



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 8 October 2008

Mercredi 8 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES SERVICES
À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et apportant des modifications à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 103, the Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, which I introduced on September 29. This bill brings together two existing pieces of legislation that deal with Ontario's youth correctional system: the Child and Family Services Act, which governs youths between the ages of 12 and 15 at the time of the offence, and the Ministry of Correctional Services Act, which covers young people aged 16 and 17 when an offence is committed.

The amendment that our government introduced last week will harmonize the two pieces of legislation to create a single legislative framework for all youth in conflict with the law between the ages of 12 and 17 at the time of the offence. This new framework will complete our efforts to create a new youth correctional system devoted exclusively to the needs of youth in conflict with the law, a justice system that offers secure and open custody, as well as a wide range of community-based alternatives to custodial sentences, as outlined in the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The integration of youth justice has been a long time coming. In fact, it was started under the previous government, who knew that the integration of youth justice was needed. Although this legislation is primarily focused on

secure detention and custody, youth in conflict with the law require supports to help them succeed in life. We have in place a range of interventions to respond appropriately to their charges. For the most serious offenders, we have secure custody facilities. We also have open custody and alternatives to custody programs in many communities.

Since the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, we have experienced a steady decline in the use of open custody facilities. Last year, fewer than half of our open custody beds were used. As a result, we have reduced these unused beds and we're reinvesting the tax dollars saved and putting them back into improving outcomes for youth.

These proposed amendments are part of the government's commitment to build stronger, safer communities by holding youth in conflict with the law accountable for their actions, while at the same time providing the support they need to help them make better choices and lessen the likelihood that they will reoffend, because every time we prevent a reoffence, we prevent a crime, and every time we turn a young person from a path that leads to a life of crime to a path that leads to productive employment, we've strengthened our economy and our society.

Some may argue that these amendments, if passed, will make young people, particularly older youth, less accountable for their actions while committing offences. But placing older youth with younger youth under one act means that we are holding these kids accountable for their actions under one piece of transparent and consistent legislation.

Our proposed legislation provides decision-makers with greater discretion in determining the level of detention for youth in custody who are facing new charges. This is consistent with the federal proposal to broaden the possibility of detention for a young person who represents a danger to the public. It also provides additional mechanisms to ensure that youth who are in secure custody cannot harm themselves or others. To do this, we will give service providers additional powers to deal with contraband items and to protect all staff and clients at youth justice facilities.

This government takes the issue of crime very seriously. When serious crimes are committed and the safety of a community is at risk, we will not hesitate to act to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario. After studying this issue of youth crime and seeking the advice of experts in this field, we know that youth in custody between the ages of 12 and 17 have very different

needs from adults in custody. If passed, this proposed legislation will complete our efforts to create a dedicated, fully integrated justice system that is responsive to the needs of both younger and older youth who are in conflict with the law.

This legislation, if passed, will ensure that youth aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence will no longer be held in the same secure correctional institutions as adults. This is important, because it means that youth in custody will not come into contact with adults convicted of serious crimes. It will ensure that these young people between the ages of 12 and 17 have access and supports based on their specific needs. It will also ensure that they receive the programs and services they need in a setting that's appropriate for their age group. This, the evidence tells us, is one of the keys to stopping young people from becoming repeat offenders and beginning the journey toward making the right choices.

For this reason, our government has committed to removing all young people in custody between the ages of 12 and 17 from adult correctional institutions by April 1, 2009. I want to tell all members of this House that we are on schedule to meet that goal. To achieve it, we're building or expanding new and existing youth justice centres in a number of communities across the province. This is on top of the 20 secure youth-only facilities located throughout the province. These new centres will offer state-of-the-art facilities that will include on-site education and rehabilitation programs.

These programs are crucial, because they offer opportunities for young people to learn new skills, develop their minds and bodies, and become productive members of our society. The first of these youth justice centres opened in Sault Ste. Marie in July. Named after a local police officer who was killed in the line of duty, the Donald Doucet Youth Centre offers education, training and the promise of a new start for 16 youth in custody. More than 130 construction jobs were created at this centre during the building phase, and 30 new provincial government jobs have been created for staff and support workers at the centre.

Additional youth justice centres are being built in Brampton, Thunder Bay and Fort Frances. All of them are scheduled to open in early 2009. As well, the existing youth justice facility in Ottawa is being expanded and will also open in the first few months of next year.

These buildings are about much more than bricks and mortar, the number of jobs created and the number of young people in custody. They are, quite simply, about hope—hope for a brighter future for young people who have made mistakes and who are paying the price for their misdeeds. But through training, counselling and guidance, these centres offer youth in conflict with the law the chance to take the first step toward a brighter future for themselves and their families.

0910

By locating these centres in communities across the province, including northern Ontario, we can keep these young people closer to their homes and their families.

Having family members close gives young people valuable support while they are in custody and provides them with a smoother transition back into the community when they have completed their sentence. That is an important consideration when it comes to helping prevent youth from the possibility of slipping back into the patterns that originally brought them into conflict with the law.

As well, our government has made special provisions to help meet the needs of aboriginal youth. The new Fort Frances facility is being designed specifically to meet the needs of these young people and will be operated by an aboriginal service provider, the Fort Frances Area Tribal Chiefs. This facility will be the first of its kind in Canada dedicated to aboriginal young people in conflict with the law. It will provide each of the 12 young aboriginal men and women housed there with their own case manager, who will be responsible for getting them the support and treatment they need.

In addition to training and counselling services, the aboriginal youth will be given opportunities to learn more about their culture and to practise spiritual beliefs that will help them connect with that culture. Our government strongly believes that by providing aboriginal youth with the tools they need to make the right choices, they can be set upon the right path to achieve their goals in life.

All of Ontario's youth deserve the opportunity to achieve their ambitions and take advantage of everything our province and our country have to offer them. That has been our government's objective since we have assumed office. That's why we've implemented the new Ontario child benefit for low-income families and offered increased support for families that have children with special needs. We've also introduced the youth opportunities strategy, to help provide young people in underserved communities with training and skills to compete in today's challenging international job market. When youth find themselves in conflict with the law, we have in place an alternatives-to-custody program, which provides support, counselling and training to help them reorient their lives and get back on track.

Some young people will make the wrong choices, and when they do, we will do everything in our power to ensure that they face the consequences of their actions. For those who pose a threat to society, we take action to keep our communities safe. But for those who show potential, we offer support and guidance to help them make a fresh start and begin becoming productive members of our society—that is our commitment.

These proposed amendments to the CFSA, if passed, represent the final steps in achieving our objectives. For these reasons, and for the reasons that will be outlined by my colleagues, I urge all members of the House to join me in supporting these proposed amendments.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member talks about this wonderful bill she is bringing in. But this wonderful bill is not going to put one more police officer on the street,

in a summer and a fall when every week, if not every day, we open the newspaper and find that somebody else has been shot in Toronto. These shootings don't take place in isolated areas. They don't take place in areas we have come to traditionally think of as crime-ridden areas—I won't mention names, but we are aware of what those areas are. These shootings are taking place all over the city now. This bill is not going to put one more police officer on the street; it's not going to prevent one crime in Toronto.

At a time when we have huge economic challenges in this country, this government will be spending a tremendous amount of money. When crime rates traditionally rise, when we have economic difficulties—they've finally admitted that they actually have an economic problem in this province, and we're having a special debate on it now, all of a sudden. We called for this debate in early June this year, and they've finally admitted that there is a difficulty, there is a problem in Ontario with the economy, with their budget and with their precious five-point plan, which hasn't worked, isn't going to work and is far too little too late.

