action. You can't go forward—you must know that—unless you know what happened in the past.

We're not asking for an inquiry; we're asking for an investigation. Let's look at the root problems, how widespread it is, and let's do what we can to reduce deaths and anything else related to *C. difficile* in the future.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I agree with the objective set out by my honourable colleague, but I think it's important that we look to, and rely on, the best experts in these matters. The experts that we hear from, both here in Ontario and from south of the border, indicate that we have a good understanding of *C. difficile* and the manner in which it is spread, and we need to be much more aggressive in terms of the kinds of guidelines that are in place and in the adoption of those guidelines by doctors and nurses working inside our hospitals. The next best thing that we can do, of course—the next thing that we could and must do—is to make information public about the incidents of *C. difficile* in our hospitals, and that's what we plan to do.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Without information about what has happened and what's going on, how can the public have confidence in your government as they move forward? Why won't you give the public the information that they're entitled to? What are you afraid of? They have the right to know. Harper's going to call the inquiry into listeriosis. You demanded the inquiry into SARS. It was provided. We have over 500 deaths in just a fraction of our hospitals and you refuse to take action. There are real people who have suffered—suffered and died

without any dignity in those hospital deaths. Will you, today, ensure that there is an investigation to get to the bottom of what happened in order that we don't repeat it in the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I share the objective laid out during the course of these questions by my honourable colleague, but I think it's important for us to rely on the best expert advice that we receive. That advice tells us that we have the information we need. We think one of the most important things that we can now do is make that information available to Ontario families.

I can also say that we're absolutely committed to patient safety, and we think that when you go into a hospital, when you put your mom or a sibling or some relation or a close friend in the hospital, you don't want them to get sick as a result of that experience in the hospital itself. We understand that, and we're going to do everything we can—working with experts, following their very best advice—to limit the incidents of C. difficile, something which is plaguing all hospitals in North America. We think that by making this information public we can go a long way to satisfying concerns.

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POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Our economy is in a tailspin. People are losing jobs, welfare rates are soaring, evictions from housing are up and food banks cannot keep up with the demand. Your response, as the leader of this province, has been to tell Ontarians that we need to go slow in addressing poverty, that we can't afford to fully tackle poverty at this time.

Several people living in poverty—Cheryl Duggan, Sharon McPherson, Ken MacLeod and Josephine Grey—are with us today in the gallery. Would the Premier please tell Cheryl, Ken, Sharon and Josephine why the implementation of a poverty strategy is no longer a priority of your government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue, but I can't agree with the premise of my colleague's question. I'm proud to lead the first Ontario government which is making a deliberate and determined effort to reduce poverty, to measure poverty, to reduce it in a measurable way, and to do that by means of a focused strategy. The issue is not whether we do this; the issue is how quickly can we move on this. But we've done many other things in the interim, and I look forward to speaking to those in response to the supplementary questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The Premier talks about a plan with no resources. The Premier's view is that nothing can or should be done to address poverty during economic downturns, and that flies in the face of experts and the lessons of history. Virtually every government in this province, save and except one in the 1995 period, did exactly what we think you should be doing, and that is increase spending on social programs to make sure that

the most vulnerable do not fall into the vicious cycle of poverty.

On this side we believe that governments have a moral and economic responsibility to help the vulnerable in difficult times. Has this government assessed the cost of social services, health care and the justice system that will be incurred if your government does not fully move ahead with poverty reduction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes a very good point, and I hope more and more of us, and Ontarians more broadly speaking, come to understand the connection between poverty, our failure to properly address that and the costs that will be incurred in other areas of government expenditures. He's absolutely right on that score. That's why we put in place an Ontario child benefit, with monthly benefits now flowing to families, supporting 1.3 million kids. That's why we've increased the minimum wage time and time again. It's why we've increased social assistance after it was frozen for so many years. It's why we're investing in affordable housing, a new dental program and enhancing our student nutrition program in our schools. We've doubled the funding for that. We understand it. We get the connection between investing in poverty and the corresponding reductions and expenditures elsewhere, and that's one of the things in part that has motivated us to keep doing these kinds of things.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Since the Premier did not adequately answer the question about the cost of poverty, I'll try to give him some help. A 2007 report by a leading US economist found that the impact of child poverty in the United States costs that country \$500 billion a year. If you use the math and figure the number of people in Ontario, that would translate to about \$22 billion a year.

Would the Premier please explain why he is backing off on addressing poverty when doing so could reasonably be expected to cost this province \$22 billion in an already faltering Ontario economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I accept the premise of this particular question, which is that it's a matter of enlightened self-interest, both for our personal sake and the sake of our economy, that we find more ways, working together, to support families that are struggling in poverty.

There's something that I like to think is exciting taking place in the province of Ontario. It's being led by Minister Deb Matthews. We've been consulting Ontarians. At the end of this year, we want to put out a plan, the first of its kind in Ontario's history, that properly defines poverty, puts in place specific ways to measure it, puts in place specific targets, and puts in place a specific strategy for us to achieve those targets, together with regular accountability so people will know whether we're making success or not. That has never happened before. We're prepared to take this on. We understand there are some challenges associated with the economy, but we will move forward on this issue.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, back to the Premier. This government has said that it wants to hear from Ontarians about poverty. In fact, you held some roundtables across the province. You invited people to participate in those roundtables, or to submit letters and respond to your website survey. Thousands of Ontarians have made a great effort to have their voices heard. They trusted that you would take their views seriously. In fact, in the last election you promised to take it seriously and have a report within one year of that election. Why will you not commit today to release your comprehensive report on what you have heard—so many Ontarians know their views—and have taken into account in your scaled-back poverty plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to take this opportunity to thank the thousands and thousands of people across this province who participated in this poverty reduction consultation. From one end of the province to the other, people living in poverty, people in the business community and the faith communities and social services—the whole province got together and started talking about solutions. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the members from all sides of the House who convened groups in their ridings to start to talk constructively about poverty reduction. It has been an extraordinary process. We are working very hard to meet the deadline and to report back by the end of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister: I have a difficult time understanding why this government refuses to publicly report on what they have heard from Ontarians about poverty. You promised it within a year, and now you're talking about the end of the year and possibly next year. Perhaps the plan does not address most of Ontarians' concerns. You cannot hide this from Ontarians. Poverty Watch Ontario has reported on government and community consultations. The 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction—145 organizations—has issued a report. And today we have filed our own report in the timeline that we promised to do: when the Legislature returned. We listened to over 400 people. All of these reports call for the same things: a poverty-proof minimum wage, social assistance rates that cover basic needs, and an adequate supply of affordable housing. Why won't this government listen to the voices of low-income people and move ahead now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say I am a bit confused. Our commitment was to report by the end of the year and we are on track to do that. As I said, we have heard from thousands of people. We have reviewed hundreds of submissions. We are working very hard to actually develop the strategy that will be complete by the end of the year. I look forward to a fulsome discussion at that time.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: This government has resources and should have done this a long time ago. If our little party can do it, then you should be able to do it with the legion of people that work for you. Ontarians are demanding the following: a minimum wage of \$10.25 an hour—now. They are demanding a full Ontario child benefit—now. They are demanding an expert committee to ensure that social assistance rates cover basic costs of living—now. They are demanding a commitment of 7,000 new units of affordable housing a year—now. Why won't this government admit that inaction solves nothing, and go forward with these plans immediately? The people are hungry. The people are in need.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's only fair to acknowledge that actually developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy is much more than just compiling a list of suggestions that people have made. We are working very hard to create a fair, balanced and aggressive—but doable—poverty reduction strategy that will create opportunities for people, that will break the cycle of poverty, that will make sure that every child in this province has the opportunity to be the very best they can be regardless of the income of their parents.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the official opposition.

YOUTH CRIME

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday the member for Whitby–Oshawa asked the minister a serious question regarding Prime Minister Harper's proposals to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act in the face of an alarming number of violent crimes being committed by young offenders. Victims' groups and others have lauded the proposals, yet you chose to attack the questioner and dump all over the announcement.

In the midst of a violent youth crime wave, Minister, why are you playing politics with this issue?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Leader of the Opposition asks a question about a Conservative platform in the federal election, and he talks about politics. Well, let's talk about the crime prevention agenda that will keep Ontarians safe.

Number one, live up to your promise, Mr. Harper, to put 2,500 police officers on the streets of Canada. You're only 40% there, and then for five years. What do you want us to do? Fire them after five years? What about a ban on handguns across this country? Why won't you take the guns out of the hands of those who misuse them? What are you trying to train, a province full of Olympic target shooters? I think it's time you got serious with the issues that affect Ontarians. I think it's time you stood up for all Ontarians and helped us keep our communities safe.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That act in the face of an unprecedented number of shootings by youth in Toronto

in the last two weeks: The Attorney General's attitude and approach is an insult to all Ontarians, but especially victims of crime. Listen to victims.

Joe Wamback of the Canadian Crime Victims Foundation: "Harper's plan sends a strong message to violent young offenders that there's consequences to their actions." Moonie Ali, a director of Toronto Crime Stoppers: "Let Chris Bentley put himself in my position. If he was a father directly impacted by crime, he would not be against these changes."

Will the Attorney General stop playing politics like he did in his first response with this critically important public issue?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Leader of the Opposition sees a future in which he will continually be speaking to victims of crime; I see a future in which there are no victims of crime because we keep our communities safe. I see a future where we support the work we've always undertaken to put more police officers on the streets. Why won't he stand up for the people of Ontario and get Harper to put more police officers on the streets?

I see a future in which we support the work of the guns and gangs task force. Why won't he support the work of the guns and gangs task force? I support the work of Chief Blair, Chief Faulkner, Chief Davidson, the chiefs of the province of Ontario, who are working hard every single day to keep our communities safe.

Why won't the Leader of the Opposition and the Conservatives stand up for the police officers who stand up for Ontarians? It's time you stood up for the people of this province.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When 12.6% of Ontario's children—345,000 of our youngsters—live below the poverty line, when child poverty has increased 2.3% over the past five years in good economic times in this province, how is it that the McGuinty government can abandon the issue of child poverty reduction?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would just say I'm a bit nonplussed by this question given that this past July the first Ontario child benefit cheques started to be delivered to families across the province. It's a benefit of \$600 per child per family, and that's going to grow until it reaches \$1,100 per child per year.

We are making a measurable difference in child poverty right now, but we are saying that's not enough. That is why we are developing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that will ensure every child has the opportunity to be the very best they can be.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: This government knows darned well that their child benefit does not replace the national child benefit clawback that they took away from kids for so many years, and they've also taken back the back-to-school allowance, as well as

the winter clothing allowance. You know darned well that families are suffering as a result of the failed policies of this government.

We had ministers trotting around the province all summer long pretending that there's a plan in the works, that it's imminent, that child poverty reduction is going to be coming soon and that these stakeholders that they've been talking to are going to see a real plan be implemented. Here today we know that that's not the case. How is it that this government can now turn to the plea of their own poverty and go back on the fight on child poverty that they were committed to for so many years? It's all just a sham, and this government knows very well that they're not doing what they need to do to take care of those 345,000 children living in poverty, whose futures are being devastated by this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm going to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about the Ontario child benefit. I think it's very important that every member of this House understand that the Ontario child benefit is different from anything we've ever done in Ontario, because for the first time we are supporting families where the parents work. For the first time, families who are working very hard to support their kids are getting a little bit more than they would have had before. But we're not turning our back on social assistance, and I think it's very important that the member opposite actually get her facts right. A single mom, for example, with two kids, on social assistance has had an increase in income of 27% since we were elected. That's made up of the end of the clawback to the NCBS, increases in social assistance, federal investments that were not clawed back. We've made important strides, but we have still got work to do, and that is in fact why we are developing the strategy.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In February of this year, the OPP completed the largest coordinated child pornography investigation in the history of Ontario: 22 individuals were arrested, and our province took another step towards ending the exploitation of children. When asked about the groundbreaking investigation, Commissioner Fantino said, "Today is a great day for children and communities right across the province. The exploitation of children—by whatever means—is appalling...."

I agree strongly with Commissioner Fantino. This is good news for my family, for my constituents and for all of Ontario. I'd like the minister to tell us what this government is doing to ensure that this is the first of many such investigations and that we continue to be successful in fighting child pornography and bringing these criminals to justice.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question.

Certainly I believe the people of Ontario and this government agree with Commissioner Fantino that the

exploitation of children is always appalling. The OPP has done a terrific job, and I can tell the member with confidence that with the support of the McGuinty government, the OPP will continue to have success in fighting the spread of child pornography.

Of the 1,000 new officers this government has put on the streets, 60 officers have been designated to fight the sexual exploitation of children on the Internet. Our government has increased funding to the OPP's child pornography section by a full 70%, and that has translated into 162 child pornography charges laid by the OPP last year against 54 people and 336 new investigations launched. We will continue to be diligent and committed to eradicating child pornography.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to hear that the minister is so serious about continuing this fight. I'm also concerned, however, about the success of our efforts to rehabilitate sex offenders and to ensure that our communities are safe when they are released back into society. I know that as a result of the Auditor General's recent report, our government introduced amendments to Christopher's Law and that Bill 16 received royal assent on April 27

Can the minister tell the Legislature what our government is doing to ensure that sex offenders are receiving adequate rehabilitation, and can he assure us that our children are safe from past offenders?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member is right to raise the issue. I'm proud of this government's record, and I can assure her that we are committed to providing offenders with training, intervention and treatment programs, as well as related services, to assist them in becoming law-abiding citizens.

As examples, this government has provided \$700,000 to the Toronto Police Service for a pilot project to establish and maintain maximum compliance and effective management of sex offenders. We also reversed the decision by the previous government to close the Ontario Correctional Institute, Ontario's best treatment centre for violent and sexual offenders. And finally, as mentioned by the member, I am very proud of our sex offender registry, which today has a 95% compliance rate. Offenders who do not register are subject to police investigations and, if appropriate, charged and prosecuted. Public safety will continue to be the cornerstone of our—

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

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TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance: Last week, John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus hosted an economic summit to hear directly from economists, business leaders and other concerned groups and individuals. We heard that Dalton McGuinty's tax hikes mean that Ontario's current tax structure is chasing well-paying jobs from the province of Ontario. In fact, Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School of

Management, a special adviser to Premier McGuinty, said that Ontario has one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world.

Minister, your policies are hurting families by chasing away good job opportunities and raising expenses. I ask you, will you immediately table an economic statement where you'll commit to lowering the tax burden and help create well-paying jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This morning, I had the opportunity to meet with 21 business leaders, three times as many as the Tory leader, to talk about all of these issues. I just remind the member what the head of our chamber of commerce said:

"The provincial government has decided to take a prudent approach. By the elimination of the capital tax, we think it is something that is going to be very positive. The cost allowance will help bring some money back into the pockets of companies."

We have a balanced approach. We have been consulting. We will have a fall statement in mid-to-late October. This follows up on a number of other—I remind the member that's per the financial transparency and accountability act, which he voted against, and we had to bring that in because even though they said they had a balanced budget, they had a deficit of \$5.6 billion. That's according to the former Provincial Auditor. Our balanced five-point plan is the right plan for Ontario at this time. We will continue to work with the business community—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: If the minister heard from the same economists that we did, he would have heard that Canada, and Ontario in Canada, is now predicted to be dead last in economic growth, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies. He would have heard that a record number of talented Ontarians have left our province to find jobs in other provinces right across Canada. He would have heard directly that some 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs have now left the province of Ontario, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's tax-and-spend policies. I think the minister will know as well that through his work at the C. D. Howe Institute, Jack Mintz recently showed that a 1% reduction in the Ontario corporate income tax rate would actually increase provincial tax revenues by up to 18%.

Minister, you did the opposite. You raised business taxes now that we have the least competitive tax structure in the world, and revenues have not kept pace. Will you now commit to lowering the tax burden to help create more economic opportunity for families in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We simply don't agree with the member, and just to reinforce, we don't agree with Mr. Mintz either. The fact of the matter is, Ontario's corporate taxes are very competitive, with \$3 billion in tax cuts. Those tax cuts in the US haven't been working. We have a balanced five-point plan that's providing \$3 billion in immediate tax relief to all corporations. Your plan wouldn't help the manufacturing sector. With

respect, you have to be making money to reduce corporate taxes. Our taxes were the ones that were recommended to us by Ontario businesses, not by Alberta academics. It's the right plan.

We also have to invest in skilled trades. That's what the business leaders told me this morning. We have to prepare for the economy of the 21st century. That old neo-conservative attitude didn't work. We have a plan that's going to rebuild this economy, working with business, working with labour, to ensure that Ontario continues to—

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

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Since July 2004, Statistics Canada reported that Ontario has lost 235,000 manufacturing jobs and almost 45,000 direct and indirect forestry jobs. Because of EI cuts by the Chrétien-Martin Liberal government of the mid-1990s, many of these unemployed workers do not qualify for EI and are ending up on Ontario Works rolls, living far below the poverty line.

Will the Premier admit that his economic policies have failed to protect good-paying manufacturing jobs in this province and that the economic devastation of the McGuinty years is resulting in rising poverty rates in Ontario's manufacturing and resource communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has worked actively to assist those families and workers in the sectors that are challenged and we will continue to make those investments, whether it's investments in skills training, which you, sir, voted against; whether or not it's incentives to encourage investment to create jobs, which you, sir, voted against.