It's disappointing to see this government wandering down this road. Certainly, trying to protect youth from youth crime is an important start to prevent crime in adults, because of course adult crime comes out of youth crime. But to move in this direction at this particular time with a large expenditure of money and not one more police officer—I just think this government is moving in the wrong direction.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I listened very carefully to the whole 15-minute leadoff speech of the minister regarding this new bill, Bill 103. One of the things that the minister spoke about was the fact that she believes that this bill is actually going to provide hope and opportunity for young people who have found themselves on the wrong side of the law. I have to tell you, when I read this bill—it does nothing of the sort. There's nothing at all in this bill that says it's going to help young people to make better choices in their lives. There's nothing in this bill that talks about how we're going to change a system that puts young people on the wrong side of the law in the first place.

The minister knows very well, if she has actually read any of the reports and done any of the hard work in terms of looking at what leads to crime in young people, that young people who don't have an opportunity for a future often end up on the wrong side of the law. We know that young people who don't have jobs often find other ways to get money. We know that young people who have addiction problems are more likely than not to be the ones who get into trouble with the police. We don't have very much service in this province when it comes to addictions, so of course, without services to help with these addictions that young people are facing, guess what? They end up in trouble with the law. We have a mental health system in the province of Ontario that

doesn't serve the needs of young children, and as they age with mental health problems not being taken care of, guess what happens? They get in trouble with the law. We have young people in this province who are living in desperate, desperate poverty, whose parents are unable to hold down a job because the jobs don't exist, who live in substandard and inadequate housing, who go to school hungry, who can't get a decent education. Those are the kids who—guess what?—end up on the wrong side of the law. So I'm very sorry to say that Bill 103 does nothing of what this minister claims in her initial remarks.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm very pleased to be able to take a couple of minutes and comment both on the minister's speech and Bill 103. I'm pleased to stand in support of this legislation being brought forward. Not every piece of legislation can fix all of the ills. Pieces of legislation are intended to build on what's currently in place. They're intended to refine, in some cases, existing standards, existing situations. I think Bill 103 does exactly those kinds of things.

I think the opportunities to create new, secure facilities for those young people who need them allow those young people who currently might be in a youth unit within an adult facility to be in an environment that's focused on youth needs, which is an important part of the rehabilitative capacity that's needed in the province for young people who have found themselves to have gone astray.

I think that bringing together legislation so that young people who are of similar ages, less than adult age, is being managed in a legislative capacity under one ministry's legislation, as opposed to multiple ministries', is a good and progressive way in which to build on the needs of addressing and supporting youth who find themselves in these kinds of environments.

I'm pleased to be able to stand and support the bill as presented. As I say, it builds on good work that is currently being done by the children and youth services ministry, it builds on the investments that are being made in the province on behalf of young people, and I think it will add, in an additive way, to a good legislative framework that we need to address the concerns and problems that young people find themselves in.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a moment to respond to the Minister of Children and Youth Services with respect to her presentation this morning on Bill 103, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act and to make amendments to other Acts. The minister's comments were brief and she did not take her full time. Her parliamentary assistant didn't participate in the debate. But I know we're at second reading and I know there will be lots of opportunities for other members to offer their comments on this, and I'm certainly looking forward to the comments of our critic in this functional area, the member for York-Simcoe, because she has a lot to add to the debate.

0920

We know that we're entering a very difficult economic period. We know that the government wants to commence debate on the challenges we're facing, and there is a motion that stands in the Premier's name that has been tabled that we're going to be debating very soon, talking about changes to the government's financial plan or fiscal plan. We're possibly taking about reduced spending, we're possibly talking about reallocating spending; perhaps the government is contemplating higher taxes, perhaps the government is contemplating a deficit—we don't know yet; the Minister of Finance has not been fully forthcoming. But I would ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services, how much is this bill going to cost? How much is it going to cost to implement it? Is she certain that this is not going to be part of the Treasurer's fiscal reduction plan when he brings forward his financial statement? Certainly these are questions that need to be asked.

I listened to the minister in her comments and I didn't hear from her any plan to reduce youth crime. I didn't hear from her any targets or time frames for reducing youth crime. I would ask her if she has any of those targets and time frames in mind, in her two-minute response—and further, I would ask whether or not this bill is going to be referred to a standing committee of the Legislature so there would be more opportunities for public discussion and public input on this particular issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the members from Halton, Hamilton Centre, Pickering–Scarborough East and Wellington–Halton Hills for their comments, and I look forward to the debate on this issue. I think that all of us in this House are committed to reducing youth crime, committed to reducing crime in general.

Let's be really clear about what this bill is and what this bill isn't. This bill is largely administrative in nature. It brings together two acts so that all young people aged 12 to 17 at the time of the offence are governed under one act. That work is already under way and it is the final piece in what is a transformation of the youth justice system in this province. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills asked, will it reduce crime? The answer is, our program absolutely is committed to reducing crime. That's what this is all about.

The evidence is very clear—and I have taken the time to review it—that with the right support, kids who commit crimes when they are young can move on into a full, productive life in our society. Our youth justice programs are built on the evidence that tells us with the right supports we can reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend. That prevents crime. Every time you prevent a crime, because a youth has been given a chance to get on with his or her life, you are making a safer society. That is what we are all committed to doing.

We are building on what we have already done. This piece of legislation in and of itself is largely adminis-

trative, but it is an important piece because it pulls it all together. It is the final step in the transformation of our youth justice system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like to remind members that questions and comments are not intended to enter into a new debate on a different subject. Questions and comments are specifically meant to be made to the speaker that had the floor at that time, and we would appreciate it if you kept them that way.

Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the discussion on Bill 103. There's very little wrong with this bill because there is, as the minister has even alluded to, very little in the bill. In fact, it could be referred to as a house-keeping bill, meeting the deadlines that had already been established and simply moving provisions around. Older young offenders will no longer be under a particular ministry; they will then move to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The government's press release talks about the government's plans to make communities safer. This bill has no connection to that worthy goal. Communities do need to be made safer, and if you had really wanted to, you could have introduced a bill that would have helped communities.

Youth crime is a very serious problem in Ontario. You see it every day on the news, more and more frequently. Youth are killing innocent people in this province, and so many of the victims of youth crime are, in fact, other young people. We have all read the stories of what the real problems are with youth crime in Ontario. Here are just a couple of tragic stories in the last few weeks.

From the St. Catharines Standard of October 4:

"Two years ago, a young man recounted to a St. Catharines jury how he laid in wait to kill.

"He hid in Bruce Firman's garage in the north end of the city until the 72-year-old retired real estate agent arrived home on his bicycle. When Firman entered, the killer, then 17, held a pipe wrench with two hands like a baseball bat and swung at the man's head.

"The teen beat Firman on the ground until he stopped breathing.

"He received the maximum custodial sentence a youth can get for first-degree murder: six years. Although a judge ruled in February 2003 that the teen should be tried as an adult, an appeal reversed the decision.

"Now, he's out of jail."

Other cases from the same paper:

"A 14-year-old girl was charged with second-degree murder for smothering toddler Matthew Reid in a Welland foster home." As a result of that, she was sentenced to four years in custody and three years in supervised community living.

"In Niagara Falls, a 17-year-old girl helped kick 58-year-old John Everard to death in 2003.

"The girl pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2004 and received an 18-month sentence, of which one year was in custody and six months in the community."

The Toronto Star, on August 19, reported:

"In 2003, there were 39 known gangs in Peel. As of last year that number had jumped to 108, said Constable Dirk Niles of the intelligence services gang unit.

"The number of gang members and associates has almost doubled in that period, from just over 800 to well over 1,500 in Brampton and Mississauga today, said Niles, adding that the increase is partially due to improved efforts in tracking gang activity in the region."

Sixteen-year-old Alex Masih "became Peel region's 17th homicide victim of the year on August 9 when he was gunned down next to this modest townhouse complex near Kennedy Road and Williams Parkway, in the heart of Brampton.

"A week later Farhan Ali Omar, 22, was stabbed to death in Mississauga, bringing the homicide total to 18, and setting a record for the amount of murders in Peel in a single year. With more than four months to go, the numbers will likely continue to climb in the rapidly expanding suburbs west of Toronto."