I would remind the member opposite that in spite of the challenges, particularly in the manufacturing and automotive sector which are very real and very front and centre for this government, we're seeing growth in other sectors. We have seen a net increase in jobs, a net increase in real wages, a 1.7% increase in employment year over year. We recognize the challenges. We're making the investments that are essential to protect families. We do need a federal partner that will address the discrepancy in employment insurance, and I hope the member will stand up with us for Ontario to ensure fairness for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: Fine words from the minister—it's too bad your federal cousins don't share your concern. Almost all experts agree that it is the huge increase in qualifying hours brought in by the federal Liberal government in the mid 1990s that is responsible for the fact that in a city such as Toronto, 25% of unemployed qualify for EI benefits—less than 25%. And yet, in the recently released platform, there is not a word about reducing these outrageous qualifying times.

Will the Premier admit that not only have his economic policies failed the people of Ontario, but also that his federal Liberal cousins are as indifferent to the plight of unemployed Ontarians as is he?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Premier McGuinty has launched a fairness for Ontario initiative. People can go to fairness.ca to see it. There is no question—and our policy is not to be partisan; our policy is to deal with Ontario's challenges.

The member may want to get up and have a partisan debate about this. We want to get up and say to all the federal political parties that it's time to change the employment insurance rules, that an unemployed auto worker in my community should not get \$4,800 a year less than an unemployed worker in other parts of the country.

Sir, we're less interested in the gamesmanship than we are in dealing with the problem. I'd invite you to sign the petition. I'd invite you to ask your federal counterparts to stand up for Ontario, to support our initiative of fairness for all Ontario workers relative to their counterparts in other parts of the country.

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

TOURISM

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. The economy is on everyone's mind. We read about the challenges faced by various industries daily. The tourism industry is no different. It has its own set of economic challenges which impact the province and this city. The weather was poor this summer. High gas prices encouraged people to stay at home. Fewer US travellers are visiting Ontario because of the high Canadian dollar. In Willowdale, for instance, Novotel, Gibson House and Mel Lastman Square are well-known tourist attractions. They're feeling the pinch in the tourism economy.

What is this government doing to assist the tourism business in Willowdale, in the GTA and, indeed, throughout the province?

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the member for Willowdale for the question, as well as the input from the member from Trinity-Spadina; it's always helpful. As the member for Willowdale noted, Canada's tourism sector, including Ontario, has faced numerous challenges over the past few years. We have not been immune. At the same time, our government has recognized that there are opportunities to be found within the industry.

We're working closely with our tourism partners on a plan for tourism. Since 2006 we've invested \$14.5 million, new dollars to enhance Ontario's festivals and events. We've heard great success stories from across the province, including the Art of Being Green, a Celebrate Ontario festival in the township of Lanark Highlands, which had a 64% increase this year in attendance. And of course, Voyageur Days in Mattawa, which sold out

weeks in advance with the help of the tourism event marketing program partnership.

1130

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

Mr. David Zimmer: The minister has addressed factors that are challenging to the tourism industry, both in Canada and in the province. In particular, the minister has referred to a competitiveness study that will address the concerns of the tourism industry and outline a plan for the direction and repositioning of tourism in the future here in Ontario. Minister, I want to know more about that study. I've received a lot of questions from my constituents regarding what our government is doing right now to promote tourism in the city of Toronto. Does the minister have a plan to help the tourism industry while we await the release of the report? Time is of the essence here, Minister.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In addition to the funding that we have given to our events and festivals, there is, of course, the campaign, There's No Place Like This, which has seen a 5% increase in domestic tourism in the province and is a great success. As well, you referred to a competitiveness study in the tourism industry which has been undertaken and chaired by the member for Vaughan, Greg Sorbara, who is travelling the province and is consulting with a wide range of Ontario's traditional and non-traditional tourism partners. He's looking at the successes of the Ontario industry, as well as the opportunities we can look at in the future. Today, I believe he's in Kingston and, of course, he's having a second session in Toronto that I'm sure the member is aware of. I'd encourage all members of the House to attend the consultations in their region and offer their input and suggestions together with their constituents.

We'll continue to work closely with our partners to provide stimulus for the tourism industry right now, while laying the foundation for innovation and long-term growth.

CLASS SIZE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, as you clearly stated for the record yesterday, you look forward to responding to questions from the opposition. I too look forward to your thoughtful answers. Time and time again we have heard how the Minister of Education defers decisions to be made to the local school boards. This statement is usually made when the water gets too hot for you to wade into.

My question, Minister, is why are you refusing to be flexible with school boards on the issue of size caps?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In 2003, when we came into office, there was a real concern—and I know, because I was a parent-advocate and I was a trustee—about class sizes. There were primary class sizes, there were upwards of 30 kids; there were kindergarten classes that had that same number. It just was unacceptable. There had been a long history of averages across boards

and parents were saying it wasn't good enough, because you can have an average which means you've got 38 in one part of the board and you've got 10 in another part of the board, and it does nothing for an individual classroom. So what we did is put class size caps in place and we have funded them. Across the province we're at 88.4% of classes at 20 students or fewer in kindergarten to grade 3. We also introduced some flexibility so that 10% of classes within a board can be above that, to 23. Some boards implemented those caps right away; other boards have waited to do that and they're—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I had hopes for a thoughtful response but what I think I've had here instead is the usual platitudes, the reinvestments and the all the photo ops that go with them. Unfortunately, that answer is not sufficient for me and it certainly isn't sufficient for the parents who are here today. These parents from Home-wood Community School are here today in search of a solution from the ministry.

Ms. Rushowy hit the nail on the head today in the newspaper where she is quoted as saying, "There is no wiggle room for boards and it is more a case of moving children to fit the policy instead of looking at their best interests."

Minister, please explain how disrupting the learning environment of an entire school for the sake of a slight overage in classroom size will help our students learn and succeed.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the name of the school is Humewood, and in fact I spoke to one of the parent leaders last night on the phone. I explained the situation, and what I said to them was this: If we introduce a cap into the system, and then we say there's local flexibility, then there is no longer a cap. What parents expect is that when they bring their three- or four-year-old—because some of the junior kindergarten kids are three—when they bring those little kids to school, they expect that that class size is not going to be more than 20, or at the very most, it's going to be 23. So local flexibility actually doesn't work. I had that conversation with one of the parents from Humewood last night. What I said was the Toronto District School Board needs to bring its classes into compliance with this cap. They know: They were at 78% compliance last year; they have said to us that they categorically will be in full compliance, which is 90% at the cap and 10% up to 23—

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

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Mines. Minister, you'll know that First Nations are the most impoverished communities in our province and that we need to do something in order to stimulate economic activity to give the people of those communities an opportunity for a better future. Your government cur-

rently is going through a process of Mining Act reform consultations, and First Nations are saying to you, as they're saying to me, and as they're saying to our leader, Howard Hampton, that your process is too rushed, that they need the time to consult with their communities to get this right.

My question to you is simply this: Are you prepared to accept the recommendation by Nishnawbe Aski Nation to give them the necessary time to consult their communities so we can get this right?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. It's somewhat ironic coming from a party whose leader said this summer that there was no need for consultations whatsoever. It was an extraordinary quote to hear, and you and I have discussed that ourselves, I say to the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Having said that, we take the consultation process extremely seriously. We're working very closely with our First Nation partners. We're doing very targeted consultations with each community. In fact, we've got community consultations that are going on as we speak, and we're trying to organize getting them together. We are working with not just NAN but with Matawa and other organizations to try and meet their needs in terms of the consultation process. We take it very, very seriously; it's something that obviously we do and perhaps your party doesn't, once again in light of the fact that your leader made it clear he didn't think consultations were necessary in the first place. Regardless, we're working closely with them, and we will continue that. We look for their advice.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Minister, you're not working closely with them, because they're calling me and others to say that you're trying to rush them through a process of consultation that is designed by Queen's Park, by the bureaucrats, that basically doesn't take into account what the realities are in First Nations communities. These are impoverished communities. These are communities where people are struggling to make ends meet. These are fly-in communities; we don't have roads. These are communities where most people don't have computers because they cannot afford to buy one or get the Internet in their community. So they're saying that you're trying to rush them down a path of consultation that in the end will not give them the opportunity to do what needs to be done.

I ask you again: Are you going to take the time to make this right as far as consultation? Or are you going to force them through a process that at the end of the day is just going to lead to more conflict and the slowing down of projects in their communities?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I ask the member whether or not that's the position of your party in light of what Mr. Hampton said earlier.

What I can tell you is that I certainly have been working closely with the First Nations in this regard. I'm very aware of the fact that they also are looking for clarity and certainty. We are working very closely trying to provide the consultation environment that they're looking for.

We spent a significant amount of time before the consultations began this summer, in our consultation document we put forward about a year and a half ago, on making the conditions absolutely the way that they should be. Indeed, we are going to continue to work with our First Nation partners on this. We know that the consultation process is very important. We very much want to meet our duty to consult, and the fact is we will continue our consultation process but recognizing that both the mining sector and the First Nations have made it clear to me that they need clarity and certainty. It's important that whatever changes go through, the legislation happens relatively soon.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is very diverse agriculturally, and my constituents have been telling me that they're very interested in buying more of the great fresh food that's produced in Ontario by our local farmers.

As everyone knows, buying local is a great way to help local farmers promote their local economy while at the same time protecting the environment through greenhouse gas reductions resulting from shorter distances that the food products have to travel. We know that a strategy to promote Ontario food helps drive local sales and all the benefits that go along with that, including stronger farming and food production industries and a healthier rural economy.

Minister, could you tell this House what our government is doing to promote Ontario foods and encourage Ontarians to buy locally?

1140

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I want to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex for the excellent question. She is a tireless advocate for the agriculture industry and her constituents.

She is very right that the people of Ontario are eager to get on the Buy Ontario/Pick Ontario Freshness initiative. That is why our government wants to partner with them. We want to promote Ontario food products, because they are the safest and the best quality of anywhere in the world. That is why in our last budget, the Minister of Finance announced that we are committing \$56 million over the next four years for our Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. That's on top of the \$12.5 million that we committed in the previous budget—so, \$68.5 million. I believe that it has been very effective and I'd be happy to tell the House, in the supplementary, of some of the examples.

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Minister, for that reply. I know the farmers in my riding appreciate the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, as it aims to open up the local markets for them and helps them to get a better

return on the hard work and resources they put into their products. They're counting on a successful strategy.

Bringing together local people from industry, the commercial sector and the community increases the bottom lines for local businesses and the quality of life for everyone. We know that everyone has a role to play: government, industry stakeholders, producers, processors, retailers and consumers.

I've seen our transit ads in the buses, the streetcars and the subway trains. I've also noticed our television commercials have really resonated. The catchy "Good things grow in Ontario" jingle is on the minds and in the hearts of viewers across the province. I think you, as the minister, set a record—or made history—at the AMO conference when you sang that jingle during the ministers' forum.

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Speaker, I think she was going to ask me to sing the jingle but I'm not going to do that. I am, however, very happy to add to my initial comments that we've also partnered with the industry. We have announced a \$12-million, four-year Ontario market investment fund. This is a partnership with producers and processors to help them market their local products.

Also, I want to tell you about some major retailers who have caught the wave to develop a "buy local" strategy. Sobeys has introduced a Compliments label for Ontario beef, pork and chicken. The packaging contains Foodland Ontario logos and the products are being promoted in Sobeys' weekly flyers. Also, Loblaws has recently launched their Grown Close to Home campaign. Loblaws is also currently offering Ontario corn-fed beef products.

These are examples where, because the consumers are demanding—they're preferring—Ontario products, the major retailers are also getting on board.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, do you believe that individuals with disabilities deserve the same rights as all citizens of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much. That's an excellent question. Yes, we do believe that. That's why we have introduced this new bill, Bill 77, which favours full inclusion of people with developmental disabilities.

In the past, we thought that these people should be in institutions, and that they should be put there for different reasons but also to exclude them from the community. With Bill 77, we have listened to the families, to our partners in the community, and we have moved forward with a new piece of legislation that will favour full integration of those with developmental disabilities.

I thank all of those who participated in the consultation and gave us their best advice in what we should—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pretty sure I asked a yes-or-no question, but I guess that's Liberal politics in Ontario.

Minister, why are you allowing, in Bill 77, government inspectors to enter homes without consent and without a warrant if you believe individuals who have developmental disabilities should be afforded the same rights as all Ontario citizens?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Indeed, a very good question. That's exactly why we are moving forward with entering into these homes to do investigations when we have a reasonable reason to believe that something is happening there. That's why we want to give full protection to those with developmental disabilities, not like you, protecting other interests. For us, Bill 77 is to fully protect and defend those with developmental disabilities. Those suggestions were from the parents and from those who have family members with developmental disabilities. They want to be their advocates. We have been listening to parents. We are not listening to those like you who want to keep us out of these homes. We're doing exactly what we're doing in long-term care.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the minister is well aware, low-income grandparents raising their grandchildren have been cut off from the little assistance they receive through the ministry's Ontario Works temporary care assistance plan.

Back on June 9, the minister said, "This temporary care assistance is short-term. It says so; it's temporary care assistance." I have news for the minister: It doesn't say so. Her ministry policy directives read: "Assistance is intended to be available to children under 18 for as long as they require care ... no time limits are set out in the availability of temporary care assistance." When will this minister get with the program and enforce her own rules?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the question. The member of the third party is a very strong supporter and defender of these grandparents. I take this opportunity to thank them for the good service that they are offering.

These grandparents believe that they have a responsibility towards their grandchildren who are in a situation where they need protection. That's why we have this temporary care assistance program, which provides grandparents with financial support. This has nothing to do with the financial capacity of the grandparents. It's a program that has been in existence for quite some time. As part of this poverty review, we will also review this program.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to welcome some students from

Claireville Junior School in Etobicoke North. I had the opportunity to talk to you outside and I'm glad that you had the chance to get in to question period and see the end of it. On behalf of all the members, welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

CLASS SIZE

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas smaller class sizes provide a benefit for students; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has established a cap of 20 students per primary class;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"We do not support the Ministry of Education's cap of 20 students per primary class without consideration for local circumstances, and request the consideration of the Minister of Education in this matter."

I agree with this petition, I am signing it and I'm pleased to hand it to page Paige.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Everett Defoe and supported by the people of northern Ontario.

"Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

"Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.

1150

"Section R-60" of the act "states that 'A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....' The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle's body was recovered from behind the scoop tram."

They petition the Ontario Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

"All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

"All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

"The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Marissa.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased to present a petition today from the residents of the riding of Scarborough Southwest.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas access to guns is a major cause behind an increase in violent crime;

"Whereas such crime has been steadily increasing over" the last "number of years;

"Whereas current preventative initiatives have been put in place to stem the tide of violent crime but a direct approach targeting gun usage has not been undertaken;

"Whereas signs specifically stating a zero tolerance attitude toward gun use in the commission of gun violence need to be created and erected to demonstrate our collective disdain for this type of activity;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Public Safety to implement an initiative to construct a zero tolerance gun usage sign and have these signs placed on all province of Ontario property, such as major roads and buildings."

I will attach my signature to it and give it to page Connor.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the Ontario Health Coalition and signed by the people of Guelph.

"Whereas understaffing in Ontario's nursing homes is a serious problem resulting in inadequate care for residents and unsafe conditions for staff;

"Whereas after the Harris government removed the regulations providing minimum care levels in 1995, hours of care dropped below the previous 2.25 hour/day minimum;

"Whereas the recent improvements in hours of care are not adequate, vary widely and are not held to accountable standards;

"Whereas there is currently nothing in legislation to protect residents and staff from renewed cuts to care levels by future governments; and

"Whereas care needs have measurably increased with aging and the movement of people with more complex health needs from hospitals into long-term-care homes;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately enact and fund an average care standard of 3.5 hours per resident per day in the regulations under the new Long-Term Care Homes Act."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with Scarlett.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition from Suzanne Huppé de St. Albert, concernant la réforme du droit de l'enfance.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craiton.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement obstacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;...

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.2) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde d'un enfant prenne en compte la volonté de chaque personne qui demande, par requête, la garde de l'enfant de faciliter les contacts entre celui-ci et ses père et mère ainsi que ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant;

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

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition prepared by the family of Lyle Everett Defoe, and signed by the people of White River.

“Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario Health and Safety Act and Regulations for Mines and Mining Plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

“Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.”

The act states: “‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded....’ The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle’s body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

“All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

“All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

“The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it with page Asha.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition for the preservation of the Ajax-Pickering hospital.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board reversed the 2006 announcement closing the maternity and pediatric services at the Ajax-Pickering hospital due to an overwhelming public outcry; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health patient unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital, and even with the Ontario Ministry of Health’s largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

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

“That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

“Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration.”

And I will affix my signature to these and pass it to page Marissa.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here from Dr. Munir Jamal. It is signed by many of his patients, and he is a urologist practising in Mississauga. It read 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 to enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Elizabeth to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I received a petition today from a Josh Lane, who resides at 30 Hanson Road in Mississauga, Ontario:

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

I will give this to page Connor again, and I’ll affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It appears there are no more petitions to be presented today.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

CASH ROLLS OF CANADA

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yesterday, I raised concerns about a Guelph company called Cash Rolls. Cash Rolls

recently moved their manufacturing division to the United States of America because Ministry of Labour inspectors here in Ontario refused to work with this company to bring them into compliance with new regulations, and instead forced them to immediately shut down operations.

I was shocked to learn yesterday that public servants from the Ministry of Labour were calling around to media outlets, demanding that they pull the story about Cash Rolls because of “factual errors.” This is a disgraceful attempt by this government to muzzle the media and divert attention from this government’s shameful record when it comes to our struggling economy.