But some people are claiming that youth crime has declined in the last few years. Well, here is an explanation. Mark Bonokoski, writing in the *Toronto Sun* in August, said the following:

"Statistics Canada indicated there was some good news in the wealth of bad news concerning youth crime—the bad news, of course, being the fact that serious crime among youth falling under the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) has risen dramatically.

"The latest tabulations by StatsCan, focusing on 2006 research, showed violent crime among youth aged 12-17 increased 12% in the last decade, and 30% since 1991.

"And homicides had jumped by an astounding 41% since 1997, with 2006 seeing 84 young people—72 boys and 12 girls—implicated in 54 homicides.

"The good news, said StatsCan, was youth involvement in property crime had fallen to a third of what it was a decade ago, putting it at its lowest point since 1996.

"Break-ins were down 47%, minor theft by 33% and car theft by 41%."

0930

Let me explain: The stats are indeed real, but they do not take into account that charges that would have meant convictions 10 years ago would not mean that today.

Bonokoski got an explanation for this from the member from Leeds–Grenville, "who wrote in an e-mail following that column, 'You might want to [check] on the accuracy of these stats.

"'Police are not laying charges for many crimes,' he wrote. 'They are using "diversion"—to things like community service (which frequently isn't monitored), or less.

"'I was told of one incident in my riding where a 15-year-old stole a car, was caught several hours later, and his punishment?—A warning letter.

"'The act needs a complete rebuild.'"

"One of the more authoritative analysts of crime stats is Scott Newark, a former Alberta crown prosecutor and

now special counsel to the Ontario Office for Victims of Crime.

"He sees 'diversion' as a buck-passer, and the" Youth Criminal Justice Act "as a shackle on the appropriate policing of young offenders—all covered in his brief to Parliament when the Young Offenders Act was devolving into its present form.

"'Society has a number of choices when it comes to the increasing rate of youth crime over the past decade,' he wrote.

"'It can strengthen the penalties in a hope to deter conduct; add enforcements in the hope to catch and thus deter more offenders.'

"'Or it can simply decide that that which was previously a crime will no longer be treated as a crime.'"

"Parliament, as it turned out, took the last" option.

"Under section 6 of the" Youth Criminal Justice Act, "for example, a police officer is 'compelled' to consider a number of options before actually arresting a young offender, and this would apply to a car thief, a drug peddler or a sexual offender because no youth crime is exempt from the act's diversion eligibility.

"The cop, under section 6, could ignore the incident and simply drive away. The act calls it 'no action taken.'

"The cop could tell the car thief not to steal a car again, and then drive away. The act calls it 'issuing a warning.'

"The" police officer "could get out of his patrol vehicle, use a printed form telling the young car thief not to do it again, and then drive away.

"The act calls" this 'administering a caution.'

"Or, the officer could take the young car thief to an agency or program that would help him deal with his penchant for thievery, but only if the young offender agrees.

"The act calls this 'referring.'

"Even if the" officer "decides to lay a charge, however, another layer of 'diversion' comes into play.

"Under section 8, the crown can tell the officer to go back to the young offender and tell him to stop stealing, and then the crown will either withdraw the charge or refuse to lay one.

"Under section 10, the crown can tell the" officer "to refer the young thief to an extrajudicial sanction, which could include writing a letter about how it is not appropriate to steal."

We all know the problems. It is time for this government to take action. We need reform in Ottawa to ensure that weak sentencing is eliminated. We need this government to start taking action to prevent youth from turning to crime, to intervene when necessary and to rehabilitate convicted youths in cases where we can.

I find it very interesting that in the minister's statement to the House when she introduced this bill last Monday, there was one word she never used, one word that should be at the heart of any bill about crime and justice issues, one word whose omission shows this government's real priorities when it comes to the needs of Ontario residents. The word the minister failed to mention when she introduced this bill last week was the word

“victim.” Not once did she speak this very important word.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services spoke of creating a “system designed specifically with the needs of youth in mind,” but what about the needs of the victims of young criminals? Why have you failed to speak about their rights? The bill before us today is a mere housekeeping bill. It will not make a single person in Ontario safer. It will not prevent any crime. It will not help youth who are in trouble or who are the victims of other youth.

Three years ago, our party published a report on youth crime. We are still waiting for this government’s report to come out. Our report was titled *Time for Action: A Report on Violence Affecting Youth*. Our party held round-table discussions with stakeholders, parents and youth and came up with 22 recommendations to keep youth away from a life of crime. First, improved policing: We recommended more police officers and to have them sooner. Everyone in this House remembers this government’s repeated announcement of 1,000 new police officers. It became a joke to see the ministers make the same announcement again and again. Obviously, doing it is the important thing. We suggested a crime reduction commissioner, one experienced individual to study intensely the issue and offer permanent solutions. We wanted a locally developed police strategy, community policing designed to meet the individual needs of individual communities, a more effective system of information for police officers in the community. We need a culture of information sharing amongst law enforcement. A good example of this is the practice in Boston, where they tracked information such as who bailed out youths from jail to make linkages to who belonged to which gangs. We recommended a warrant sweep. Police should be encouraged to conduct sweeps of high-risk areas to target those trespassing and those with outstanding arrest warrants. Police should work with communities to develop this plan.

Our second series of recommendations was to fix our justice system. Sentencing has to be made tougher. We should lobby federal parties to toughen sentences for violent crimes. We suggested that the crown should contest bail for anyone committing a crime involving a gun. We want to toughen the Youth Criminal Justice Act for crimes involving violence, particularly guns. Rehabilitation of young offenders is important, but the community must be protected from violent youth. Probation officers and police should get the power to make home visits to first-time offenders. If only they could get to young people early enough to help steer them away from crime. We must halt the flow of illegal guns into Canada. The federal government must tighten our borders to cut off the flow of illegal weapons into our country. To do this requires more searches, better information about gangs and full co-operation from provincial and local governments.

0940

Our consultations to produce the report also identified a number of areas outside law enforcement where we

really could make a difference. Mentoring and tutoring of students should be established in every school in at-risk neighbourhoods; both adults and other young people should be involved in this, starting in Toronto and working its way out to other areas of the province. Mentorship should also be provided by Ontario’s college and university student athletes. These young athletes should use their influence as positive role models to assist coaching a youth team in their particular sport. Scholarships should be offered to help at-risk students finish high school and begin post-secondary education. Internships with the public sector and businesses would provide young people experience and options in life. Summer internships would show youth that another life is possible. We recommended a review of the Safe Schools Act to make it work better.

Another key recommendation is parental education. Many new parents do not have the life skills to give their children a good start in life. Parenting education should be provided in high schools, and Early Years centres should be expanded. People like Dr. Fraser Mustard and others have done world-class, amazing research about how important the first few months and years of life are to a child’s development. Organizations such as Families and Schools Together do great work with children. They provide that kind of stable connection between the community and the family that is at the core of understanding the importance of role models, of recognizing the values of organizations that exist to support families in the province.

As an aside, I have to remind the government that due to their underfunding, the Early Years centre in Stroud in my riding is going to close at the end of November. This seems to fly in the face of all of the research that would demonstrate the importance of providing parents and families with the kind of support that they need. The government is very conscious of, and the minister herself made comments this morning about, the limitations of this bill. Certainly, when the minister talks about providing supports and making sure that people are able to steer away from a life of crime, the investments that the Early Years centre represents are exactly the kind of work that, in theory, she is suggesting should be available.

So it would seem to me that in the context of this debate and in the context of this bill, which is described by the minister as a harmonization of existing legislation and of meeting a deadline of April 2009—that’s the purpose of this bill. But as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who is now assuming this responsibility for the part of the youth justice system that has been under corrections, it’s the perfect opportunity, then, to demonstrate what kind of support she is prepared to provide to people like the families in my riding who have, frankly, oversubscribed to the Early Years centre, recognizing how valuable those kinds of investments are. There is a wealth of information and research that supports the importance of the investment that can be made at this time.