The ministry felt our press release wasn’t clear enough in specifying that it was the “manufacturing” division of Cash Rolls that had been shut down and moved to the States. That was the huge factual error they found and used as an excuse for their attempt to silence the media. Regardless of this bureaucratic nitpicking, there are still 11 local jobs and over \$1 million lost to the Ontario economy because of excessive government red tape.

If it’s not enough that the Ministry of Labour inspectors are forcing businesses to close, they are now attempting to strong-arm the media when there’s a story and their goon-like tactics are made public.

It makes me wonder if the minister directed these senior bureaucrats to do his dirty work and try to shut down this story, just as they have effectively shut down this business.

How many other stories have we not seen because of this same type of behaviour, and when will the labour ministry and this McGuinty government stop acting like a bully toward businesses and reporters alike?

ARTHRITIS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to speak about the issue of arthritis in the province of Ontario. You will know that in Canada in general, and in Ontario, about one in six or one in five Ontarians suffer from various types of arthritis. There are about a hundred different types.

I want to give my story. Members would have seen me drag myself into this House last spring, using a cane, having a difficult time walking, always thinking I had a physical injury. It wasn’t until such time as I had a chat with my daughter, who is a nurse practitioner and who noticed that I had a rash on my leg, that my condition was in fact identified as psoriatic arthritis.

I want to say this, because it is an issue in this province that not enough people know what this condition is, and if not treated, as many people in this chamber will know, the condition can worsen. Luckily for me, my daughter is a nurse practitioner, and luckily for me, my family doctor, Dr. Stephen Cohen, knows something about the issue and I was diagnosed quickly.

But here is the other story. As I go to the pharmacy to fill my prescription, I’m lucky. As a member of this assembly, I have the little drug card that everybody else gets, so my drugs are paid. Many people who suffer with this condition show up at the pharmacy—I see it first-

hand—and are not able to get the medication they need to treat their condition.

I call on this government to work on this issue so that other people who suffer from this condition are able, first, to get the type of medical attention they need and, second, get the drugs they need in order to deal with the condition.

I'll be speaking of this later as we bring forward a motion or bill on this very issue.

ONTARIO RESEARCH FUND

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to announce that the McGuinty government allocated \$21 million to York University for scientific research in the area of autism.

World-renowned researchers and doctors working at York University will be receiving funding to develop more effective therapies for autistic children by studying what goes wrong in early childhood brain development, targeting the role of genes and environmental factors such as toxic substances which may trigger autism in individuals.

This fall, the province is announcing \$37 million in investments through the Ontario Research Fund, including this announcement. This funding will support more than 1,800 researchers working on more than 200 projects at 17 institutions across Ontario.

The Ontario Research Fund is a key part of the government's plan to support scientific excellence in much-needed research. Through a commitment of \$625 million over four years, the Ontario Research Fund provides Ontario's research community with one window for research funding. This in turn will help to create jobs and will go a long way to ensuring better health care.

Other research being undertaken is the pioneering of new treatments against breast cancer and diabetes and research into blood vessel biology to build new methods of treating vascular disease, which unfortunately is a leading cause of death in Ontario. I'm proud that the government of Ontario under Mr. McGuinty has recognized the importance of addressing the issue.

MUSKOKA ALGONQUIN HEALTHCARE

Mr. Norm Miller: Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare can no longer offer much-needed and valuable local lab services to the medical community and the residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka. A long-running government pilot project that funded community labs and area hospitals will end in a few short months. This means that lab specimens collected in local clinics will no longer be sent to local hospitals for testing. Instead, the work will go to a central lab clearinghouse in Brampton. Six well-paying jobs, very difficult to find in my riding, are at stake.

The McGuinty government told Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare that they could continue offering community lab services, "But we, the government, are no longer funding the \$1.65-million annual cost. And by the way, you, the hospital, have to balance your budget." In other

words, the hospital had no choice in the decision to shut down the local service.

I recently met with the CEO and the chair of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. Their message to me was simple: They prefer the current model of delivery for community lab services. They want the lab work to stay in the community but they had no real choice in the decision to shut down the local services. A public meeting on the issue was held in Huntsville on Monday, and another public meeting is scheduled for tonight in Bracebridge.

Blame for the decision to shut down community lab services should go to where it belongs—to the McGuinty Liberals who ended the funding for the services.

FESTITALIA

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I am delighted to inform the House that this month Hamilton is marking the 33rd annual Festitalia—a month-long celebration of Italian arts and culture in our community. This year's theme is "Con Amore", meaning "with love". It is in that spirit that this year's festival features a special dinner in support of Good Shepherd, an organization dedicated to helping the less fortunate in our community, as well as Moda Italia, an Italian fashion show, and this Saturday's *Vino e Amore*—a night of music and entertainment.

Some of the most popular events are the regional dinners featuring specialties from across Italy, hosted by clubs like Petterano, Famee Furlane, the Donnici Social Club, the Santa Croce di Magliano Association of Hamilton, the Venetian Club, the Abbruzzese Club, the Alpini Club, the Pugliese Club and the Sons of Italy.

There is also a street festival, a bocce tournament, a film night, an authors' night, the Festitalia annual mass and the Spirit of Ontario awards.

Festitalia is an exciting celebration that brings together Hamiltonians from all backgrounds and cultures. I'd like to congratulate the board and the chair, Mr. Dennis Concordia, and all of the wonderful volunteers who have made this event possible. Viva Hamilton and viva Festitalia!

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My statement today is in regard to the regrettable behaviour from the Liberal government yesterday in using their question to launch a personal attack against me. It is particularly shocking in light of the new focus on creating a family-friendly Legislature. It would be nice if at least occasionally their words matched their rhetoric. My comments, unlike those from the government benches towards me personally, were not to disparage the event planner who is simply trying to run a business in this overtaxed province of Ontario. I was fulfilling my duty as opposition critic to hold the McGuinty government to account as they clearly are unable to demonstrate any amount of fiscal restraint themselves. The Minister of Education should follow her own zero-tolerance policy for bullying and stick to the substance of the issue, instead of petty attacks.

The people of Ontario deserve better. They deserve answers to their questions. Meanwhile, the minister creates a tempest in a teapot in the hopes that we won't realize that she doesn't address the issue. None of us are duped by these tactics. Government members should spend their time focusing on the needs of our students whose education and lives are being disrupted because of a reluctance to put students ahead of the government's inflexible policies.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA SOUTH

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize and thank the many generous volunteers, sponsors and talented musicians who make our many celebrations in Mississauga South possible. Thanks to their efforts, there were many great events this summer on our lakefront. This year's Mississauga Waterfront Festival was a huge province-wide attraction, featuring extraordinary bands and children's entertainment. A good time was had by all because of the leadership and dedication of an amazing team of local volunteers.

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We also had a fantastic Canada Day in Port Credit village. Because of the support of skilled organizers, the annual Paint the Town Red celebration on the waterfront was a tremendous success that was capped off with an amazing display of fireworks.

The summer ended on the waterfront with the Southside Shuffle Blues and Jazz Festival. It boasted an impressive lineup of international headline performers and an exceptional list of local talent. The Southside Shuffle has become legendary for its fantastic music during its three-day run.

These unique events add to the character and economic strength of the lakefront communities and make us proud to live there. But they don't happen on their own; it takes an incredible amount of effort and organization. In addition, I thank those who continue to work selflessly towards a shared vision for an extended and revitalized waterfront for all to enjoy.

In Mississauga South, we're lucky to live in a community full of talented and dedicated volunteers. I extend my thanks to all those who help to make our community great. We had an outstanding summer this year on the waterfront and I look forward to next year's.

RAISE-A-READER DAY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I rise in the House today in celebration of national Raise-a-Reader Day. Across the country, local and national newspapers have teamed up with volunteers to raise money for family literacy programs and libraries. In my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, whether through our schools, our libraries, our Early Years centres or our parenting centres, all hands are on deck to improve literacy in Ontario, because literacy is critical to our everyday lives and is a necessary skill in today's economy.

Our government recognizes the importance of literacy, and that's why I'm pleased to share with you some recent accomplishments that our students have made. Ontario's elementary students continue to improve their reading, writing and math skills. Today, 65% of grades 3 and 6 students are achieving at or above the provincial standard—an 11% increase since 2003. Grade 6 French language students have improved their scores by up to 17% since 2003, and today they meet or exceed the provincial goal in all assessment areas. English and French students with special needs have improved their scores by 28%, and grade 3 students who are now in grade 6 who underperformed in grade 3 are meeting our provincial standards.

These are significant improvements, and teachers, parents, staff and students should be congratulated. When you go home tonight, pick up a book and read it to yourself or to your kids—I know I will—and celebrate national Raise-a-Reader Day.

RAMADAN

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Of course, it's with a great deal of pride and sentiment that I rise as a member of the McGuinty team in government to speak in the month of Ramadan, the month of the fast for the Muslim Canadian community across Toronto and across the entire country. As you'll know, Muslims, on the order of about one billion-plus across the globe, are celebrating this holy month of fasting, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, which commemorates the revelation of the Holy Quran.

There are a number of rituals and procedures during the month of Ramadan, including refraining from eating and drinking from dawn till dusk, but of course the sentiments are deeper. It's a matter of controlling one's desires, wants, old habits and, actually, many of the negatives that we might fall into. The ultimate goal is one of harmony of the soul and purification of the body, as well as celebration with extreme enthusiasm as it's going to be coming to an end sometime next week.

I know, for example, that my own children, Shafiq Jr. and Shamsa, are looking forward to receiving, along with so many kids of the Muslim Canadian community, gifts in celebration and many, many different forms of treats and so on. And of course, it gives them a chance to reaffirm their faith in this wonderful multicultural mosaic that we call Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 110(b).

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Balkissoon from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly presents the committee's report, pursuant to standing order 110(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The report is self-explanatory.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 110(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on hospitals' management and use of surgical facilities from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Mr. Sterling from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the committee's report on hospitals' management and use of surgical facilities and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This is in response to the Auditor General's report of December 2007. The auditor had the opportunity to visit three hospitals in our province and made several observations and recommendations in his report. Our committee followed up on those recommendations and has several other recommendations to make as well: 14 in total.

The committee is making these recommendations not only to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care but to the 14 local health integration networks, known as LHINs, and all of the other 150-odd hospitals across our province. Perhaps the most concern that the committee had with regard to the auditor's recommendations and the recommendations that we have made was the fact that the decisions as to who had access to surgery first across the province was not based upon patient needs, but more upon other factors within the hospital community. Therefore, the committee has asked the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and the hospitals to bring into account some of the advisory committees who have been suggesting changes and alterations to those guidelines and rules as to who would have access to our hospital rooms first. We all believe that it should be on patient need, and the most urgent patient should get first access.

We also make 13 other recommendations dealing with hospitals, and we not only urge the Ministry of Health and the LHINs to read and understand this report, but we also demand answers of the hospitals and the LHINs and the ministry with regard to some of the issues raised by the Auditor General. We believe that if hospitals try better, we can indeed have a better health care system, and the auditor has done very good work in this regard.

We would like to thank the three hospitals that were involved in this. But we make note that the other 147 hospitals must pay attention to this report and to the committee's report as well.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Debate adjourned.

MOTIONS

REVIEW OF PROVISIONAL STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Then, notwithstanding the order of the House dated May 1, 2008, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly shall submit its report on the standing orders to the assembly by October 2, 2008.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for Haliburton-Kawartha-Lakes-Brock on a point of order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to inform my colleagues in the Legislature that today is World School Milk Day. I know that they'll all want to thank and recognize the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Dairy Council for supplying milk to the schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for her point of order. We do appreciate the good work of the dairy farmers, but that was not a point of order.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

POLITIQUES FISCALES FÉDÉRALES-PROVINCIALES

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon all federal party leaders and Ontario candidates in the upcoming federal election to outline their plan to ensure Ontario is treated fairly so that our province has the same opportunities to succeed as the rest of Canada, including:

—fairness for unemployed workers who currently receive \$4,630 less in benefits and supports than Canadians in other provinces;

—fairness for Ontario's public health care system which is receiving \$773 million less in per capita funding this year than the rest of Canada;

—fairness for our economy in southern Ontario, the only region in Canada with no federal economic development programs;

—fairness in Ontario's infrastructure funding that is being shortchanged by \$970 million in per capita funding compared to the rest of Canada;

—fairness in equalization payments with a commitment that if Ontario qualifies for payments under the equalization program, we will receive our full share of funding as the program exists today; and

—a commitment to reduce the drain on Ontario that is now caused by annual transfers of more than \$20 billion from this province for programs and services in the rest of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. McGuinty has moved government order number 84. Mr. McGuinty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am honoured to speak today in this House in support of this motion. Every day in this Legislature we, Ontario's representatives, seize the opportunity and assume our responsibility to express our differences. We believe in healthy debate as the foundation of a vibrant democracy, but there are times, I would argue, when we need to come together and speak with one voice, and this is such a time.

Ottawa n'accorde pas un traitement équitable à l'Ontario, et si nous ne faisons pas front commun, si nous ne défendons pas nos intérêts, personne d'autre ne le fera à notre place.

To be very direct, Ontario is not being treated fairly by Ottawa, and if we don't stick together, if we don't stand up for ourselves, nobody else will.

First, a brief status report on Ontarians' recent achievements: Ontarians working hard and working well together have accomplished much in the last five years. We have lower class sizes, higher test scores, higher graduation rates and the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world. We have shorter wait times and 630,000 more Ontarians now have a doctor. We've created a greenbelt bigger than Prince Edward Island for Ontario families to enjoy forever. And in comparison to five years ago, we have 450,000 more jobs, and unemployment is down. Sure, there is more to be done, and we are all in this House eager to do more, but by any objective measure, we've made real progress together.

Having said that, it is equally true that Ontarians are anxious today. There are powerful global economic winds blowing out there. The continuing massive shake-up in the US financial industry is just the latest in a series of storms. Again, working with Ontarians, we have in place a solid plan to help grow this economy so that we might emerge from this global economic slowdown stronger than ever.

Our plan has five parts: We're cutting business taxes. We're investing in the green economy through innovation. We're investing in infrastructure like never before. We're partnering with businesses to help them grow stronger. And we've created Canada's biggest-ever worker retraining program.

Ensemble, nous travaillons fort avec les Ontariennes et Ontariens pour renforcer notre économie et créer de nouveaux emplois. Mais nous pourrions faire bien plus, et bien plus rapidement, si Ottawa nous traitait équitablement.

Together we are working hard with Ontarians to strengthen this economy and create new jobs, but we could do more and we could do it faster if we were treated fairly by Ottawa.

The Conservatives suggest we need to cut more taxes to become more competitive. The NDP suggests we invest in new programs. I believe that there is some real merit in both these suggestions, insofar as they build on our five-point plan. We would like to cut business taxes faster and we would like to strengthen our programs to grow the economy, but right now we don't have the financial resources to do that. It's not that Ontarians are coming up short when it comes to paying taxes, because they are not. The problem is that Ontario taxpayers are sending over \$20 billion of their tax dollars through Ottawa to other provinces to support tax cuts and new programs in those provinces. That's 20 billion Ontario taxpayer dollars we could use here in Ontario to strengthen this economy.

Now economists are telling us that Ontario may itself qualify for equalization. The TD Bank Financial Group's report of April 29 of this year speaks directly to the absurdity of this situation when it states:

"Ontario's projected move into equalization-recipient status ... would suggest to many Canadians the province is no longer a net contributor to federal coffers. However, this is not the case...."

"Ontario residents contributed a hefty \$21 billion more to federal coffers" in 2005 "than what was returned to the province in federal spending...."

"In actuality then," the report goes on to say, "Ontario residents will, in effect, be paying the equalization tab with their own money."

The TD Bank is unequivocal: Should we qualify for equalization, the equalization money would come from us. More specifically, it would come from Ontario taxpayers out of that \$20 billion that they're sending, through Ottawa, to other provinces.

There are some fundamental and perhaps surprising truths about which we need to speak to Ontarians: our financial circumstances. The truth is that today, by working hard and working well together, Ontarians are generating all the wealth we need to excel in the global economy. The truth is, too much of our wealth is being taken by Ottawa. The truth is that Ontario taxpayers are spending \$20 billion every year in other provinces to cut their taxes and invest in their new programs. The truth is that Ontarians are not asking for a penny from our fellow

Canadians living in other provinces. The truth is, what we're asking for and what we're demanding is that we simply keep more of our own money so that we can make ourselves stronger and, in turn, make this great country of ours that we love so much stronger too.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens ont besoin de connaître la position des partis fédéraux sur cette question. J'ai donc écrit à tous les chefs de parti et je rendrai publique leur réponse.

Ontarians need to know where the federal parties stand on this issue, so I've written to all the leaders and I will make the responses public.

I've also raised four other specific concerns Ontarians want addressed:

(1) Unemployed workers in Ontario get \$4,600 less on average in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada. That's money that would help parents who have lost a job pay the mortgage, buy groceries and get the training they need to get back into the workforce.

(2) Ontario families are being shortchanged by nearly \$800 million a year for their health care. We're just getting less for our health care than other Canadians are getting for theirs. Obviously that is not fair.

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(3) Ottawa makes regional economic development investments for Canadians living in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, the west, and the north, but there is no such program for southern Ontario, home to over 10 million proud Canadians and the heart of Canada's manufacturing sector.

(4) Ontario receives almost \$1 billion less than we should for infrastructure investment, again based on the funding other provinces receive.