Our task force also recommended programs that would increase the role of fathers and recognize that there are some responsibilities and skills to be learned to be a good father. Too many young men in at-risk areas abdicate their parental responsibilities. A number of youth our party met with indicated that they did not have a positive father-figure role model. We must also encourage young fathers to play an important role in their children's lives and emphasize how important they are to a young child.

I think back on my own childhood and the opportunities that were afforded me and my sister to have undivided time with our father. One of the things that I always thought was interesting was that as a family—certainly, there wasn't the kind of funds to allow him to go golfing. I was the beneficiary of that because it meant that Sunday afternoons he spent with me and my sister and not on the golf course. So it's not just a question of at-risk or of the socioeconomic, it's also the kind of important value that people place on this. A lot of times I think that's a societal issue, and we, as parliamentarians, need to be the leaders of that kind of societal change, recognizing the value of taking your kid for a walk instead of chasing a ball on the golf course.

In my riding, Catholic Community Services of York Region runs a number of excellent programs. Among these is the Focus on Fathers, which has been very well received and certainly, again, oversubscribed. It also looks at providing people with some insight into not only the importance of their role, but with some techniques.

We also looked at recommending looking at the role of pop culture in contributing to crimes. Certainly, there has been much study done of the violence of video games and the kind of contribution they make to youth violence. I think, again, that there is a parental role here as well. I can remember when our daughter was at an age where suddenly she moved from cartoons to music videos. Just as I had spent some time with her looking at the pre-school programs and the programs for quite young children, I then continued that interest in looking at some of the music videos. One of the things that disturbed me was the way in which women were sometimes portrayed. Once we'd had a conversation about that, she then became far more discriminating in looking at those videos, and instead of just a passive viewer, she now had a sense of, "Wait a minute. What is the message they are giving me here? Do I accept this message or not?" Sometimes a lot of these things aren't really difficult, but they do need to have some understanding.

We in this party have certainly tried, through public meetings, through meeting with a variety of experts and others, to look at where we should begin. When I look at this particular piece of legislation here today, I recognize the legal imperative that has prompted the minister to introduce this piece of legislation. But I would argue that it's also an opportunity to take stock of what the processes are that lie behind the kind of work that this framework legislation is about to embody. I think that it is a missed opportunity if the minister is not talking about and looking at the kind of research that exists and

bringing leading-edge funding for leading-edge work that quite frankly is right here at home.

0950

I've made references to things like Families and Schools Together, and I've met with people who have told me it has changed their lives. It has given them a sense of belonging in the community. It has given them a sense of people who have similar concerns to the concerns they have. It has provided for their children having a far better sense of relationship to the school. These are relatively inexpensive, but hugely valuable impacts that you can expect. The Focus on Fathers program—again, the dollars attached to it are certainly low in exchange for the return that you're going to get.

So we are saying here that programs for youth in schools and in the community need to be improved. The different levels of government need to work together to actually help young people see that they do not need to turn to a life of violence. This report that I've referenced was made almost three years ago, and sadly, we have not seen youth violence improve; in fact, it has worsened.

Bill 103 deals only with which ministry will hold authority over older youth offenders, and it moves some of the rules and regulations into legislation. Obviously, it's not a sense of a bad bill, but we are in a situation in this province where there is so much more that can be done. We all remember the summer of the gun in Toronto. We do not even use this term anymore, since youth crime and youth violence are now virtually a daily fact of life. Too many youth are joining gangs, too many youth are committing violent crimes and too many young people are dying, and as I mentioned earlier, the minister has never talked about the victims. We have so many people who, for every one of these crimes, is a victim. That has not taken the place that it should in the opportunity that government has to respond to that; even the question of bullying and trying to look at what happens: The legislation is silent on the issue of the victim. Usually children are the objects of this, and they are affected for life. The kinds of support that they and their families need are simply overlooked.

So it's rather unfortunate, then, as we take stock of the kinds of problems that have been created in our communities and the increase of those things, that this government is doing so little.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly did enjoy the comments from the critic for the opposition.

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She got a good round of applause from the minister and the Minister of the Environment as well.

There's one piece that I have a little bit of different information about in terms of the statistics, I guess. I was going to raise those in my own remarks, which are coming up very shortly, and that is the issue around the rates of youth crime. The information that I have, in fact, shows that Ontario is the second lowest in the country in

terms of youth crime statistics. In fact, I think Quebec is the lowest and Ontario is the second lowest in terms of the propensity of youth crime. Again, when it comes to talking about these kinds of issues, it's really important that we look at all of the different pieces of information, but also the sources of those pieces of information and how those pieces of information are used to support various kinds of arguments.

I would say that the member brought a lot of important issues to the table. I'm on exactly the same page as her particularly when she talks about services for young children. The lack of child care in this province is abominable, as is the lack of services for families who have very young children, those very ages which are the most important when it comes to early learning and then the outcomes of that early learning later in life. The evidence is clear, as the member mentioned in her remarks, and Fraser Mustard has actually thrown up his hands in disgust in terms of the lack of action not only in Ontario but across this country, specifically in terms of how we make those investments when children are very, very young so that over time you end up reducing your costs significantly in areas like youth justice, educational supports and health.

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to thank the member from York-Simcoe for her comments on this bill. Certainly, I would remind the House that this bill is intended to bring together two pieces of legislation so that children and youth who are in conflict with the law are treated with consistency under one bill. That transformation has already been underway.

The member talked about victims, and I think as a government, we are certainly always mindful of victims. That's why, and I want to quote from the minister's speech, the minister clearly stated, "This government takes the issue of crime very seriously. When serious crimes are committed and the safety of a community is at risk, we will not hesitate to act to protect the lives and property of the people of Ontario." This is certainly a recognition of the fact that victims are entitled to justice as well.

We need to make sure that children who are in conflict with the law also have an opportunity to change their ways, have an opportunity to better their lives and have an opportunity that will make sure they don't reoffend. Reoffending is probably the greatest issue that we are trying to deal with here. We talk about mentoring, and I heard the member from York-Simcoe talk about mentoring and other programs. We need to make sure that these young people have an opportunity to turn themselves around and become contributing members of society.

That is why we want to make sure that they're treated with consistency. This bill will make sure that they have those opportunities, but it also gives the decision-makers greater discretion and the ability to determine the length of that detention. Again, they are to provide justice for the victims as well.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to make just a few comments. I believe our opposition critic made it very clear that the government's press release talked about a plan to make our communities safer. The bill in no way has any connection to the worthy goal of making our communities safer.

In fact, she pointed out very clearly that this is primarily a housekeeping bill. What it does is bring older young offenders under one ministry. When I look at the explanatory notes in the legislation—which, by the way, was just introduced on the 29th—it's very clear, if you just read the explanatory notes, that this is purely a housekeeping, administrative exercise. It does nothing to the laudable goal of making our communities safer. If I was to be specific, I would look at the legislation, and the member from York-Simcoe has pointed this out. It "permits the minister to designate persons to conduct inspections and investigations in places of temporary detention, of secure custody and of open custody." That's the kind of tone and themes that are marked throughout this legislation.

As laudable as administrative goals are, at the end of the day we have a serious problem if you look at street crime and drugs and youth and youth violence. Our position clearly would be something that I'd encourage the minister to look at: repeat violent offenders. There should be consequences for those kinds of actions. If that is not spelled out in here, the courts need you, Minister, to direct that policy direction, and it's not in here.

This is administrivia gone wild under a Liberal government. This is about making it more comfortable for them. I'm waiting for the member from York-Simcoe's wrap-up on this because she has it right: It's well intended, but in fact there are no teeth in the deliverables.

1000

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

The member for York-Simcoe has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by other members, the members for Hamilton Centre, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Durham.

If I were to take the comments collectively here this morning—and certainly the message that I feel is important for the government to receive—it's the question of the fact that on the one hand we have a housekeeping bill; we're sitting here in relative comfort discussing a housekeeping bill, whereas out on the streets of all of our communities, in fact, there's a sense of urgency. I think that's where we're having difficulty, in the fact that, okay, fine, you want to put these two things together; in fact, that was a decision that was made some years ago. This is only because you are facing the deadline of April 2009 that we're looking at this housekeeping matter.

Our streets are in dire straits. Our communities are under siege. It's that kind of urgency that I think has prompted all of us to speak about what we should be

talking about. I liken it to the fact that we are going to debate a resolution by the Premier on the economy months after we started saying you need to be concerned about this. So on the one hand we have a housekeeping piece of legislation here; outside are dire circumstances. A sense of urgency needs to unfold on this topic.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm certainly pleased to have a chance, on behalf of New Democrats, to speak to Bill 103. We definitely welcome the opportunity to have a discussion about this bill, which, as the minister said, in fact does unify the youth justice system and bring 16- and 17-year-olds—formally, I guess—into the current system that we have here in Ontario. Really, what's been happening is that they've been left in a little bit of a limbo over the last little while and as a result have not actually had a chance to access programs and services that we would expect them to be able to take advantage of in the facilities that they are currently in—although “currently” is probably a bit of a misnomer, because we know that there's a move of a lot of these young people out of those kinds of facilities into ones that, as the minister indicated in her remarks, are being built specifically to house, if you will, the consolidated system.

I actually believe that it is the right thing to do to bring the system into one consolidated system, a youth-only system. I think that would give opportunities for better rehabilitation so that the kids who have found themselves in the youth justice system will be able to have the most supports that they could possibly have and be able to, hopefully, some day, live very productive lives, and healthy lives at that.

We know that many of the youth who become involved in the youth justice system didn't get there by fluke. Oftentimes those kids are coming from extremely difficult situations. They've become involved in the justice system because of where they come from in their lives. They often are the kids who are growing up in poverty in this province. They're often the kids who have experienced physical and/or sexual abuse. Of course, yesterday the minister gave a statement in the House here on abuse prevention month. These are the kids that we're talking about, who end up not being able to cope because of some of the things that they've experienced, and turn to crime as a result. We know that many young people in the criminal justice system end up there because of mental illness that often goes untreated, undiagnosed and ignored until it worsens and worsens; events occur and young people end up not having had the services and supports they need for their mental illness but in jail instead.

They're youth, really, who are from our communities. They are young people who are part of our neighbourhoods, part of our ridings, part of our province. They're not these other people who are out there somewhere; they are actually kids from our own communities. We no doubt have a responsibility towards those kids to try to get them on the right track and back into a community, with a much better outcome.

Having said that, it's really, really important I think to acknowledge and recognize that the public safety has got to be preserved. It's not one issue or another; we have to look at the issue from a broad perspective and acknowledge and recognize that folks out there are really concerned about the likelihood of being victims of some kind of violent crime, some kind of criminal act. Those folks are out there. They're worried. There's a palpable sense that people are concerned that there is going to be something that threatens them in their daily lives, and this is unacceptable. It's really unacceptable that this fear, this anxiety, this sense of the likelihood of an event happening that's going to be a criminal act upon average people—that's out there, and that's something we really have to take seriously and deal with. People have a right to live in their communities without that kind of fear. They have a right to enjoy their lives and their neighbourhoods without worrying that they're going to be the victims of—you name it—a robbery, a carjacking or some kind of violent crime.

The other thing that is important to recognize is many of those folks who have that fear are regular folks. They're not the folks who are living in gated communities or buildings with high security; they're regular working-class folks who are concerned about their safety in daily life, as they live it out in their communities. It's not the people who have the means to protect themselves in terms of fancy systems, but it's regular folks. It's folks who are working hard, trying to make ends meet and trying to eke out an existence in these troubled economic times, and we know that they're only going to get worse. But those are the folks who are worried about their safety, and rightly so. They have some concerns, and we have, then, a responsibility in this place to do everything we possibly can to prevent crime and to ensure that those who perpetrate crimes take responsibility for that action and take responsibility for what they have done.

We have to really approach the whole issue of youth justice in a way that is effective and in a way that is based on knowledge that has been accumulated for many, many years—for decades, in fact—around these very issues. It's not just knowledge that we've come to here in the province of Ontario, but of course this is an issue everywhere in the world. There is a lot of evidence that is out there that speaks to not only why crime occurs or the factors that lead to higher levels of crime in communities, but also what do you do, what are some of the methods that you use to reduce crime, to reduce the likelihood that crime is going to take place? Then, of course, the other side of the picture: Once someone is in the criminal justice system, how do you deal with that situation to reduce recidivism, which is to reduce the likelihood that they will reoffend once they are out of the system?

The biggest concern I think is that there's a real sense, from some of the debate already today, that the fear we have about the likelihood of being victims of crime is something that leads to this idea that there's an epidemic of crime out there, an epidemic of youth crime particularly, and assumes that there's an increase in youth crime

and that that is a result of lax punishment, that's a result of the fact that the penalties and punishments against young people are not strong enough, and therefore we have these wildly increasing crime statistics in the province of Ontario. It assumes there has been a shift from rehabilitation to denunciation and punishment. Basically, what it assumes is that if you focus on punishment as opposed to rehabilitation, then the result you're going to get is reduced crime. That's the assumption of that fear-based perspective that is out there and that is fanned by certain places. But the evidence is very, very clear, not just here in Ontario, not just in Canada, but in fact around the world, that severe punishment, particularly for youth crime, is not the best approach. Youth criminal justice needs to be based on prevention, rehabilitation and public safety, and it has to be informed by evidence, not by ill-founded assumptions about the merits of punishment and the possibility of deterrence.

1010

So, as I said earlier in my remarks in response to the member from Simcoe North, there is really no evidence of an epidemic of youth crime. Yes, there are individual incidents that we all completely abhor, that we think are absolutely unacceptable, that we rightly do not accept and are extremely vocal about, in terms of saying that we will not put up with this kind of violent crime when it occurs. But the incidents are not increasing by leaps and bounds, as some would say. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Ontario has the second-lowest youth crime rate in all of Canada. The lowest youth crime rate, not surprisingly, is in the province of Quebec.

Moreover, many people like to think that punishment is something that is really going to reduce the likelihood of young people committing crimes. People think, "Well, gee, if you just put a big, scary punishment at the end, that's going to prevent young people from getting into trouble." But the reality is that punishment doesn't prevent or reduce crime. Stronger penalties do not deter youth offences.

The John Howard Society has a paper that outlines some of this theory in detail. It says, "Sentencing severity"—that means the severity of the sentence—"has no meaningful general deterrent value for young people, or anyone for that matter. People who commit crimes simply do not consider the length of the sentence they might face when making this often split-second decision."

If someone is about to commit a crime, they don't stop themselves and say, "Maybe I shouldn't commit this crime," and then think about all of the outcomes which are going to be occurring if they actually commit the crime. It's kind of ridiculous to think that's the case. Yet that is what some people believe and use as a basis for the way that they would like to deal with youth justice issues specifically.

In particular, for youth who commit very serious crimes, the rates of reoffence are the same, the evidence shows, regardless of the sentence. So that, again, is a piece of evidence that shows that the severity of the punishment has no impact on reoffence when it comes to

very severe crimes. The reality is that youth who commit crimes are people who have high impulsivity, low self-control, and often, as I've already mentioned in my earlier remarks, mental health concerns and addictions. So these are some of the things that are predictors of whether or not young people are going to be actively involved with the criminal justice system.

These kinds of factors mean that kids are not in a position to be able to make rational decisions. If they have a mental health problem, if they have problems with impulsivity, if they have low self-esteem, these kids are not going to just take a step back and rationally figure out whether or not they're going to be involved in a particular activity which they know is against the law. That's what the empirical evidence shows quite clearly.