These are all clear-cut cases of unfairness. As Len Crispino, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, put it, "Federal funding for vital services is not distributed fairly in this country. This is an issue that affects every man, woman and child in Ontario. It affects every person who uses health care services, who accesses training or unemployment insurance, who arrives as a new Canadian in Ontario, who drives on our roads or takes our transit."

I've asked for responses to all these issues from the federal party leaders by October 3. As I mentioned, we will share those responses with all Ontarians. In the meantime, we have created an online petition for Ontarians to sign so we can send a message with one voice to all federal leaders. Our website is fairness.ca. I'm also asking Ontarians to raise these issues one-on-one with their local candidates.

Le 14 octobre prochain, les Ontariennes et Ontariens vont élire plus qu'un tiers des députés du Canada. Nous avons un rôle très important à jouer dans le choix du prochain gouvernement et du prochain premier ministre du Canada.

On the 14th of October, Ontarians will elect more than one third of Canada's MPs. We have a huge say in who gets to form the government and who gets to be Prime

Minister. As Ontarians, it is only right, natural and predictable that we're going to have our differences on everything from gun control to how best to tackle climate change. That's understandable. But when it comes to fairness for our province, we need to close ranks. There can be no daylight between us.

I'm asking my colleagues on all sides of this House to support this resolution. It is most deliberately non-partisan. It is intended to bring us together as Ontarians on this important issue, as I believe Ontarians would want us to be, as Ontarians need us to be. We can and should vigorously debate the merits of more tax cuts and new program spending, but I believe we can and must agree on fairness for Ontario.

Together let's send a clear message to Ottawa: Give us fairness. Let us build a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: At the outset I want to indicate I'll be sharing my time with the member for Nepean-Carleton.

I'm pleased to be addressing this resolution, the so-called fairness resolution, because it provides an opportunity to put this issue in perspective. You see, what we should be talking about here is the need for a thoughtful discussion, a discussion about Ontario's role in our Confederation, about how different levels of government can find common goals and common ground and about how the entire system of equalization works and should work.

There's no shortage of legitimate issues to be discussed, and certainly, as our party leader, John Tory, has said, there is a case to be made for Ontario developing a new arrangement with the federal government. However, Mr. McGuinty is not leading nor asking for that kind of thoughtful discussion. Instead he has framed what he calls the fairness issue in very simplistic terms. Some might describe it as jingoistic language. To Mr. McGuinty, it is a matter of "them" and "us"; not how we can work together, but what's in it for his government. To Mr. McGuinty, it's not a matter of the broad issues of national finances and intergovernmental co-operation; it's simply a money grab. Worst of all, he is attempting to use this issue as an excuse and a smokescreen. It's his constant excuse for any economic failing.

Ontario has gone from first to last place in Canada in economic growth. "Gee," says Mr. McGuinty, "if I only had some of that money back that Ontario sends to Ottawa, I could do something about that." Ontario has lost nearly a quarter of a million manufacturing jobs. "Gosh," he says, "that's just awful. You know, if we just had some more fairness, that wouldn't be happening."

Our unemployment rate is above the national average for the first time since the 1970s. We're the only province that will see zero economic growth this year. Consumer confidence is tanking, job losses are mounting, and people are justifiably worried about their futures, their kids' futures and their grandkids' futures. Mr.

McGuinty's response: "Sounds like we might have to do something, at some point. For now, though, I'll just point this finger at Ottawa."

The Premier is using the equalization and fairness issue as a substitute for a real plan to stop the decline in our economy and the bleeding of jobs. It's become clear that when Dalton McGuinty talks about his five-point plan for the economy, it really comes down to this: point 1, blame Ottawa; point 2, see point 1; point 3, recap points 1 and 2; point 4, refer to points 1 to 3 above; and point 5, blame Ottawa again. By following this formula, he's hoping to avoid dealing with the real fundamental issues facing our economy.

It also, I guess, gets him out of the woods when it comes to a serious discussion of the very complex issues surrounding equalization. He's trying to reduce those complexities to a simple magic bullet, the one-step mystic spell that will solve all of his problems. Now if he can get more money from the feds, he won't have to rein in his government's out-of-control spending.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That obviously is irking some of my honourable friends across the way, but the truth sometimes hurts. And the truth is that this isn't about fairness; it's about looking at our national government like it's some kind of cash machine and you're itching for another fix.

This government wants more money because it has hiked its program spending by 31%, much higher than the rates of inflation or population growth. And even though they've been the beneficiaries of dramatically increased federal transfers over the past two years, they're looking for another cash injection. Why, you might ask? Because they are hooked on spending like a junkie on meth. You've heard of Hooked on Phonics; they are hooked on spending.

It's not enough that Ontarians spend nearly half their income on various kinds of taxes, including the second-highest personal income taxes in Canada. That's still not enough money for them. It's not enough that Ontario's business taxes are among the highest in the world. Mr. McGuinty still wants more cash, and he'll take it from wherever he can get it.

And to my Liberal colleagues, if you don't like that fact about your business taxes coming from me, I suggest you take it up with Roger Martin. He pointed that out at the Progressive Conservative economic summit that we held last week, a summit that the government refused to hold. Roger Martin—one of the most respected experts on competitiveness in the world and one of the government's own key advisers—pointed out that your business taxes are keeping jobs and investment away from Ontario. He also called your tax structure dumb. That was his word, not mine, although I have to say I agree completely.

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So rather than tackle that problem and exercise some restraint, Mr. McGuinty fastens on to another potential source to feed his addiction—the federal government. I

suppose, for Liberals anyway, it's difficult to do what sensible families do in hard times. It's hard to tighten your belt and stop hiring all those advisers and spin doctors with six-figure salaries. It's much easier to cry "unfair" and demand more from someone else. That's the smokescreen that really lies at the heart of Mr. McGuinty's fairness campaign in this resolution.

It's becoming increasingly clear that some of the members opposite are a little uncomfortable with this. I'm sure most of us have had the opportunity to watch the Wizard of Oz at some point. When Dorothy and her friends discover that the wizard is just an ordinary man with a special-effects machine, they pull aside the curtain to reveal him. Remember Oz shouting, "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain"? Well, here we are, pulling back the curtain and revealing the inconvenient truth about this fairness campaign. Briefly, anyway, let's leave that point behind.

Let's pretend just for a minute that they actually do want to talk seriously about equalization and about fairness. Let's leave aside the fact that the Premier's online petition is a rather pointless public relations exercise, since the Legislature can't accept petitions without original signatures. Let's all hold hands and imagine that they're serious.

What are the merits of their demands? Let's take, for example, health care, one area where they want more federal money. That money is already on its way. Federal transfers are already being increased. They're up half a billion dollars this year and growing by 6% a year. So that battle essentially has already been won. You have to wonder why they are after more health care funding when they always told us that they're going to have enough, thanks to the Premier's broken promise and the largest single tax increase in the history of Ontario. I'm sure the folks across the way remember the \$2.7-billion health tax they imposed on Ontario.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Those voters who the Premier looked in the eye and made commitments to certainly remember it. Once again, it's easier to go after another money fix than to deal with the waste, find smarter alternatives, stand up to the unions or anything else they could do in health care.

Let's talk about another item on their list of demands, and that is—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've called order a number of times. Respect was given to the previous speaker and I think this speaker should have the same.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you for that, Speaker. I appreciate your intervention.

Let's talk about another item on their list of demands, and that's infrastructure. Here's another example of the pot calling the kettle—this government collects \$4.1 billion a year in gas tax revenues from Ontarians. Unlike other provinces, it does not reinvest all of that money into

roads, highways and bridges. It keeps a sum for other priorities like massive casino parties. I have a story here from CanWest News about a \$2.7-million party that Ontario taxpayers paid for in Windsor—the gala opening of Caesars Windsor—at a time when they’re asking the feds to give us more money. CanWest says it’s “probably the most expensive party ever held in the city, possibly in all of Ontario,” at taxpayers’ expense—that’s just one example—when you’re going to have to show restraint in terms of implementing a program to go after poverty in this province.

I would think that when people look at this, every thinking Ontarian should be offended.

Back again to the infrastructure issue: If this government is worried about infrastructure—and they should be—let’s see them prove it. Put 100% of your gas tax revenues toward rebuilding this province. Do that and you will have some sort of case for going to other governments and demanding more. Of course, you may have overlooked the \$6.2-billion deal you just signed with the federal government. They just handed you the single biggest federal investment in public infrastructure since World War II. I suppose the attitude over there is, “What have you done for me lately?”

Another area where this government is crying foul is on employment insurance benefits, and there is an unfair balance here, but it’s the balance between the needs of the system and the unfair premium charged to employers. If this government really wants to help, it should not be trying to grab more EI cash from Ottawa; it should be lowering its own business income taxes and fighting for lower premiums. That would return money to Ontario in the most useful way possible. As a reduction in business costs, it would boost employment and make us more competitive.

This Liberal government knows perfectly well the differences under the EI program depend on local unemployment rates. It’s part of the whole fairness idea. Maybe I shouldn’t mention, but I will, the extra half billion dollars you get under EI for training every year or the labour market agreements that give Ontario a bigger share than any other province. Maybe the other provinces might get the idea that that’s unfair.

This resolution also speaks to the need for a regional development program for Ontario. Why? Because other regions have one; we’re jealous? Perhaps it’s because you want more money to try to pick winners and losers, like all of the businesses you’ve invested in with no job guarantees. Something we should get into at some point in the not-too-distant future is your investment in asset-based commercial paper, which we hear now could be costing us in the neighbourhood of \$700 million. Perhaps it’s because you forgot about the \$1.6 billion that Ottawa already invested in the auto sector in Ontario.

There’s no doubt that direct industry support is a tool, but it’s only one of many that you need to use to get our economy moving again. It’s much more important to provide broad-based tax relief that helps all businesses grow and succeed.

That’s the laundry list. It’s pretty long, but it comes down to one word: gimme. It’s dressed up in pretty language and they tried to put a David-and-Goliath spin on it—brave little Dalton McGuinty takes his sling against the towers of Parliament Hill—but it still comes down to “gimme.”

Finally, let’s talk about the whole concept of fairness and the idea of being a champion of Ontario. I think it’s fair to say that Ontario could use a new deal with Ottawa. It’s even clearer that Ontario’s municipalities deserve a better deal with Queen’s Park. Fairness is fairness—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The troops are restless, Speaker.

I think it’s fair. I think we should all agree that fairness is fairness, and the Premier can’t have it both ways. If he truly thinks that different levels of government should be treating each other with respect and helping to meet each other’s needs, his argument applies even more strongly to Ontario’s cities and towns. They’re still waiting for him to live up to his broken promises of partnership; they’re still waiting for something more than one-time announcements; they’re still waiting for secure, long-term funding that demonstrates some real respect for their needs. The Premier has to cast the beam from his own eye before he starts talking about the mote to be crossed in Ottawa.

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As for being the champion of Ontario, that’s an admirable goal. I think we’d all love to see Mr. McGuinty actually put on that armour and ride off to slay the dragons that threaten us. He could start by tackling our economic woes; that’s the first dragon any champion of Ontario should be aiming at. But if he really wants to carry the lance for Ontario on the national scene, there’s another threat he could help to defeat, and that’s the massive, multi-billion dollar tax hike, the Dion carbon tax, being proposed by his federal cousins. As Mr. McGuinty rightly said a few weeks ago, everyone knows that you don’t impose a major tax increase when your economy is in trouble. Mr. McGuinty went on to say that even the NDP knows better, but I’m not going to join the Premier in insulting my esteemed colleagues on this side of the floor, especially with a leadership candidate present.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Who? Paul, I wouldn’t take that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If the Premier is so concerned about billions of dollars flowing from Ontario’s economy to feed the federal government, he should be horrified at the thought of the carbon tax and should be openly and aggressively opposing it. It’s going to cost Ontario another \$4 billion a year just in extra energy costs, nearly \$900 a family, and that’s a fraction of the total cost when the carbon tax drives up the price of virtually all goods and services. It’s a green shift, all right, a shift of the green in our wallets to a Liberal government in Ottawa.

If \$20 billion a year from Ontario to Ottawa is bad, what about \$24 billion? Shouldn't Mr. McGuinty, the wannabe champion of Ontario's best interests, stand up and clearly reject that idea? Of course, I don't want to reach this conclusion, unless, of course, his campaign is not about fairness or protecting Ontarians. Remember that I said earlier that we agreed to hold hands and pretend today.

We're going to pretend that we believe in the dubious connection the Premier makes between his fairness demands and his ability to act on the economy and other issues. We're going to join the Premier in pretending that the huge gap he talks about is a gap between governments—his and Ottawa's—but of course it isn't. When Mr. McGuinty talks about how much money Ontario sends to the federal government, it is not all money coming from Queen's Park; it is money coming from Ontario taxpayers.

But let's keep pretending. Let's pretend that the \$20-billion figure he cites is actually accurate and up-to-date, not three years old. Remember last year, when the federal government realigned the equalization system in Ontario's favour, after the federal Liberals had ignored Ontario for years? Remember the massive increases in transfers, the extra \$2.7 billion that the McGuinty government is receiving as a result, not to mention the extra \$600 million this government is getting this year, over and above what was budgeted? We'll just close our eyes and ignore all that; otherwise, the careful fantasy Mr. McGuinty is weaving would fall apart and we might have to deal with reality.

This is not a question that should be reduced to black and white. This is not a simple matter of fair or unfair, but a series of complex issues that touch on every major policy area. As I said before, you can certainly make the case for the need for new arrangements. The case has been made before, new deals have been struck and our Confederation moves forward in a more equitable way. What the Progressive Conservative official opposition wants to stop is the Premier's use of this issue to avoid the real economic questions, saying too much money is going to Ottawa, while at the same time failing to oppose a carbon tax that really would suck billions out of this Ontario economy.

This resolution, Mr. McGuinty's resolution, is a finger-pointing exercise wrapped up in a coating of patriotism which doesn't wash. Any legitimate points are undermined by this government's determination to pick a fight. And that is the biggest shame of all.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I thought he said "the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills."

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Oh, Nepean—Carleton; I'm sorry. I misheard.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm about two feet taller.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the leader of the official opposition. I appreciate his candid comments.

I'm proud to take part in today's debate on fairness for Ontario. As an Ontarian and a Canadian, I view this debate as healthy for our democracy, for our country and for all those people whom I represent in this Legislature. I support fairness for Ontario, and I'm happy to add my voice to calls for treating Canada's most populous province, the economic engine of our country and the most diverse jurisdiction in Confederation, with even-handedness, particularly as we face unique challenges in our economy, our health care sector and our criminal justice system.

As our leader, John Tory, has pointed out, of course we believe in fairness for Ontario, but the issue of fairness in Ontario is not about equalization; it is about our economy. I think it is safe to say that John Tory, Bob Runciman, myself and our caucus agree with Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who said just days ago: "Our objective ... is to keep Ontario as the industrial engine of our economy. It is not to see Ontario become a have-not, equalization ... province, and I hope the government of Ontario shares that objective."

In the official opposition, we are concerned that the McGuinty Liberals are blaming the federal Conservatives instead of taking responsibility for the problems they have created for themselves, and in turn, for all Ontarians, those problems being high taxes, skyrocketing energy prices and excessive regulation. It is without question that Ontario has been slipping since Mr. McGuinty came into office. When the Premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, took office, he led the economic engine of Canada. Sadly, now, five years later, under Mr. McGuinty's watch, manufacturing jobs in Ontario have been lost to the tune of 200,000. Ontario has gone from first to worst in Confederation in terms of economic growth, and we are now on the verge of becoming a have-not province.

As an Ontarian, this truly, truly concerns me. One would hope that this motion put forward today by our Premier is more about working together for Ontarians and less about trying to find a scapegoat for Mr. McGuinty's own mismanagement of our now fragile economy because of his very own record of out-of-control spending and record high taxes.

As I mentioned, the debate is about the economy, not equalization. I fear that Mr. McGuinty is using the name of fairness to instead further his own political agenda and ambitions, rather than improving the economy which right now demands all of our attention. Looking at this resolution, one can judge the merits of his arguments as much by what is excluded as by what is included. This is of course troubling on both those accounts. That is why I have two major concerns on how this resolution before us reads and what it is saying to Ontarians.

First, Mr. McGuinty makes an incorrect assumption about employment insurance, which I look forward to touching on later. But I think that in a very real way it exposes the shallowness of his arguments and perhaps is a telling example of why Ontarians aren't drawn to his point of view.

Second, the objectivity of this resolution is obviously called into question with the glaring omission of the ill-fated and risky Liberal carbon tax plan and its detrimental impacts on Ontario's already slowing manufacturing sector, not to mention for areas like mine and ones with strong agricultural communities, what negative impact it will have on family farms right across this province. I can understand why Mr. McGuinty may want to shy away from the carbon tax and criticizing the Liberals, considering his own brother, the federal Liberal environment critic, is an architect of the Liberals' environmental plan. But it's important to those of us taking part in debate to focus on the issue at hand.

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Before I delve into my two major concerns, which I reiterate are the incorrect EI assumption and the glaring omission of the risky carbon tax plan put forward by the Liberals, I do want to take a moment to discuss equalization. It's important for those of us who are taking part in this debate to understand the intricacies of the equalization formula, that we are aware of the posturing that has taken place for decades in this country and that we're aware of exactly what Mr. McGuinty's math actually adds up to. Specifically, it is important to remember that under the Chrétien and Martin Liberals in Ottawa this province, and basically every other province, had the federal books balanced on their backs. There were record cuts to the provinces in health and social transfers, and these transfers are slowly being rebuilt after cutting and slashing by the Chrétien-Martin Liberals in the early 1990s. I'm sure some members here will remember those days. But don't just take my word for it; take Allan Rock's. It was he who said: "It was my government that diminished the size of transfer payments.... I will not stand here and tell you that the cuts in transfer payments we made were insignificant. They were not. And I won't tell you that they have not had an impact. They have." This, of course, was in a speech to the Canadian Medical Association on August 20, 1997.

I'm also sure that members here will never be able to forget when Ontario asked the previous Liberal governments for fairness in transfer payments. Not only were Ontarians' pleas ignored, but the Chrétien-Martin Liberal caucus chair even supported a separatist government in another province over his own. Again, don't just take my word for it; take Paul DeVillers's. Back in 2001, Paul DeVillers, who was an Ontario MP and also the federal Liberal caucus chair, told the National Post, "We can sign agreements with the separatist government but we can't sign a time-of-day agreement with Ontario."

Even when the federal Liberals admitted their cuts have hurt health care, when they said they would rather deal with separatists than deal with Ontario, what did the

provincial Liberals say? Do you guys remember what you said? It would have been helpful had you said nothing at all, because this is what you said: "The federal government has given the province \$895 million more than they need for health care," said David Caplan to the Guelph Mercury on November 10, 1999." Our current Minister of Health at the time said that the federal Liberal government, who by its own admission was cutting and slashing our health care dollars to the bone, was giving Ontario too much money. I thought it was a joke until I read those words myself, yet it gets better.

Mr. McGuinty, who is waging a partisan war during a catastrophic campaign for his own Liberal Party, at one time actually applauded the Conservative government's changes that just last year changed the equalization formula for all Canadians. At the time Mr. McGuinty said about Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister, he "made a deliberate effort to bring a principle-based approach to ... equalization and federal transfers.... We are very much in agreement with this approach." I'm not sure what has changed between Mr. McGuinty's interview with the Globe and Mail on June 15, 2007, and today, September 24, 2008, with the exception of two things: In 2008-09, Ontario is expected to receive \$13.9 billion in transfers, which is an increase of \$2.7 billion from the last Liberal government in 2006. Secondly, it is pretty obvious that there is a federal election on. Yes, there is a federal election on and the federal Liberals are having what could be considered the worst election campaign since Confederation. The big red machine is broken and it needs a lot of help. Enter Mr. McGuinty and this Hail Mary pass. As I mentioned, this resolution before us contains two flaws: one which is contained within the false assumption on EI, and the other which is omitted, the devastating impacts of a carbon tax on our economy.

First let's look at the EI assumption in this resolution, because I think it speaks volumes to the credibility of Mr. McGuinty in his "fairness" fight. While it is clear that Ontario deserves its fair share—and no one here in the opposition questions that—I think it is important that as a Legislature we make our case based on facts. Unfortunately, in their haste to join the federal election campaign of Stéphane Dion, the McGuinty Liberals have added a point not even relevant to the debate. As Mr. McGuinty surely must know, the employment insurance program is based per taxpayer, not by province. The EI program is designed to ensure that eligibility and duration of benefits depend on local unemployment insurance rates. That means those who have a strong economy and who value a strong economy also value fewer people drawing employment insurance. By Mr. McGuinty's logic and the Liberal Party of Ontario's, he would like to see more EI dollars coming into Ontario and thus he would value a higher unemployment rate in this province. This hardly sounds like someone championing Ontario. It hardly sounds like Mr. McGuinty is standing up for Ontario, but let Ontarians be the judge of that. I'm sure most Ontarians would take a strong, vibrant, job-filled economy over an unemployment line any day.

Not only does Mr. McGuinty miss the boat, so to speak, on the whole premise of EI and its program; he also doesn't factor in the fundamentals of why the program was designed. The program was designed to ensure that unemployed Canadians living in areas with similar rates of unemployment and job opportunities are treated the same, regardless of where they live. That's because it's a national program that benefits the taxpayers who pay into it, not the provinces. It works this way: EI provides income support to eligible unemployed Canadians wherever they live, and all contributors are entitled to benefits provided they meet qualifying and entitlement conditions. I tell that to the Liberals because I'm not sure if any of them actually ever had a member of their family on employment insurance. I've had lots, and I can tell you this: Anyone on employment insurance needs the money. What they don't need is the provincial government under Dalton McGuinty trying to take it away from them. As my leader, John Tory, pointed out today in the Sun, even if Ottawa were to rewrite its equalization rules, funds would return to the individual taxpayers, and rightfully so.

Now, the second issue which I raised in this resolution as tricky, because it omits Stéphane Dion's risky carbon tax plan—I know at least one of Mr. McGuinty's advisers has concerns with it too. Warren Kinsella said on May 15, 2008, "Forget about the fact that, with fuel prices having gone up a billion per cent in recent months, we already have a driver-detering carbon tax. Forget about the fact that it's unfair to people on fixed income (like the elderly) and the poor (who have to heat their homes and buy food, too), and is therefore profoundly un-Liberal." As recently as June 18, Kinsella said, "Sifting through the entrails leaked out to the media, was I wrong to oppose a carbon tax right now? No way. I'm for punishing polluters, not consumers. Cap-and-trade; not this."

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The risky carbon tax plan would be bad for Ontario. It should be in this resolution if Mr. McGuinty were truly serious about engaging the federal parties this election on fairness for Ontario in a non-partisan and objective way. The carbon tax is not fair to Ontario. The Ontario Taxpayers Federation recently completed a study of the risky carbon tax and its impacts on Ontario businesses. They found that the increased power bills alone will be more than the tax offsets they would receive.

If we were all to agree that the real problem facing Ontario is our economy and, on the one hand, we have our Premier giving up the fight and asking for more EI and, on the other, he is totally ignoring a risky carbon tax plan that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has said will cost Ontario businesses—what are Ontarians to expect? Ontario is a strong province, but Mr. McGuinty is taking our economic downturn laying down. If Mr. McGuinty was so concerned about Ontario, he would denounce the carbon tax and he would get to work to ensure Ontarians were on the assembly line, not the unemployment line.

At a time of economic uncertainty, Ontarians cannot afford to experiment with Stéphane Dion's risky carbon tax. Energy costs are arising in this province. How would an added tax be fair for our residents? Ontario is a global trading partner. How fair would it be for Ontario's international exporters when they begin to see their markets shrink when other countries retaliate for the increased tariffs they face when importing to Canada? By undermining the economy, Mr. Dion's plan will only recentralize money further in the hands of Ottawa, which will completely undermine the progress that Canada and Ontario have made and the changes with the federal transfers just last year.

Remember that change. We spoke about it earlier, the change in 2007 made by Stephen Harper and lauded by Dalton McGuinty when he said, and I again quote, that he "made a deliberate effort to bring a principle-based approach to ... equalization and federal transfers.... We are very much in agreement with this approach." Don't you think we should all know a little bit more about this risky carbon tax and all it will cost the province, including recentralizing those hard-fought funds that the provinces, including the province of Ontario, had decentralized into our hands just last year, in 2007?

Shouldn't it be a major issue in this debate? I think so. That is why I'll support an amendment to this resolution to incorporate the risky carbon tax. I think it's relevant to the debate before us, and I think the carbon tax legitimately needs to be examined in this Legislature for its potentially harmful effects to our economy.

I want to touch on something that our leader in the Legislature, Bob Runciman, brought up during his remarks, and that's the assumption on the \$20-billion gap. The figure \$20 billion—our research indicates that it is out of date. It is based on 2005 data, not 2010, when Ontario is to start receiving payments. I actually think it's pretty dismal for us to be debating Ontario becoming a have-not status.

I raised in the Legislature I think almost a year ago the fact that I grew up in a have-not province. I was born and raised and educated in Nova Scotia. Many members of my family worked seasonal and many of them had to draw EI. I came to Ottawa because Ontario was always the land of opportunity in this country. It was where everybody went. People would go to Toronto because that's where the jobs were. It was the economic engine of the country, and every Canadian knew it. Every Canadian was proud of Ontario because they knew that's where they could have a better life. I came here with 200 bucks in my pocket. My parents' friend drove me. He was actually a Liberal; he actually ran for the Liberal Party. But he was a nice man, George Manos. He drove me to Ottawa when he was visiting three of his four kids who moved here. Two hundred dollars in my pocket, and I worked hard. Now I own a home in Nepean. I have a little girl. She'll be born and raised and educated in Ontario, a province I'm very proud of but one that, when I came here, was at the height of its economic boom. It was the strongest in this country, and in five short years,

the folks opposite have taken us from first to worst. They've taken our spending from \$60 billion a year to \$30 billion in a short period of time, and now we're talking about Ontario becoming a have-not province. Well, I'll stand up for Ontario. I'll stand up and ask you why you're not doing more for our economy.

I'll support this resolution; there's no question about that. I have outlined two areas where I'm very concerned: I think that your assumptions on EI are faulty, and you're undermining the individual taxpayer in this country.

At the end of the day, my favourite prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, once said, "Let us be English or let us be French ... and above all let us be Canadians." That's a big challenge for the folks right across the way. They're not thinking about what this province means to Confederation.

I want to talk a little bit more about the so-called \$20-billion fiscal gap, because reducing the so-called \$20-billion fiscal gap would not increase provincial revenues unless Mr. McGuinty again increased provincial taxes. I guess I have a question: Why would anybody increase taxes to reduce them? It doesn't make sense, nor does the economic plan of the Liberal Party.

Mr. McGuinty and his colleagues are ignoring the truth. Ontario would not be receiving equalization payments if the economy was growing faster. GDP growth at just 2% would add \$1.5 billion to the provincial coffers. We need Ontario to remain the economic and key engine of this country, and we, on this side, will all fight for that.

As I conclude, I just want to make two points. There is a lot of unfairness in this province. I want to raise two examples.

Presently, Ontarians serving in the Canadian Armed Forces are forced to pay the health tax, even though the federal government pays the health care bill for those who are serving us so proudly in Canada's military. Mr. McGuinty should support our troops and eliminate the health tax for men and women serving our country abroad. That's fairness for Ontarians.

My colleague, Sylvia Jones, is a visionary. The registered disability savings plan brought in by my colleague's husband, Jim Flaherty—I'm very proud of the work Mr. Flaherty is doing for Ontario and for Canada. He brought in something for children in this country who are disabled, to help their parents. This Liberal government is clawing back that benefit. Mr. McGuinty is penalizing children in this province who are disabled. They do not receive the benefits that children in British Columbia or Newfoundland receive as a result of the work that Mr. Flaherty has done. And to date, the McGuinty Liberals have not jumped on the bandwagon with Sylvia Jones and her private member's bill to protect children in this province who are disabled. If they were really serious about fairness for Ontarians, they wouldn't even make Sylvia Jones debate her private member's bill; they would adopt it. They would just do it.

Unfairness is all around us. Again, there's no question; I'll support this. I'll also be urging my colleagues

opposite to support our amendment on the risky carbon tax, because I think that if they see it, especially those rural members, they'll know it will be detrimental for our agricultural communities if it is put in place, and I think you all know it. I think you all know too that that plan would be detrimental with respect to our small and medium-sized businesses. The folks who are working hard as importers and exporters are going to be penalized because of retaliation from other countries, who are going to see their tariffs increase.

In terms of employment insurance, I'm still trying to figure out why the province that should have every single young man and woman out working wants them on the unemployment line. We can do better than that, and we should do better than that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you for indulging me in this debate. I want to thank the Premier for bringing up this issue. I want to thank Bob Runciman, our leader of the official opposition, for what I thought was a very important speech.

I want to make one comment about that. I noticed all members of the official opposition and all members of the third party sat and listened with respect to our Premier as he made his comments. But throughout the vast majority of my remarks and throughout the entire remarks of the leader of the official opposition, we dealt with heckles and jeers. And if you can't call a spade a spade in this very important debate, I don't know why we're even having it.

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So on that, I conclude. I encourage all of our colleagues to do the right thing for Ontario—to do the right thing for Ontarians, who at the end of the day are all Canadians, and we should all be very proud of that.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I actually look forward to getting into this debate today in regard to how Ontario is treated or not treated on the part of the federal government when it comes to equalization payments or transfers or how much money we give over to the federal government. I just want to say at the outset of this that, generally, we support the motion. We, as New Democrats, have made the argument for a long time that in fact we needed to get a better deal from Ottawa.

But I do want to say that this is a bit of a four-trick pony. I've been around this place for almost 19 years now, and I've seen now four Premiers go down this road. First of all, it was—what's his name again? Bob Rae; that's right. He was Premier of Ontario between 1990 and 1995, and I remember that he was the first one who raised this issue and said, "We're having a problem with regard to the transfers from Ottawa and we're having a hard time trying to make ends meet in the time of this recession." And I remember the now Premier and the then member of the opposition, along with members from the Conservative Party, who used to get up and say, "Mr. Premier, you don't have a revenue problem. You've got a spending problem." That's what the argument used to be.

It was a total non-acceptance on the part of either the Liberal or Conservative Party of the day to say that maybe we should get into a debate about how we're treated by Ottawa. Instead, they took the political route and we paid the price for that.

I would argue that there are some things Mr. Rae did that he probably shouldn't have done that might have made things a little bit easier, and I guess that's just as well. He's now with the federal Liberal Party, and I hope he does to the federal Liberal Party what he did to mine. So I wish him well.

We then had another election and we had a guy by the name of Mike Harris. Mike Harris was converted on the way to the election of 1995. All of a sudden it wasn't a spending problem, it was a revenue problem. Mike Harris went down this four-trick pony as well. Mr. Harris tried the same strategy as the previous Premier and went down the road of trying to get a better deal from the federal government and making arguments as to why Ontario should get its fair share.

Then we got rid of that Premier and we got that other guy, Mr. Ernie Eves, who became the third Premier in my time in this place. And Mr. Eves stood in this House—I watched him on many occasions—making the arguments that the two previous Premiers had made. All of a sudden, he got converted as well on the road to Damascus, as they might say, because he accepted that it was no longer a spending problem, it was actually a revenue problem, and that the federal government should do something to remedy that.

At that time and the time of both Mr. Harris and Mr. Eves, and Mr. McGuinty as the leader of the opposition, they didn't accept that argument. I remember the debates well in this Legislature. I remember the press. I remember the discussions in the greater public with regard to what was going on. The Liberal Party of the day, the opposition, led by Mr. McGuinty, said, "Mr. Harris, Mr. Eves, we don't buy that. You're the government. You've got to fix these problems."

So we have another election, and I get to see the fourth Premier of Ontario since the time that I've been here. And it's amazing: He's converted. Upon the election of 2003 or whatever year it was, Mr. McGuinty did what he's famous for: He changed positions. People would call it a flip-flop, but I don't want to go that far. But he got converted as well, and all of a sudden he said, "We no longer have a spending problem. We've got a revenue problem. I'm embarking on a campaign, and the support of all political parties and I solicit the support of Ontarians and the media so that we can go after the federal government"—at the time Monsieur Chrétien, and eventually the federal government of Mr. Martin and now the government of Mr. Harper. He made the argument, "Poor us, Ontario. We don't have the money. We need to have all the help we can get from the federal government."

I just want to say to the members of this House and to the media and others who are watching that yes, indeed, I've always felt there is a problem, and we're going to

talk about that a little bit later, but this is the oldest trick in the book. This is the trick that has been used since the 1990s by Premiers of all political stripes who stand in the House and say, "I make the argument that Ottawa is not treating us well, and let's put the attention over there because it certainly can't be over here when it comes to finding the solutions to problems that we face in Ontario."

Do we have a problem in Ontario? Of course we do. Go to Hamilton; go to Niagara; go to Smooth Rock Falls; go to Ottawa. Go to many cities and towns and hamlets across this province, and you're going to find fairly high unemployment as compared to what it was five, 10, 15 or 20 years ago. As a result, there are fewer people working, so what happens? The less people work, the more they are in need of government services, unemployment insurance, and if that runs out, welfare and various government services, and they don't pay taxes, because they don't have revenue. They don't have an income. So it does put a strain on the province; there is no question.

But, in the end, the way to fix this problem is for us as a province to take our responsibility as well and do something to help those workers in Hamilton, to help those workers in Niagara at John Deere, to help those workers in Windsor and Toronto and Oshawa and Smooth Rock Falls and Opatatika and all communities in between, to help build the strong, robust economy that we need in this province.

I believe as a New Democrat—and I've said this in the launch of my leadership race—that you cannot build strong social programs without having a strong economy. I understand that as a social democrat. Social democrats around the world have understood that. Look at the Scandinavian countries and others. I also accept the argument that wealth creation is necessary if you're going to build the economy you need to be able to have the revenue to make the key investments in programs that we think are important in this province.

But for the provincial government to say that the way we do the key investments for the people in communities across Ontario is by going after the federal government in order to get more money, I think, takes away from the argument that maybe we have an obligation, that maybe we in this Legislature, as the government of Ontario, have something that we can do in order to try to fix the economy.

I've watched the Premier over the last four or five years that he's been in the top job in Ontario, and if I close my eyes and I listen, I sometimes find there's not a lot of difference between him and the Conservative government before him when it comes to one key issue, and that issue is, to what degree the provincial government of today is prepared to use the tools that it has at its disposal in order to assist the economy of Ontario.