Homicide rates in Canada have been falling since the abolition of capital punishment, since 1976. Since we got rid of capital punishment, those rates are going down. American states with the death penalty have higher rates of homicide than those who do not. California counties that enforce the famous three-strikes law did not show any decline in crime compared to other states.

Not only does deterrence not work, as the preponderance of evidence shows, when applied to youth, it is in contravention of international laws and covenants.

So the evidence is pretty clear. Oftentimes it's obfuscated so that other agendas can be brought to the fore, but the reality is severe punishment, particularly of young people, not only doesn't work but it is in contravention of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention requires that youth justice courts "impose sentences that ensure the care and protection of youthful offenders, that avoid the detrimental effects of detention as much as possible." Again, an international body that came up with the covenant which Canada signed on to, right? So we're all supportive of it. It says very clearly that the preponderance of evidence is what you need to really look at when you're determining how to deal with youth criminal justice.

Other UN rules mandate that youth sentences are minimal, proportional and in the child's interests. The NDP actually concurs with the John Howard Society, which holds that crime prevention is best addressed by addressing the underlying causes of youth crime. I raised this in my remarks to the minister's initial statement because it's absolutely where we need to focus. I was listening to some reruns this morning on CBC Radio of debates that were happening here in Toronto in regard to the federal election, and of course the youth crime issue came up. Once again, very, very clearly, the amount of applause that came when people were talking about, during that debate, when candidates, Olivia Chow particularly, from—what's Olivia's riding?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Trinity–Spadina.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you. The member for Danforth, Peter Tabuns, reminded me that Olivia's riding is Trinity–Spadina.

CBC radio did a debate that had federal candidates from various ridings coming together to have a debate

here in Toronto, and Olivia was very clear in her remarks—and it's consistent with what we believe at the provincial level as well, that it's about the roots of crime. It's about opportunities for young people. It's not about punishing at the end, after kids have had no opportunities whatsoever to choose a better way. So, when educated and informed, those kinds of principles are the ones that Canadians tend to stand for. Again, it was clear in the amount of support that Olivia got in her comments in debate, but it's also clear when you talk to people in depth about what it is that leads to crime with young people.

One principle for preventing youth crime is to remove the tools of crime from the hands of youth. New Democrats have been very clear and again, in the debate that was held in Toronto, Olivia was very clear as well: The New Democrats have advocated for, and will continue to support, a comprehensive handgun ban. It has to happen. It is required. There is no reason—no reason—for handguns to exist in the city of Toronto or anywhere else. In fact, I think that's almost word-for-word what she said in her debate: There is no need for guns in Toronto, period. And I would say in Toronto, in Hamilton, in Kingston, in Windsor, in Ottawa; in all communities, there is no need for handguns, period. So a handgun ban is a part of what we need to do when we're looking at how to reduce crime, particularly youth crime.

Another important approach to reducing youth crime is to build the child rather than fix the adult. This goes back to my comments around lack of affordable housing, lack of mental health supports, lack of addictions programs and services. Reducing child poverty, providing quality child care and early learning opportunities, investing in strong public schools and expanding community-based social and recreational programs for families are going to go much further in reducing crime than will an increased reliance on punishment.

1020

Simple community support programs, like home visits from nurses to low-income first-time teen moms in the US, have led to reductions in crime—and this is amazing. Crime rates of children have been reduced by up to 80% as a result of that program in this one jurisdiction in the States. All it took was a public health nurse to come and provide supports, education and help to a new 14-, 16- or 18-year-old, a young mom, a teenage mom. Instead of just blaming and shunning a teenage mom or a pregnant teenager, provide the supports that she needs. Get the public health nurse to come to her home to show her how to care for her child and teach her the kinds of signals a baby makes when certain things are occurring, whether it's hunger—usually it's hunger—or sometimes there's an uncomfortable piece of clothing chafing their skin or something like that. There are many, many ways to engage a brand new mom, particularly a teenage mom, in the ways to appropriately care for her child.

If you have that support coming in and you have that teen mom learning how best to take care of her baby, how to breastfeed, because we all know that that's the

best way to provide nutrition for a young baby—through breastfeeding—if we provide those supports, the evidence shows very clearly, in this particular jurisdiction, an 80% reduction in youth crime rates because of a program that focused on the early, early years of life. Again, it goes back to what the member from York-Simcoe said in her remarks and it goes back to what I've said in my remarks: These are the things the government needs to pay significant attention to because these are the things that are going to prevent young people from getting into trouble as they grow older.

Investments in programs like that are important, and maybe it takes a little bit of time for them to pay off, but as politicians we have a responsibility not only to act on the moment but to act for the future. We need to make changes today that might not show up today but that will make positive changes for the future. It's not always good and appropriate—in fact, oftentimes it's ineffective—to use a quick fix, a simplistic, sometimes, and misguided quick fix that we see so often that comes to the table. Fixes to profound social problems often take long-term investments and the long-term view. With that in mind, with that kind of framework in mind, if you will, let's turn to the specifics of Bill 103.

The minister brought this forward as a bill. It's interesting, because in her introductory remarks she talked specifically about how this bill was going to provide hope, it was going to provide opportunity, it was going to give kids a chance to make different choices, to be able to come out of the system and make different choices for their future. Then, of course, in my comments to her speech, I said, "I don't see how that happens in this bill." I was fairly critical of that remark, and then, when it came back to the minister to respond to my criticism, she said, "Really, it's just an administrative bill." Well, you can't have it both ways. You can't come out and spin this as a bill that's going to make all kinds of positive change—that's going to give kids a new chance, that kids who have been incarcerated are somehow going to be given all kinds of new opportunities and all kinds of hope for the future—and then turn around and take another step back when you're called on it and say, "Well, really it's just an administrative type of bill. It's really just administration."

This is the thing that's very frustrating, the propensity of the government to spin these things out like they're larger than life. If it's an administrative bill, it's an administrative bill. If it's a bill that's going to create huge change and positive impact, then, fine, I'm prepared to debate it within that context. But let's not pretend it is what it isn't, and let's get down to exactly what it is. The aim of the bill is to bring youth aged 12 to 17 under one single justice system, and that's a laudable goal, as I said earlier on.

It's the amendments to the Child and Family Services Act, and the overriding principle of the Child and Family Services Act is that it is supposed to be in the best interests of the child. That's the overarching theory, more or less. The limbo that the 16- and 17-year-olds have

been in the last couple of years and the last couple of decades has been an ongoing issue. The 16- and 17-year-olds, when they're in the youth justice system, have been in this no-person's land where they're not really getting the programs and services that they should be getting to try to provide some rehabilitation, to try to reduce the recidivism rates. That has not been happening, so this bill gets those kids who have been falling through the cracks over the last little while, kids that have not been able to get the programming they need in the wings of the adult facilities that have been set aside for their use, and provides them with the opportunity to be in with other kids in the criminal justice system, ages 12 to 15. So now instead of 12 to 15 in the Ontario system and 15 to 17 in the adult system, that all comes together and it's one system. It makes sense particularly with 16- and 17-year-olds because it provides some opportunity for the involvement of young people in their decisions around work and training, and that's a positive thing.

But there are some concerns that we have with the bill, and it's important to get those things on the table. The first one is that there has been a very disconcerting lack of consultation around the development of the bill. What we've found out is that not only were youth not consulted—again, it's the principle about consulting people who are going to be affected by legislation. Oftentimes you end up with a better product if at the beginning you build in the conversation with stakeholders and with people who are concerned. But with youth, oftentimes they're not considered to be legitimate stakeholders, right? "They're just young people, so we'll just dismiss them because we don't really care about their opinions. It's not really important." But it's very important.

This piece of legislation will have an impact on young people and so it's important to have an opportunity for young people to have a look at it in its drafting, in its preparation and perhaps—for sure; it's not a matter of "perhaps"—they can absolutely provide insights and suggestions to the government. But the arrogance of the government to not even bother to have any kind of consultation with a bill that specifically amends the Child and Family Services Act, which is the act that's supposed to be in the best interests of the child—of course, in typical fashion, "We don't want to find out what the children think is in the best interests of the child. That's not how we do things around here." I think it's a shameful lost opportunity. It's a shameful missed opportunity.

It's bad enough that young people were not at all consulted in terms of the drafting of this bill, but the child advocate was not even consulted in the drafting of the bill. We have an independent child advocate in Ontario: an advocate for children, a person whose job it is to advocate on behalf of and with—I have to say that our independent child advocate, Irwin Elman, is an extremely competent and skilled professional who's been working with young people for a very long time. The member from Pickering–Ajax was on the hiring committee and participated in the interviews along with myself and the member from Nepean–Carleton in regard to this. It's

quite interesting that we have this expert, really, that we've hired as the child advocate and the government didn't see fit to even let the child advocate know that there was a bill in preparation. That's problematic. That's really problematic.

We have found out that not only was he not consulted—this is Mr. Elman, our new child advocate—but in fact the staff of the advocacy office have no recollection of having been contacted or approached at all in regard to putting this bill together. That's not good form. In fact, it's very disconcerting that the government would not even consult the child advocate's office. It's even more disconcerting because in fact Bill 103 contains within it several amendments to the independent child advocate act. The very legislation that covers off the child advocate is being amended with Bill 103 and yet the advocate's office was not invited to participate in any way in the discussion.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the specifics around what those amendments are a little bit later, but that is poor form when it comes to consultation. It's really obvious that the government doesn't see their role as being collaborative in any way when it comes to youth criminal justice, and that doesn't send a good signal. The consultation was not satisfactory at all. Although some of the service providers say that they had some minor involvement in the drafting of the act, by and large there was very, very unsatisfactory participation, and much more consultation would have been useful.

1030

The second major issue is that there are parts of the bill that impact significantly, particularly on people who are granted authority under the auspices of the bill. There's a new authority that is granted to directors of facilities. These directors of facilities are given new powers, if you will, or new abilities to do various things under the idea that because of the 16- and 17-year-olds coming into the system, they need to expand their scope of power, their scope of opportunity to do certain things.

But one of the things that the bill allows authorities to do which is new is to open up e-mail and mail from children. Children are sending an e-mail or writing a letter, and this act now allows authorities to open that mail or read that e-mail before it gets sent.

The question becomes, to what extent is this new authority necessary, particularly with the younger kids? Is it necessary to intercept a 12-year-old's mail to her mom? I don't know. It's a question. It's something that we need to explore. To what extent is it necessary to have that kind of control over a young person's mail that they're sending out—not mail they're receiving in but mail they're sending out?

I get it a little bit—and I'll talk about that as well—wanting to intercept mail that's coming in, because you don't know what's in it and there could be concealed weapons or dangerous things in the mail. What I don't really see is the need, particularly with the younger children, to intercept their outgoing mail.

That's something that I think we need to spend some time on in committee. I'm actually looking forward to the

committee hearings because I believe this bill needs to have some time in committee. I believe that there are young people and people from the advocate's office, and I'm sure there are service providers as well, who will want to come and give some insights and remarks on the changes that this bill is undertaking in terms of youth justice. But some people think that some of those changes go a bit too far—and that is one of them, particularly.

Previously, mail had to be opened in the presence of a young person in cases where there was concern that there might be articles that were prohibited by the service provider, or the mail could be read if there were grounds to believe that the contents of mail could be causing emotional or physical harm to the child. Now, I'm not talking about the mail that goes out; I'm talking about the mail that comes in. In the previous system, any mail that came in, if there was a concern that it would be harmful or contraband, the service provider had to open that mail in the presence of the young person, so the young person knew that their mail was being intercepted. Now, with Bill 103, mail can be examined, read and withheld in whole or in part if "prejudicial to the best interests of the young person, the public safety or the safety or security of the place of detention or custody." It's expanding the powers of the facility to intercept, read, make a judgment call and ban the mail from going to the young person, without the young person's knowledge at all.

This is a significant difference and one that I think we need to delve into a little bit more. The question is, why was the criteria of physical or emotional harm in the previous bill expanded to be a more catch-all phrase, "best interests" of the child? The issue becomes that this section has become really broad now. The change has meant that there's a broadening of this section that allows providers to open any mail on the basis of a claim that it's possibly a public safety issue, including situations in which young persons are in foster care or in a group home. So it's not only pertaining to youth in secure custody, it's also pertaining to youth in any kind of facility. I don't know whether the government did that on purpose. I would imagine they did, but I'd like to know why. I'd like that know why this section broadens out the powers, not only within the secure custody situation, but also in all of the facilities where young people are staying as part their sentence.

There's no mechanism at all to ensure that the child is aware that mail is being held. Not only is this broadening the opportunity to intercept mail and keep it, but also there's no obligation or no recognition or acknowledgment that needs to be provided to the young person that says that their mail has been intercepted and kept from them. So the child's right to send and receive mail is being replaced by the facility's right to intercept their mail. Previously, the law said mail "shall not be examined or read by the service provider or a member of the service provider's staff if it is to or from the child's solicitor." But the proposed law states that mail "shall not be examined or read under clause (b) if it is to or from the young person's solicitor, unless there are reasonable

and probable grounds to believe that it contains material that is not privileged as a solicitor-client communication."

You can't tell by the outside of a letter whether what's inside it is going to be covered by solicitor-client privilege. I mean, how do you tell by the outside of a letter what's on the inside; right? So who determines whether or not correspondence or communication is privileged? What rationale exists to interfere with mail between a young person and their legal counsel? I don't know. I don't know what that rationale is, and that's another reason why we need to get to committee, to try to explore where the government's mind was—collective mind, I guess—when they came up with this, because I really don't understand it at all.

In terms of visitors, "A service provider may impose such conditions and limitations upon persons who are visiting a young person ... as are necessary to ensure the safety of staff or young persons in the facility." It is crucial that this clause not apply to certain people. It shouldn't be up to the service provider of a facility to decide whether an MPP can visit that facility, to decide whether a child advocate or somebody from the advocate's office can visit that facility. An Ombudsman should be able to visit that facility. So I'm pretty concerned there is this new piece that prevents our watchdogs, if you will, that prevents the people in Ontario who are charged with making sure that these kinds of facilities operate the way they're supposed to operate, including ourselves around this room, from having the opportunity to visit these facilities. That's an extremely, extremely worrisome addition, or perhaps deletion, if you will, in terms of access to the facilities, and it's something I'm extremely hopeful the government will reconsider. I mentioned it to the minister informally as we were having a conversation earlier today. She was not aware that was in there, so I look forward to having a very serious discussion with her about the extent to which that piece particularly needs to be completely removed.

It used to be that MPPs could go into correction facilities. In fact, many of the most egregious abuses that have happened in correction facilities were found out, routed out and shut down because of the opportunity for MPPs to visit those places, to see what was going on there. Do we really want to remove that level of oversight from these facilities? I don't think so. I don't think it will serve anyone at all, particularly not young people who can—and not always, and again, this is not a painting of facilities in any way whatsoever, but it is an important principle that the facilities know there are levels of oversight in place to ensure those very few who might not be acting in the best interests of children are able to be held to account. It's extremely important.

1040

Here's another point altogether: The act expands criteria for secure detention. In other words, right now there is a way that secure detention is dealt with, but it doesn't really deal with open-custody situations. When someone is in secure detention, it's a process of ensuring

that there's attendance at court, for example, and that there's safety of the public and security in the place of detention. We have to be really, really careful about the expansion of the criteria for secure detention, about what it means to be in secure detention.