For example, we in northern Ontario were the first to really start to feel the crunch in the economy. Forestry went through a huge downturn—yes, because of pressures from outside of Ontario in regard to what happened to the American economy, but when you look at how

Ontario has weathered the storm when it comes to its forestry industry compared to Manitoba, British Columbia or Quebec, we have done far worse than anybody else. You know why that is? The provincial government does not want to use the tools that it has in order to assist that sector of the economy.

I remember specifically bringing the mayors of Highway 11 into this Legislature, and eventually into a meeting with the Premier and the then-Minister of Natural Resources, to make the argument in Opatatika when Tembec was going to shut down the Excel mill, closing the only employer in town. They went in and said: "We need a couple of things from you. The crown, being the government through the Minister of Natural Resources, controls the fibre that's in our forests, and if Tembec closes down our mill, we need you to make that allocation of timber stay with the community. We need you to use the force that you have under law to effect the policy that when a mill shuts down, the trees and the fibre don't revert back to the company that closed down so they can take it somewhere else and process it. It needs to be tied to the community."

The Premier, at that meeting, and echoed by the Minister of Natural Resources—they weren't going to go there. They were going to allow the private sector to work this out and shake itself out so eventually the private sector would do the restructuring it needs in order to become the strong industry that they need to be to survive. I remember at that meeting, the mayor of Opatatika said, "But there's hardly going to be anybody standing." This is a very deep economic problem we're running into when it comes to housing starts in United States etc. Lumber prices are dropping. Demand is down. If you give that access to that fibre for those companies to keep for themselves, when we do get the rebound, there won't be five mills on Highway 11, between Constance Lake and Cochrane; there'll be one or maybe two. How does that help our economy and how does that help the workers in those communities?

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When I say I close my eyes and listen to Mr. McGuinty and he sounds no different than Mr. Eves or Mr. Harris, the point is that he is not prepared, along with his current Liberal government, to use the tools he has at his disposal in order to assist those sectors in the economy that need help. There are things we could be doing that would help us to weather the storm that may not avert every closure we have across the province, but I think they would avert many, and they would at least put us in a position to be able to recapture those markets that we had when the economy turns around.

So I say to the government across the way and to the Premier, you make the argument that maybe we need a better deal from Ottawa, but I say to you yes, that might be true, and let's go off and do that, but don't make that an excuse as to why you cannot do anything to assist people in this province in dealing with the issues that are affecting us in the economy here in Ontario. We need to use the tools at our disposal here in Ontario to be able to

assist those communities and those industries to basically grow, prosper and create the jobs that are necessary so that Ontarians can live the life they've always had in this province, which was a fairly good life because of the employment we've had here.

We have seen hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs go, basically disappear, and what's worse, pop up again in Mexico in some cases, or in China or India, and this government has done nothing to stop that. I'll give you another little example. When the mining industry was going through the big takeover era, where the giant called Inco in Sudbury and the other giant called Falconbridge—two large Canadian mining companies operating in Canada, in this case in Sudbury and Timmins, for my particular concern; they were basically being sought after to be bought out by foreign interests from Brazil and Switzerland—we New Democrats—Shelley Martel and myself and others—under the leadership of Howard Hampton said to the government of the day, "We cannot stop globalization and we cannot stop the ability of companies to buy each other up. That is something that happens within the private sector.

"We are not calling on the nationalization of industry the way George Bush is nationalizing the banks and the financial institutions." My God, I'm getting confused. The Republicans have become true leftists. I saw that Mr. Sarkozy—I wander away from my speech a little bit—the right-wing President of France, got up this morning and said, "Capitalism is bad," and that we need to regulate capitalism, and I watched Mr. Bush last week talking about, "We have to nationalize our financial institutions." I'm getting really confused about who the left is in this country and who the left is in this world. I just thought it was kind of interesting. Anyways, they finally adopted a social-democratic principle, which is that capitalism is good. But there need to be some rules of the road. If you don't have rules of the road and you don't use the tools at your disposal as a government, at the provincial or federal level, the economy is not going to do as well, workers are not going to get the deal they need and, I would argue, entrepreneurs are not going to do as well either.

So I say to the government across the way, sure, let's try to get a better deal from Ottawa, but what are we going to do, utilizing the tools that we have? So back to my point: When Falconbridge and Inco were purchased, we said, "Put some conditions on the sale, that head office jobs need to remain here in Ontario, and that the materials and goods that are being purchased by the mines in Timmins and in Sudbury, in various places in Ontario, need to be sourced to Ontario contractors and suppliers." The McGuinty government of the day and the Minister of Mines, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury, said no. What would have been wrong with our using the tools of government to say, "Well, certainly to God, if we have a natural resource in the ground, we Ontarians should benefit from that natural resource"? So use the public policy and the legal authority that we have in order to say, "Yes, we understand that globalization is here, we

understand that you can't stop corporations from gobbling each other up"—although we may not like it—"but at least set conditions and use the tools of government to try to protect local businesses and workers so that we don't end up in a situation that that will happen."

I put this on the record: When the prices of nickel and copper go down, those companies are not going to have any affinity for the communities of Sudbury or Timmins. They'll be making decisions out in Rio de Janeiro and Berne or Geneva, or wherever they might be in Switzerland, that will be to the detriment of our communities. Why? Because they're not from our communities. We need to find ways to encourage local ownership, or at least some control, of our natural resources.

So on this point I say to the government: You stand in this Legislature, as you've been standing over the last four or five years, making the argument that we need to get a better deal from Ottawa. I say that you have not done what you could do so that we can thrive here in Ontario and have the economy we need, so that we have the money to make the key investments that are necessary.

I look at an opportunity that came by at one point. The Harper government, when elected three years ago, instituted a reduction in the GST. They said they were going to reduce the GST by two points over a period of two or three years, whatever might be; that was their promise at the time. True to their word, the Conservatives got elected and reduced the GST by a total of two points.

The province of Ontario could have done something really simple to help with equalization and the amount of money we get back from Ottawa. We could have said, "All right, we'll shift that 2% to our PST." In other words, we would have increased our PST by a percentage equal to what the federal government reduced the GST. Ontario would have got roughly \$1 billion per percentage point above what we've got now and it would have been tax neutral. Ontarians would have had to pay no more—no new taxes—compared to what they were paying before.

In a funny kind of way, Stephen Harper, who did it for quite different reasons—you know, tax cuts aren't about trying to make the economy grow; they're about how you destroy government. The reality is that you have to have taxes and revenue from citizens and industry to have the dollars necessary so that you can provide infrastructure and do the things that are important for our society in how we care for each other through public education, public health care and others. When Mr. Harper said, "I'm cutting the GST," it wasn't about, "I want to prime the economy." He cut the GST by two points, and the economy went into the tank. We lost 200,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. So don't tell me—either the Conservatives or the Liberals, because they basically do the same thing on this—that tax cuts lead to prosperity.

I agree that you don't want to tax an economy when it's down. Increasing taxes is a difficult thing for any government to do, and I'm not advocating for a second that we raise taxes. But my point is that Harper gave you an opportunity. If you, as a provincial government, truly

believed that you could have done something to assist Ontarians, you could have said, "Thank you, Mr. Harper, we'll take that 1%," and the next time he reduced the GST, "Thank you, Mr. Harper, we'll take the next 1%." Ontario today would have \$2 billion that it doesn't have now just by doing that tax shift, not an extra penny being paid by the consumers of Ontario.

I would argue to people: You got a 2% GST reduction. Do you really see a difference in your lives? Are people running out and buying more cars, building more houses, buying more consumer goods because there's a 2% GST reduction? Absolutely not. People are struggling, trying to make ends meet. That's where they're at. They're trying to maintain their mortgage payments, their car payments and basically living the life they've got to live. They don't have the ability to do what the government says they're going to as a result of tax decreases.

Again, here is another example where the provincial government could have done something on its own to try to equalize the fairness argument between the money we pay to Confederation from Ontario and the money we get back from Ottawa. We could have very simply said we're going to transfer the GST points over to the PST—tax neutral, \$2 billion. We could have helped our municipalities. Imagine that.

In this federal election, I look at the same argument that was going on in the last provincial election: Municipalities are starving. They've hardly got the money necessary to make the kinds of improvements they need to, when it comes to infrastructure. Municipalities across this province have crumbling infrastructure, and it's becoming more and more expensive to maintain it. Imagine if the provincial government had said, "Okay, we'll take that 2% and put 50% or 75% of that directly back into municipal infrastructure." It would have gone to the point that Mr. Runciman made, and I agree with him, although they're the authors of some of this: Municipalities have as much of an argument about fairness in how they're being treated by their senior level of government as we, as a province, have with the federal government. Clearly, municipalities are feeling the crunch. They have seen, over the last 10 or 15 years, a reduction in transfers from the province of Ontario, an increase in the roles they have to take in services they never used to have to deliver or pay for, and an overall reduction in the amount of money they used to get for infrastructure.

So I say that if there's a fairness argument to be made by the provincial government to Ottawa, maybe you should deal with things in your own backyard. Maybe, by example we can set in Ontario about how we treat our transfer partners, called municipalities, more fairly, we can look at ourselves in the mirror and say, "Well, we're doing it for our municipalities. We're a senior level of government. We believe in the fairness argument. We will treat our municipalities more fairly. Therefore, Ottawa, please help us."

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But no, we choose not to use the tools of government to help the economy. We don't use those opportunities

afforded us by the federal government when they reduced the GST. We don't treat our municipalities fairly when it comes to overall transfers. So excuse me when I say, as I started, this is a four-trick pony. This is what I'm getting at: This is really a phony argument. You always start in your backyard, and you do what you can do to make things better, and yes, go solicit the help of others. It's a little bit like the person who's trying to build a house or do a renovation in a house: You can stand at the fence and yell over to your neighbour to ask him to come and help you over and over again, and the neighbour, he or she, may come and they might help you, but it isn't going to get done unless you do it yourself. So you've got to put your tools on, roll up your sleeves and start doing some work. That's my argument: Ontario has to do what it has to do in order to help itself fix some of the problems that we have here in this province and help treat our municipalities fairly.

I want to talk a little bit about equalization because I find this quite an interesting and fascinating subject. First of all, I want to say that in all of the briefings I've had where I've gone to sit down with people at the federal or provincial levels, and people in academia, to talk about equalization, this is what I'm first told: "Oh, it's really complicated." "Oh, yeah? Well, can you give me the Coles Notes version so I understand how equalization really works in this country?" The next line you get is, "Well, there's, like, eight people in Canada who really understand it."

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Oh.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm being deadly serious. Hardly anybody understands the details about how equalization works. The sad part is, of the eight people who understand equalization, one's missing, and we don't know where he's gone. We can't even talk to him.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Who are they?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's only eight. I'm dead serious about this. So the point is that the equalization system in Canada is very complex, some of it for good reasons, some of it for bad reasons. For example, under unemployment insurance, our government argues that under Mr. McGuinty Ontario is being shortchanged when it comes to EI. Yes, that's true. But under equalization there are also some reasons for that. We used to be not a have-not province. So a province that was have-not, for example, as in the Maritimes, they had an easier time qualifying for EI because we tried to assist those seasonal economies that they had around the fishery and around other industries. Equalization, in a very complex way, said that if you live in Newfoundland and you don't have full-time jobs the way that they have in Ontario, and you have a seasonal economy, we will give Newfoundland more money per capita for unemployment insurance than they do in Ontario, Quebec or other provinces that are doing well. To argue strictly that Ontario is getting less money because we're not being treated fairly is a little bit beyond the pale. I agree—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Oh, come on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, hang on a second. I agree we need a better deal on employment insurance, and I'll get

to that in a minute. The point I'm making here is, don't say that the full amount that we're short is because we're being treated unfairly. It's the concept of equalization that says that the have-not province will get more because they need it more than the have province. Equalization, as I say, is a very complex thing, so let me propose this: In the end, is Mr. McGuinty saying that maybe we need to redo equalization or rethink it?

As an Ontarian, I want to be able to assist other provinces that need my help. I just put it out there. I'm not advocating that we do it, but I just put it out there: Should the discussion be about how we change equalization? I don't know. It's just something I put out there. I just make the point that equalization is quite a complex issue to understand for the best of us. I would argue that nobody in this Legislature, including myself, understands it. I challenge any member of this assembly to go get a briefing on equalization, because I've done that a couple of times and they can't explain to me. They always start, "Oh, it's too complicated. How long do you have? Can you sit here for a month? I'll take out the charts and show you." I say, "Well, is there anybody here who really understands this?" "Well, I understand this part of it, and this guy understands this part of it." There are, like, eight people in Canada who understand it, and one of them is missing. That was actually said to me when I went to a briefing, and I thought, "Boy, that was hilarious."

I just say to the government, come on, give me a break. If we're making the argument that Ontario needs to get a fairer share, let's understand that equalization was built at a time when Ontario was the powerhouse of Canada and we had an economy that was robust, that was strong, that created lots of wealth, we had lots of taxation and we were assisting provinces at the time that were not doing so well, such as the Maritimes.

A little side story: I was at a leadership event last Thursday in Orillia—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, listen to this: This is a funny story. I was there and I was listening to these two guys from Newfoundland who were at this conference that I was speaking at. As the two Newfoundlanders were starting to walk away, one turned to the other and said, "Ay, boy, it's about time we leave this have-not province and go back to somewhere they're really doing well." I thought that was really hilarious, because at one time, as I was growing up, Newfoundland was the one that was having trouble, but now we see with offshore oil and others that Newfoundland is actually doing better.

My point is that provinces, as far as their economic ability to sustain themselves, have really changed over the years. And so I say, is the Premier making the argument that we need to make changes to the equalization formula? Maybe that would be an interesting debate; I don't know. But he has not said that. Instead, he makes the argument that we need fairness. Well, equalization payments—the equalization program was about fairness. The difference is that the Ontario economy is not doing as well, and because we're not doing as well, we are now

becoming benefactors of equalization; we're now a have-not province. We're in a very different situation than we were under the times of Robarts and others, when equalization was developed.

I say to the government across the way again, this is a four-trick pony. We've been down this road before. Do we really need to have the debate that we're having today? It probably doesn't hurt to talk about it and get some ideas out there, but at the end of the day, if we, as a Legislature and a province—if our government doesn't take the tools that it has at its disposal to assist the economy, to build the robust economy that we need to generate the taxes we need to make the key investments we need to make in this province, what are you there for? What's the purpose of having the government if the government does not want to utilize the tools that it has? So I just say, it's an interesting argument that the government has to make on that particular issue.

On the issue of EI, I just want to say the following. There was a time in Ontario, not only in Ontario but in Canada generally, that when a person became unemployed, they got 60% of their wages by way of EI. At the time it used to be called unemployment insurance; it was a different program altogether. That's been changed through successive Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa to where we're now down to 55%, and also we've changed the qualification rules around EI, as it's called, but as they used to call it, unemployment insurance.

I believe it was under the Chrétien government—it might have been under Martin, but I believe it was under Chrétien—that they made the qualification for unemployment insurance go from so many weeks of work to so many hours. That has really diminished the number of people who are able to qualify for unemployment insurance. One of things that we're now seeing in Ontario is that there are far fewer people able to qualify for unemployment insurance once they get their pink slip at the job site because we've changed the qualification rules around unemployment insurance.

That should be the debate that we're having with the federal government. We shouldn't be talking a fairness argument in regard to how much Ontario gets as compared to other provinces. We should be joining forces with other provinces to say, "Manitoba, Quebec, British Columbia and other provinces in between there and Newfoundland, are we prepared to sit down and go to the federal government in order to change the rules around the qualification for unemployment insurance?"

There was a huge surplus in unemployment insurance that was gobbled up by the previous Liberal administration and continued through this current Conservative administration under Mr. Harper. So I say the argument is not that of fairness with unemployment insurance. The argument is the rules by which workers cannot qualify to receive unemployment insurance, because of the changing of the rules.

Here's a scary stat: In 1990, 80% of workers in the province of Ontario who became unemployed qualified

for unemployment insurance. Guess how much it is today? Forty percent. We've gone from an 80% group of people who can qualify for unemployment insurance to 40% as a result of changing the rules. So is it a question that Ontario is not being treated fairly as compared to other provinces? Absolutely not. The worker in PEI, Quebec or British Columbia has the same problem. Why? Because Conservative and Liberal governments in Ottawa have changed the rules for qualifying for unemployment insurance. So that's where we ended up.

We ended up getting less on unemployment insurance because of the whole concept of equalization: You give more money to the have-not province. And the federal governments under the Liberals and Tories have changed the rules for qualification, so workers are having a harder time qualifying for unemployment insurance; hence, less money coming to the province of Ontario.

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So is it a fairness argument? I think not. I think it's a policy issue, and it comes back to my point that, in the end, we need to do what we have to do as a province to assist our workers by helping to build a stronger economy.

I'd just ask a rhetorical question to the Premier, and I know the Premier is going to be watching the 11 o'clock rerun tonight. He always stays up to watch what I have to say because he's keenly interested as a good colleague. Actually, we got elected in the same year, so we're kind of like brothers, right? Well, maybe not my brother, but that's a whole other story.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: That's a stretch.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was a bit of a stretch, but we come from the same class, as they say, the class of 1990.

But I ask you this: Is your strategy really working? Is Ontario any better off as a result of five years of basically going after the federal government and blaming them for our problems here in Ontario? I would argue marginally, a little bit, but not quite. It was a bit of a victory a couple of years ago, when they managed to get an extra couple of billion dollars as a result of a deal with the federal government. At the time Mr. McGuinty said, "Whoa, we finally got a great deal. This is wonderful, the best thing that ever happened since the time of Robarts." Remember him? He used to be Premier in this place once upon a time, back in the 1960s. The issue was going to go away because they had finally got this great deal, but he's back at it again. Why? Because Ontario is in a recession; it's not nice to say. The economy is having problems because of what's happening globally, because of what's happening in United States to a certain extent, but also because the decisions we've made in this province have not prepared us to weather the storm economically. If you look at other countries around the world, they are weathering the storm far better than Ontario. In fact, if you look at the provinces around this country, some of the other provinces are weathering the economic storm far better than us because they've positioned their industry and they've done the things they had to do as provincial governments to help weather that storm.

I look at Mr. Mauro, who shakes his head. I wouldn't be shaking my head coming from Thunder Bay, and I don't mean this as a partisan shot. Thunder Bay has got a terrible situation with regard to unemployment insurance—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—in regard to what's happened to joblessness. It's good to hear that he wants to enter the debate. I look forward to his opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Thunder Bay.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But I'm just saying that Thunder Bay is a good example that we have—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member from Timmins—James Bay, I'd like some order so that we can all hear the debate. Member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My point is that Thunder Bay has suffered what a lot of other communities in this province have suffered. We've seen it in Smooth Rock Falls, we've seen it in Opatatika and we've certainly seen it in Timmins. We see it in places like White River and Windsor; we see it all over. Basically, the manufacturing base has been going through huge, huge problems with regard to reductions of employment because of what's happening generally overall, and the forest industry has gone through the same. As a result, a lot of people have become unemployed.

We can point our finger all we want at the federal government. We can try to blame Stephen Harper, Jean Chrétien before him, Paul Martin after him or Jack Layton after the next election, but at the end of the day we need to do what we have to do as a government here in Ontario and as legislators to deal with the issues that are coming before us on a daily basis.

So I say to the government across the way, rather than throwing stones into somebody else's yard, maybe we should take a little more time to look at what we can do ourselves.

On a vu le jeu qui s'est amené avec ce qui s'est passé entre le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement provincial durant la dernière année. M. McGuinty avait décidé de continuer sa bataille avec le gouvernement fédéral faisant affaire avec son besoin de divertir envers le gouvernement fédéral l'attention sur le problème économique qu'on a en Ontario. Si on blâme le fédéral, si on dit que c'est de leur faute et que le gouvernement fédéral ne nous soutient pas bien autour les transferts à la province, on peut les blâmer lors de la prochaine élection.

Après cela, on a eu quoi? On a eu M. Flaherty, qui s'est promené autour de la province de l'Ontario en disant, « L'Ontario est un désastre; c'est une méchante place à investir ». Et les deux gouvernements ont commencé à se lancer la balle : le fédéral, qui blâme la province, et la province qui blâme le fédéral. Pourquoi? Parce qu'ils veulent divertir l'attention du monde pour ne

pas regarder le problème : regardez ici; ne regardez pas là.

Donc, c'est le plus vieux jeu qu'on voit dans cette confédération, où les gouvernements se lancent la balle pour se blâmer. D'une manière ou d'une autre, si on blâme l'autre, nous autres on ne prend pas la responsabilité. Comme Canadiens, on a besoin sérieusement de prendre notre responsabilité envers ce qu'on peut faire pour nous aider dans notre économie et ce qu'on peut faire pour nous aider à bâtir l'économie qui est nécessaire pour faire les investissements qu'on peut faire.

I want to end on this point, just as clearly as I can make it: I, as a New Democrat, agree that we need to always try to get a better deal from the federal government, and for that reason I'll vote for this motion.

As Ontarians, as municipalities, should we be trying to get a better deal? Of course. Municipal governments will do the same. They would vote for a motion like this in their municipal councils when it comes to how they're treated by the province of Ontario.

But I really want to warn the government. We've got to stop blaming the other guy for the problem. At one point, we need to accept that we as a government have tools at our disposal to help ourselves. We can do things to try to weather the storm in the economy that we're seeing as it unfolds over these troubling times in regard to what we're seeing in the market and what we've seen in the loss of jobs across this province. We need to utilize the tools of government. We cannot stand back and say it's the other guy's fault.

It is really interesting—and I said that earlier—to watch the Republican and Democratic candidates in the United States in the presidential election. I'm really having a problem trying to understand who's on the left over there, because all of a sudden they have started to understand—even George Bush has—that you cannot afford not to use the tools of government to protect your economy and do what needs to be done to assist your citizens.

We've seen, as John McCain would put it, the greed of Wall Street go to excesses, and as a result, Mr. Bush is now nationalizing some of the financial institutions in the United States. If somebody had told me even two months ago that George Bush would nationalize financial institutions in the United States, I would have said, "Never in a million years."

But even he understands—as much as I am diametrically opposed to 95% of what that man has done to the United States and the effect that he's had on the world, his own people, and even us as Canadians—that you have to use the tools of government; that government is a good thing; that government is there in order to be able to level out the playing field, as Mr. Mulroney used to say; that entrepreneurialism is good and capitalism is good, but there needs to be some rules of the road.

We need to utilize the tools that we have at our disposition to make sure that the excesses don't happen such as we have seen over the last little while, and that we take all possible opportunities availed to us by the

legislative authority that we have to make things better for Ontarians.

We could have done things around the auto sector. We have could have done things, and we can still do things, around the forestry and auto sectors and others to assist the Ontario economy and Ontarians. And to a degree, the government is doing some of that—not as much as I think needs to be done, but to a degree.

But if the government is not prepared to utilize all the tools at its disposal, I would just say, at the end of the day, it's a disservice to all of us here in this province.

With that, I look forward to the debate of other members.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up today in the House and speak to this issue. I find it interesting that a government which has proven its absolute limited ability to manage the finances of our province, this same government which has the honour of implementing the single largest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario, this same McGuinty government which has driven the economic engine that used to drive our nation into last place amongst our Confederation partners—this same McGuinty government now wants our federal partners to hand over more money, derived from the exact same taxpayers, into our coffers here in Ontario.

I would argue—and I am certain that I have the support of my caucus colleagues—that the McGuinty government have not proven to be effective financial managers with the money they currently soak out of the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario.

I believe in fairness. I mean, who doesn't believe in fairness? I believe in fairness—

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Pardon me? I believe in fairness for unemployed workers who currently receive \$4,630 less in benefits and supports than other Canadians in other provinces, but they would not be unemployed if Premier McGuinty and his government partners kept their factories open and reduced business taxes to make our province more competitive and more attractive to keeping businesses here, attracting new businesses—and investors to come back, once again, to Ontario.

1700

I believe in fairness for Ontario's public health care system, but before the Premier asks the federal government to bail him out, he should find out where the \$2.6 billion he receives from the health tax is going, because the people of Ontario can't see it.

I believe in fairness for our economy in southern Ontario. Unfortunately, it is under Dalton McGuinty's oppressive regulations and high taxation that our companies are packing up and leaving this province for more stable economies.

I believe in fairness for Ontario's infrastructure—funding that is being doled out hand over fist in Liberal-held ridings while the rest of Ontario turns into a giant pothole.

We believe in fairness for Ontarians as well. I think that Ontario deserves better, better than the McGuinty government is giving it. This resolution is dragging the good, proud name of Ontario through the mud. We have always been a proud province, a province that has given our fellow provinces a helping hand when they went through the same tough times or were not as blessed as we are with our natural resources, our entrepreneurial businesses and our absolutely fantastic workforce. Essentially, the Premier wants us to go begging, hat in hand, to our federal counterparts. Well, isn't that a lot easier than developing effective initiatives that work right here in our own province?

I liken this to a young adult who has just smashed up a brand new family car and is now demanding that I hand over the keys to yet another vehicle. I imagine my response would be to say, "You destroyed the first one you got, so why should I give you another one?"

Agreed, our economy is tied to the United States, which is experiencing a huge economic turndown. This is not a news flash, folks. We have known this for quite some time. In fact, on this side of the House, we've been talking about it for over a year, but it's falling on deaf ears.

The responsible thing to do, as a government, is to try to keep the businesses we have left right here in Ontario so that Ontarians continue to have jobs. What does the Ministry of Labour do? They walk in and shut down a plant that employed people and injected a lot of money into our economy, and forced them to move their business south of the border to the United States—no warning, nothing; just shut their doors and walked away.

How can this be allowed to happen in Ontario during these tough economic times? Clearly, the power has gone to the government's head. This government that prides itself on its compassion is running roughshod over Ontarians and their communities.

Guaranteed, Premier McGuinty isn't going to be invited to ring the bell at the Toronto Stock Exchange any time soon. What Premier McGuinty fails to realize is that it is not just about equalization. It is another E word; it is about the economy, an economy that he has spent one term pillaging and neglecting.

Stop blaming the feds, stop blaming the US economy, stop blaming the world markets, and stop blaming the fact that we're not oil-rich in this province. I think the blame needs to be placed on, and the responsibility needs to be taken by, the Premier himself. This is a problem which he has created: the high taxes that Ontarians now enjoy in this province, the skyrocketing energy prices and the overregulation that is driving businesses out of our province, out of our communities. Ontario has been slipping since Mr. McGuinty came to office. The proof is in the facts.

Last year, Mr. McGuinty called the new equalization formula a great success for Ontario. Well, what happened since 2007 to 2008? Now we have a handout. If McGuinty was so concerned about Ontario, he would denounce the carbon tax, a tax that would create even

more financial hardships for Ontario families. Where was Premier McGuinty when the federal Liberals cut transfers to Ontario? I don't remember hearing Mr. McGuinty being outraged. Oh, yes, he's stumping for his brother. I think it's great that the Premier won't be backing any particular horse in this federal election, or so he said, until I heard the end of his speech this afternoon. Well, that's great news. Once again the Premier and I are in agreement, if he follows through with that statement. I definitely want Ontarians to pick the candidate they know will best stand up for them, and I doubt the voters will be duped by the Liberals twice in two years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. David Ramsay: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this issue. I hear the varying views of the folks in this House, and especially those in the opposition, and I guess I would like to make a plea to my colleagues on the other side that this is really just about fairness.

The previous speaker talked about Ontario having to beg. That's not the case at all. I think the easiest way to explain what has happened here is that right across Canada, this wonderful country of ours—we're all citizens of this country, including those who live in Ontario. I think it's Ontario's position, it's this government's position and the position of Premier McGuinty that all Canadians should be treated fairly, all Canadians should be treated equally, so why shouldn't an unemployed worker in Ontario receive the same amount of assistance from her government as an unemployed worker in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec or Newfoundland? That's what we're talking about. Why would Ontario be penalized? The worker here in Ontario, when suddenly found unemployed, has the same challenges as a worker anywhere else in this country and deserves the same support from her government. We expect Ottawa to live up to that. Why are we short in Ontario, as Canadians, \$800 million in regard to health care transfers? Why shouldn't every Ontarian expect that their federal government would make sure every Canadian right across this country, regardless of what province they live in, receives their fair share of the taxpaying money that we all contribute, regardless of where we live in this country? Really it's a fairness issue, and that's what we're trying to say. That's the plea the Premier is making to the federal party leaders. I certainly hope they respond to his letter, because I think Ontarians need to know where all the parties stand in regard to this.

I'm not sure of the history of why this got out of whack. I guess it's because there was such a difference in the affluence in this country between provinces. Ontario was always known in the past as being the fat-cat province. We had all of the manufacturing, and most of the other provinces had to struggle. Ontario governments of the past and Ontarians saw themselves as Canadians first. We have always wanted to contribute to this country to make sure that regardless of where Canadians live in this country, we all receive the same services that we've all fought for over the years. We want people in

every province to have the same quality of health care, to have the same quality of the highways to drive upon. We've always fought for that and always wanted to, and want to continue to, contribute. What we now say, though, is that if the circumstances change in this country between have and have-not provinces, there should be a formula that's equitable, that treats all Canadians the same. Canadians living in this great province should deserve the very same treatment that Canadians living in other provinces receive.

We know that we have a huge infrastructure deficit across this country, and yet we receive about a billion dollars less in fair share of infrastructure investment in Ontario than we should be getting. We deserve that. This is one of the main economic engines, not the only one, of this country. If we're going to generate the tax dollars for this country and Canadians right across this country, we need to make sure that this economic engine is as strong as the economic engine in Alberta, or the economic engine that now is finally roaring at great speed in Newfoundland. We're very pleased that other parts of the country are now doing so well.

1710

We're looking at equity; we're looking at fairness. That's what this is about, and I would ask that the members of this Legislature put down their partisan swords in this case, if you will, because this is not a partisan issue. The Premier was very careful in crafting this resolution so that it would appeal to Ontarians of all political stripes, so that we can come together on this and say, "We need to be treated fairly. We need to be treated equally by our federal government." With that, it should be an issue in this federal campaign for the leaders of all of the parties to debate and discuss.

In the end, Ontarians are going to be choosing a great proportion of the people who will represent us in Parliament. Ontarians should have all of that information, and as is their right, they should be demanding from those candidates their views on the issue of fairness when it comes to this.

Mr. Paul Miller: New Democrats broadly support the aims of this motion to call on the federal government to make substantial changes to employment insurance, to fast-track health transfers and to create a federal economic development plan for southern Ontario.

We want to devote our debate time to employment insurance. It is an issue we've been focusing on from the very beginning. With so many jobs heading south under this government's watch, employment insurance benefits are even more important. We agree that unemployed Ontarians don't get their fair share, but that's not the whole story.

Major cuts to the EI program began to happen in the early 1990s. They started with the federal Conservatives, who reduced the maximum income replacement rate to 57%, down from 60%, with Bill C-113 in 1993. In 1994, the new federal Liberal government began its social security review. Out of that came radically altered legislation, the Employment Insurance Act. Some of the

changes included changing eligibility from weeks to hours, doubling the number of working hours required to qualify for EI, reducing the replacement rate to 55% and the benefit period—questionable—and reducing maximum insurable earnings.

A significant increase in the number of working hours required to qualify for EI has drastically changed who qualifies and who gets benefits. In 1990, 80% of unemployed workers were covered by EI; by 2004, coverage had fallen to 40%. Conservative and Liberal governments reduced benefits to the unemployed.

Not surprisingly, the changes have systematically and disproportionately affected women, new immigrants and others in precarious forms of employment. Forty per cent of women in the labour market work in a non-standard work arrangement, compared to 30% of men. The increase in the number of qualifying hours forces workers in non-standard work arrangements—disproportionately women—out of EI eligibility. Similar trends have been found in other socioeconomic groups where non-standard worker arrangements are common. A study in 2000 showed that 31% of unemployed non-immigrants received EI benefits, compared to only 23% of recent immigrants. The same study found that while 30% of non-immigrant women have collected EI benefits, only 19% of immigrant women benefited.

At the same time, average incomes are higher. In 2006, the median income in Ontario was \$67,000, second to Alberta. Because incomes are higher, the total premiums paid are higher. Ultimately, the combination of the regressive overhaul of the employment insurance system with higher average incomes is the reason Ontarians, as a whole, receive less EI benefits per capita than others. Ontario is home to a significantly higher number of new immigrants and other types of unstable work not covered by EI.

So yes, on unemployment, Ontario workers are being shortchanged by \$4,630 on a per capita basis, but it is the McGuinty government's federal cousins, carrying out EI changes started by the Conservatives, who are directly responsible for this. Premier McGuinty likes to blame Mr. Harper for this problem. Conservatives certainly share some responsibility, but it was his Ottawa counterparts—Jean Chrétien, Paul Martin, Stéphane Dion and company—who made it more difficult for unemployed workers—disproportionately women, immigrants and other marginalized workers—to qualify for employment insurance. Conservative and Liberal policies are the root cause of Ontario's EI woes.

So the real question now is, who should Ontarians trust to get the job done on employment insurance? Over 220,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since the McGuinty Liberals came to power. Ontarians know this government can't be trusted to protect their jobs. The Liberals can't be trusted to protect workers after they receive their layoff notices, either. This has been witnessed in Hamilton. Thousands and thousands of qualified people have been laid off, without jobs. The Conservatives are no better, watching auto plant after auto plant lay off

workers in southern Ontario, only to offer help on the eve of an election.

The McGuinty Liberals haven't tabled what they want out of EI reform—no mention of reducing the number of hours required to qualify or increasing the income replacement rate, just some gimmicky phrases here and there. The Premier's federal cousins aren't proposing any substantial reforms either. Nowhere in the federal Liberal platform is there any mention of reducing the number of working hours required to qualify; nowhere is there any mention of increasing the income replacement rate; nothing in the 76-page document to help out women and men struggling to build a better life for their families. In other words, even if the Liberal Party of Canada keeps its platform promises, it won't be making employment insurance fairer for Ontarians.

But why should we be surprised? It was the federal Liberals who made it difficult to qualify in the first place. If Mr. McGuinty is serious about supporting a party that believes in EI fairness, he should call on Ontarians to vote NDP. New Democrats have consistently said that EI is broken and needs to be repaired, and that it fails Ontario workers and their families. The only party to put a real proposal forward during the last federal election was the NDP. We proposed to reduce the number of working hours to 360, down from an upwards of 700 required now. We proposed setting a real target on EI coverage back to an 80% level, before the Liberals put the axe to the program in the mid-1990s.

There is no reason for voters to trust the Conservatives and Liberals on employment insurance. Federal Conservatives and Liberals broke it and, 15 years later, after a Conservative Prime Minister comes to power, provincial Liberals propose that it should be fixed. But their federal counterparts don't think it's important enough to put our proposals in their platform. It is a complicated story, with a simple message: The federal and provincial Liberals cannot be trusted to protect workers. They haven't protected jobs from leaving this province, and they haven't protected workers when the jobs leave.

It seems like the McGuinty government is a one-trick pony. Whenever there is a need to deflect blame or distract people's attention, the \$20-billion number gets tossed around in this House, every day. "It's the federal government's fault," they say. The real reason McGuinty is causing a distraction these days is the fact that 225,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs have been lost since the McGuinty government came to power. The unemployment rate is up, and many economists are predicting a recession. Is Ontario getting its fair share? No. But what's interesting is the timing of the campaign. After the Harper Conservatives' 2007 budget, there was a virtual love-in between Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Harper. Here's what members of the McGuinty government said:

"It was the Premier who took on this issue and it was the Premier who negotiated the greatest improvements to fiscal fairness since the era of Lester Pearson and John Robarts. In recent weeks, we have reached agreement on federal funding for the environment and for public

transit. That agreement is evidence that when the governments work together, we make real progress”—Greg Sorbara, budget speech, 2007.

“Since we like to lay claim to the fact that Ontario is both the heart of Canada and the economic engine of Canada, this is certainly ... a great day for Canada. It’s a great day for our environment and our economy. It’s a great day, as well, for Ontario’s fight for fairness”—Premier McGuinty, March 7, 2007.

Another quote from the Premier: “Absolutely nothing can cool the warm enthusiasm we all share today.”

After the Conservative budget, the McGuinty Liberals proclaimed victory. Finally, Ontarians would see the end of the endless fairness campaign. But when thousands of workers were given pink slips in towns across this province, the McGuinty government had to do something—something to show his government was on top of things. So what did he do? He went back to the good old fairness campaign; after all, it’s a proven distraction strategy that has worked in the past.

1720

So only about a year after proclaiming victory, celebrating the success of his campaign, calling it a great day for Canada, Mr. McGuinty launched a new campaign, a slick website, letter writing, a media blitz, a petition and a candidate information sheet. Distracting Ontarians from the economy is a lot of work. But Ontarians won’t be distracted by flashy websites and cheap gimmicks. They want the Premier to take real action considering the economy. He tries to convince Ontarians that these policies are working. But Ontarians’ day-to-day realities paint a far different picture.

The NDP has proposed three real actions this government could be taking to stem losses now: introduce a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to reward companies that create jobs; introduce a Buy Ontario program to ensure that billions of dollars spent on public infrastructure would employ Ontario workers—wouldn’t it be a shame to go forward with a \$50-billion transit plan and not keep investment in our province?—and lastly, introduce an industrial hydro rate like they have in Quebec and Manitoba to soften the impact of sky-high energy prices. The NDP has a real plan that can be implemented immediately to deal with the economic downturn, to provide a needed boost to Ontario’s economy. But the McGuinty government has rejected them all. He said no to concrete actions proven to work in other jurisdictions. Instead of real actions on the economy, real actions that improve the lives of Ontarians, we get a recycled fairness campaign.

I’ve sat and watched our economy crumble in the last few months. It’s worse in the States. I was just in Philadelphia and they are very frightened in the States, the way things are going. Ohio is going to be hit very hard; they’re a car manufacturing area too. It’s trickling over the border slowly, but it is definitely going to get worse before it gets better. I hope that this government sees the future unfolding in front of them and does something immediately, not when it’s said and done,

throwing bad money after bad money. We have to have sound investments. We have to have commitments from companies that they’re going to stay in Ontario, that they’re going to protect jobs, that they’re not going to get handouts and then leave, close shop and go back to where they come from. They have to invest in equipment, manpower and the communities they open up in. We’re looking for stability. We’re looking for investment. We’re looking for large manufacturers to come to Ontario.

I can say that in the last 20 years, we’ve probably lost 40 to 60 major manufacturers in the city of Hamilton—and not one has opened. At last count, we were approaching 20,000 jobs lost in the Hamilton region—20,000. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, what impact that has on a community of 500,000? For every one of those workers, it affects three other people. Twenty per cent of the people in my area are living below the poverty level. What do you tell these people? What’s their future?

You can retrain people—and that’s good. Training is good as long as they have jobs to go to in Ontario. But if you train them, and they go out west to the tar sands or they go east to the oil rigs or they go south to the States for jobs, how is that benefiting Ontario? We spend the money to train them and they go somewhere else to work. It doesn’t add up to me. We’ve got a long way to go. We’ve got to start attracting big business to this province. I know what they do in the southern states. They give them land for free. They help them set up. They don’t have to pay taxes for two or three years when they open up; they give incentives. Not just handing out taxpayers’ money; they give the businesses incentives to come to their communities. We don’t do a lot of that. We need to do more of it. You give them incentives and they’ll come. If you tax them into the ground, or you’re going to close them up, then they are going to leave.

What you need is incentives, and the incentives aren’t throwing money, hundreds of millions of dollars, at the auto industry and them saying, “Oh, sorry. We were going to hire those 500 people at Ford but now we’re not going to hire them,” and then three months later, after I got chastised by the government for saying, “Nothing’s happening,” what happened last week? Gee, another 500 on top of the 500 who didn’t get the jobs they were promised. Another 500 are on the street, and it’s getting worse and worse by the minute.

Until we take solid action, until we really go after this situation, we’re in big trouble. I think we’ve got to wake up and smell the roses.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I won’t take long. In fact, I’m happy that the member from Timmins–James Bay is back because actually I didn’t intend on speaking today, but most of what I have to say—it won’t take me long—is in regard to some of the comments that he put on the floor in regard to this fairness debate that is before us today.

A fair bit of the time being taken by the other two parties today is talking about this motion in the context of blaming the federal government and us using it to deflect

from the economic challenges that are occurring in Ontario today. It's quite the opposite. We are not trying to deflect away. We understand that there is a series of variables affecting the economy in Ontario just as they are affecting the economies of other areas in North America. It's not about shifting blame. It is, as so well put by David Ramsay not long ago, the member from Timiskaming, simply about addressing fairness. He listed very well the three key components—unemployment insurance, infrastructure and health care—that amount to a significant number of dollars that are not coming back to Ontario from the federal government. It's simply an issue of fairness.

As was said, the Premier went to great lengths to frame the motion that's before us today so that the issue could be addressed in as non-partisan a manner as possible. Unfortunately, that hasn't been the case today.

We heard the member from Timmins–James Bay in his remarks once again talk about tools at the disposal of the provincial government in regard to the forest industry and continue to say, as they have been for three or four years, that other provinces are doing much better than Ontario in this particular sector. I've listened to this language from that particular party for three or four years. When they first started making this argument, the comparator they used was the province of Quebec. At that time, their leader would stand up on an almost daily basis and tell us that what we needed to fix the forest industry in Ontario was a lower energy rate. He would often compare Ontario to Quebec because Quebec does have lower energy prices. As we all know, Quebec has lower energy prices because they are very fortunate. Topographically, most of their energy is produced hydraulically. It's a cheaper way to produce energy. They don't rely on nuclear or other forms; they don't have that capital cost billed. So they have been fortunate topographically to be able to provide energy historically in that province for quite a long time at a very cheap rate.

That is true, but what is not true, and where the argument goes off the rails—in the province of Quebec the forest industry since 2003 or 2001, as far back as you want to go, is not doing better than the forest industry in Ontario. In fact, if you compare the job numbers, the job losses and the number of mill closures in Quebec, where the energy rates are lower, you'll find that there are more closures and more job losses in the province of Quebec in the forest products sector than there are in Ontario.

Now, I think somewhere along the line, this fact occurred to the leader of the third party. I'll take the member from Timmins–James Bay at his word that when he stood today and made these comments that he truly believed them to be true, but they're not. I think his leader discovered this somewhere along the line about a year or two ago. If you're interested and you check the Hansard, you will see that somewhere along the line he stopped using Quebec as his comparator when he discussed the forest products industry relative to what's going on in Ontario. I think it occurred to him and he became aware of the fact that there are significant job

losses in that sector in Quebec and that there are as many or more plant closures in Quebec. So to stand and suggest that there are tools at the disposal of Ontario that we're not using relative to what's going on in Quebec is just simply not the case.

When they discovered that Quebec could no longer be used as the comparator, the shift came to where? They were going to start to compare Ontario's forest products sector to Manitoba's, a ridiculous comparison; an absolutely ridiculous comparison to compare a sector the size of what exists in Ontario to what goes on in Manitoba. So that's where it shifts, and this is what they've tried to do now to make it look as if we haven't brought significant resource to the table to support the forest products industry in Ontario, when it's quite the opposite.

1730

On the energy piece, we have brought in a significant program to support the industry, and there are success stories in northwestern Ontario. We all understand and empathize with the people who have lost their jobs, who have worked in those mills and pulp and paper mills and sawmills for 20 and 30 years, 40 years. We live it every day in our communities. We know how difficult it has been on those families.

But we have brought resource to this sector that has mitigated the damage. You can go to Terrace Bay, where a pulp and paper mill is open today, reopened as a result of a program that we brought to the table. It's employing 450 people. You can go to Fort Frances, in the riding of the leader of the third party, where we gave them a \$22-million grant that has led to an \$85-million cogeneration project that stabilized not only a mill but an entire town. I've met their mayor and councillors at AMO conferences as long as one or two years ago, and they continually thank our government for the programs we've brought to the table in the forest industry.

Unfortunately, not even the leader of the third party, when a mill in his own community has probably been saved from closure by one of our programs, that's stabilized an entire town—do you even hear him stand up once and say maybe there was something good that went on?

We need to separate the forest industry into two halves. There's the pulp and paper side and there's the sawmilling side. But they don't do that when they talk about the forest industry; they lump it all together. Anybody who has paid any attention to this issue knows that they're very different. People know that on the sawmilling side, there's very little impact from the provincial government on this particular industry. They know that it is not energy intensive, and if they're telling you that it is, they're being disingenuous, because it's not. They should know and understand that the factors that affect the sawmilling side are more of a federal nature, although we have still brought resource to the table to help them. The softwood lumber agreement is the primary thing affecting that industry, the primary thing, as is the collapse of the housing market in the United States and the price of the Canadian dollar. People know this, but

they pretend that it doesn't exist. They want to ignore it and perpetuate this myth that in Ontario the collapse of the forest industry is all the fault of the provincial government.

We've got candidates who run in the northwest in a provincial election and then next they run in a federal election. Then they run provincial and then they run federal and, depending on what election they're running in, it's that particular government's fault. When they're in a provincial election, it's the provincial government's fault; when they're in a federal election, it's the federal government's fault.

The fact of the matter is, I agree with them on the fed side. The feds haven't brought anything to the table. The feds have not brought anything to the table, not a penny. So we've got a mill right now—it's in the clippings today. You can open the paper and you'll find it today. This particular mill, to which we brought \$15 million or \$16 million of resource in our program, it's there. They're still feeling a challenge and they say today, five, seven years later, they haven't received a penny of support from the federal government. So they want to ignore these. They want to pretend and suggest that there are challenges there.

I should mention one of our programs, the roads uplifting program. In about 1993, over three or four years \$225 million was a particular cost that was downloaded onto the forest industry by the New Democratic Party. We have brought back that \$225 million on that particular piece. It's a program that came into being about three years ago.

So it's just a bit rich to listen not just today but for three or four years on this particular topic, this continuing misrepresentation of what's gone on with forestry in the province of Ontario. It's wrong.

But back to the point: We have a motion before us today that has been appropriately stated by people on our side of the House, which we'd hoped to have presented and debated in a non-partisan manner. Unfortunately, that didn't happen yet today. There's still an opportunity. There's still an opportunity, and I think you have time—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think you still have some time left on the clock where you can express your support for the motion that's before us today, and perhaps you will when you stand up and vote and support the debate. In fact, I think I did hear the member state in his remarks that they were supportive of the intent of the motion, so I take him at his word and I thank him for that.

At the end of the day, that's simply what this is all about: It's not about shifting blame; it's about getting about a billion dollars in infrastructure annually that doesn't come to Ontario; it's about getting about \$800 million annually in health care that doesn't come to Ontario; and it's about getting about \$4,600 per unemployed worker that doesn't come to Ontario. The historical arrangements really are irrelevant to me on the unemployment side. If you're unemployed in Ontario and you can't get a job, does it matter to you that you're in an

economy that historically has performed better? If you're laid off for six months or a year, does it matter to you now that you're going to get \$4,600 less? Of course it doesn't.

Just a short time ago, we contributed \$1.1 billion, through the Investing in Ontario Act, to municipalities in the province of Ontario for infrastructure, and we've got another billion out there that we're saying on an annual basis we don't get from the federal government—\$1.1 billion. In my communities, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, that meant somewhere on an order of magnitude of about \$12 million or \$13 million. In the city of Thunder Bay, \$1 million roughly equates to 1% on the residential property tax base. We brought about \$13 million to Thunder Bay and district through that one time. This is what we're talking about. This is what we can do. And I know the members opposite benefited from those investments as well.

We saw when we came to office in 2003 that there were three deficits: fiscal, infrastructure and service. We've gone a long way to trying to address the infrastructure deficit—another billion dollars on an annual basis from the federal government. Whatever governments are responsible for the historical arrangements that we have to work with today, to me, are relatively unimportant. What we have before us is here today. We've got to deal with it. Whether it was a Conservative federal government or a Liberal federal government, we've got a situation today that we need to deal with. We're trying to get some fairness for Ontario.

As has been stated by other speakers, one hundred and—what's the number? How many federal MPs are elected in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's 103.

Mr. Bill Mauro: So 103 or 106 federal MPs will be elected on October 14 in the province of Ontario. I think it behooves all of us to do what we can to see that they are paying attention to this particular debate, and hopefully we will see a different result from whatever government comes into power on October 14.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to take a few minutes today and make a few comments. I think, as many speakers have indicated, obviously a principle of fairness is one that we would all agree with, and, as always, it's a question of the details. But I want to look also from the point of view that there is only one taxpayer, and I think when you look at it from the point of view of the individual taxpayer, yes, those individual taxpayers want fairness as well. They also want to have confidence, in whatever level of government, that they are providing the kind of leadership that they believe is appropriate. One of the things that I hear when people listen to members of different levels of government talk about each other is the fact that it appears like there's just a big whining noise. That's where people think that they can off-load their own responsibility and talk about what they think someone else should be doing. So when I listen to those individuals in my riding and in the communities at large,

it seems to me that they recognize that decisions that all levels of government make are complex and that they are costly. But what they really want to know is that people they elect are operating in a responsible and fair way.

I think that's one of the problems that, when we get into the kinds of analysis and numbers that many of the members who have spoken today talk about—obviously they're very complex. One of the former speakers talked about there being only eight people in Canada who understand these complex relationships, and I think that is probably pretty close to the truth.

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But I think it's more important that we be able to demonstrate what, frankly, people are looking for. They want those they elect to be good managers. They want people to be talking about ideas and a prosperity agenda. They want to know that people have a vision of looking at an educated workforce, of dealing with shortages in particular trades, of meeting the challenge of apprenticeship and providing the appropriate funding for community colleges to make sure that their children and grandchildren are able to be part of that educated workforce. They want a competitive tax structure. They understand that we are in a global economy. They know that that is a key to making sure there are jobs here. They want to make sure that there's a regulatory environment that is balanced, that provides safety, but also that it isn't a burden, that it isn't something that is more than people can cope with. So it's in the context, then, of being good managers who spend wisely, act prudently and look for the ways by which they can stand up for Ontario. But that means that you're designing programs from the perspective of the individual citizen, not the silos of government; and it means that you do more than complain about the other levels of government.

I think it's those concepts that, frankly, people are looking for. When they make their decisions to vote, they're looking for someone who is going to understand where they are coming from and what those particular issues are that they value. So I think that, while fairness is something that obviously we all agree with, we also have to accept the fact that we can't be accused of whining.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to comment on this motion put forward by the government. Again, my colleagues from Hamilton East—

Stoney Creek and from Timmins–James Bay both did a great job in terms of outlining some of the issues. But I have to tell you that it sends me into fits of giggles when I look at a government that talks about fairness when they turn around and don't know how to apply that concept in their own backyard.

I know that there are concerns with the federal government, and certainly we would agree that this issue needs to be raised, but look at what the provincial government is doing to municipalities. Talk about lack of fairness. Holy smokes, the previous government downloaded all kinds of stuff onto the municipal level, and here, with this government, after five years, very little of that has been addressed. In fact, there are still considerable problems in terms of the fiscal relationship that exists between the province and municipalities, everything from court security costs to Ontario Works, particularly the administration costs, and other things.

But I have to say, the other thing that I found quite amusing—other than the glass house syndrome, where the government is living in a glass house and they're throwing stones at another level of government, another order of government—was hearing the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan talking about how he doesn't want to go and blame other governments from other decades and decisions they've made, and then he turned around and blamed another government for a decision that they made. So it's kind of interesting how they talk one talk but their actions are quite a bit different in terms of the way they deal with their own responsibilities as a government.

I believe I'm out of time, and there's not much more to say except that, living in a glass house, you can't throw stones. Let's get this government to stop distracting or trying to distract the people of Ontario and get down to business not only in terms of fiscal relationships with another order of government called the municipal level, but also deal with the economy, deal with the job loss and deal with the growing poverty in the province of Ontario.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I don't have my pocket watch with me, but I'm sure that if I did, it would say that it is 5:45 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, September 25.

The House adjourned at 1745.

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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
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Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
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Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
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Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
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