The use of custody prior to conviction should serve two ends, and two ends only: to prevent a dangerous person from harming others, and to ensure that they attend court. Those are the two pieces that are most important and that need to be there. Pretrial detention continues to be an unduly long process, as a result of the backlogs in the courts. There's a backup in terms of the amount of time that young people are left in detention. It shouldn't be a matter of using the pretrial period as a back door to providing that—I'm losing my concentration with all of the noise that's suddenly come into the chamber. It's been extremely quiet all morning, and all of a sudden—it's showtime pretty soon, so I'm beginning to lose my concentration.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We came to hear you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oh, thanks. The Minister of Education says she came to hear my speech, and now of course I can't concentrate on it, so that's put even more pressure on me.

Nonetheless, the point is this: Pretrial detention should not, as part of its goal, inflict a lesson on the youth or in any other way punish the youth. This goes back to the conversation earlier about the extent to which the punishment model simply does not work. So we have to be careful about sliding into this process which then allows the pretrial detention period to become a de facto early punishment or initial phase of punishment for the young person. That is not acceptable. Pretrial detention periods, as we know, because of the jam-up in the courts, because of how long it takes for things to get to trial, are becoming longer and longer and longer. So we have to be extremely aware of the fact that young people will be stuck in this limbo, without any programming, without any opportunities for rehabilitation or training or counselling or anything at all. They really do just sit in a tank waiting for their trial. We have to be extremely careful about detaining people unnecessarily.

I think it's particularly important to note that certain folks tend to show up in the criminal justice system more than others. We know that our First Nations aboriginal communities are overrepresented in the justice system. We know that people from racialized communities are overrepresented, compared to the general population. They're overrepresented in our criminal justice system, and we know, from some of the comments before, why some of that is.

We know that new immigrants have real challenges, particularly around finding a decent job. We know that we have a minimum wage here in Ontario that does not support families adequately. We know that we have a system of certification, or of recognition of credentials, for people who have great skills coming from other countries, that is not allowing them to be able to use those skills in a productive way to make decent earnings

here in Ontario. We know that there is no certification for unionization in this province, which reduces the likelihood of a decent wage.

I believe that I will be able to continue my comments on this bill when next we meet and when next the government calls Bill 103 for reading, so I'll leave it at that and look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome some guests to the chamber today.

On behalf of the member from Oak Ridges–Markham: the grade 10 students from St. Augustine Catholic High School, who will be visiting Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: Tim Holman, father of Sarah Holman, the page from Eglinton–Lawrence, Paul Veary and Rayburn Veary, all seated in the east members' gallery. Welcome.

On behalf of page Paige Weller: her aunt Kristen Clarke and her cousin Coco Petracchi, in the west public gallery. Welcome today.

And some guests of mine who will be joining us soon in the Speaker's gallery: Ab Chahbar, Sam Chahbar and Dan Chahbar.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday you tabled a motion for a debate on the economy. Regrettably, this is, in our view, a totally insincere charade designed to give yourselves a pat on the back and leave Ontarians who are worried about their future with false hope. Premier, it's completely meaningless, because you haven't opened up the books and told Ontarians what the state of Ontario's finances are.

If you are truly looking for a legitimate discussion, will you commit to releasing a comprehensive statement on Ontario's finances before this debate begins?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very much looking forward to having the opportunity to speak to economic issues.

I'll remind my honourable colleague that his leader, Mr. Tory, has, I believe on three separate occasions now, asked that we have just such a debate in this Legislature. I think it's important, not just for myself, but for all MPPs in this Legislature, to have the opportunity to speak to those kinds of issues which are concerning our families at the breakfast table. There is tremendous economic dislocation and uncertainty prevailing in the global

economy. I think it's important that we find a way to create an opportunity—which we've done here.

Failing this debate now, we'd have to wait until the budget, effectively, for members in this House to speak to it. We think it's time to speak to it right now, and that's what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, that response, like the motion, is self-serving and nothing less.

This morning, the Premier, in a scrum, said that we need to discuss in this House the things that people are talking about around the kitchen table. Well, families sitting around the kitchen table don't look over their household budgets without having in front of them their pay stubs, their bank statements or their credit card statements.

Premier, do you really believe you can fool the public with this stunt of yours—a shameful stunt, an attempt to dupe Ontarians? If you want to have a serious, substantive debate about the economy, show us the books. How much money does Ontario have? How deep is the hole that you've spent this province into?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a traditional approach that is brought by the opposition in traditional times of economic challenge and economic downturn. I would argue that this is an extraordinary event in terms of what's happening to our economy—not just here in Ontario but globally.

One of the reasons I'm eager to have all members participate in this debate is so that we can gain a better understanding, by sharing each other's perspectives, of what is happening out there. We'll have an opportunity to hear ideas, hopefully positive ideas, put forward by all members of this House, and using that information, we can help better inform the fall economic statement and we can help to inform the budget. We see it as a productive, important exercise in keeping with the values and desires of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Now, this is the new Dalton McGuinty we're seeing here today. If you look back, he says we can't wait until March for a budget debate. But on June 4 this year, Premier, the Progressive Conservative Party—the official opposition—asked you for an emergency debate on the economy, along with a transparent financial update—four months ago; four long months ago. You've ignored the warning signs, you've demeaned concerns about the economy that both opposition parties have brought forward, and now you bring in a phony motion designed to hoodwink worried Ontarians. Is that your definition of leadership?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll remind my honourable colleague that we released our second quarter economic results just last Monday. That's the latest information that we had available. We've made that public.

I just can't agree with my colleague. I think it's important for all of us to have this opportunity to speak to

those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontarians. They're very concerned about the state of our economy. They're asking themselves questions about what is happening, not only here in Ontario but what's happening more broadly in the global economy. I see this as an important opportunity for Ontarians to speak to those issues and, again, to provide their particular perspectives on this, to share their insights in terms of what they might think is happening, to get a better sense of how external events are going to affect us inside, here in Ontario.

I see it as a positive, constructive opportunity to gain information, to inform our fall economic statement and later on our budget. I think it serves the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again to the Premier: You have to wonder how serious the Premier is about this emergency economic debate he has called for when he's jetting off to Mexico tomorrow and one of his economic ministers is basking in the Middle East sun.

But let's look at the motion that has been tabled. "Just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances." Premier, can you tell us: Just how tight are Ontario's finances, how much are the revenues down by and how much has spending increased?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Leader of the Opposition: I will remind him that last week we put out the most recent Ontario economic accounts. I would invite him to look at those. I would invite him to review the transcripts from the meeting of the 12 economists who hosted a breakfast the other morning. We had the opportunity to meet with them after.

There is no doubt that these are challenging economic times. I welcome the opportunity to hear from members of this House before the fall statement, as we line up our response to changing circumstances. According to the Fiscal Transparency Act, the members opposite have the information they need to form views and to form opinions. One need look no further than the front pages of every major daily to get expert opinion and analysis, and I look forward to your contribution and the contribution of your colleagues to this debate.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As the minister and the Premier know, in the past two weeks we've asked on a number of occasions for a time speed-up, if you will, on the economic update, not leaving it until October 22. To debate today without that information in front of us is just a so-called debate; it's not a real attempt to find solutions. You can't find solutions if you don't know what the problems are.

Your motion says "the Ontario government should make adjustments." In Liberal speak, that means two things: a tax increase or a deficit. Premier, Minister, are you spending Ontario into a deficit or are you telling those hard-working families sitting around that kitchen

table that you're going to raise their taxes—or get ready for both? What is it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are taking a balanced, responsible, prudent approach to the challenges in the economy. We have laid out a five-point plan that we believe is delivering results today. This government's whole approach over the last five years has been oriented just to this time. That's why we started investing in post-secondary education with Reaching Higher. That's why we started ReNew Ontario, to be investing in infrastructure. That's why in about two weeks' time, municipalities across Ontario will be getting \$1.1 billion to start investing in that very infrastructure.

There is no doubt that there are real challenges in the economy. This government has laid out a plan. We look forward to the input of the opposition and the people of Ontario as we move forward in a challenging world economy.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I didn't hear much of an answer there. If the Premier really believed there was an emergency with the economy, truly sincerely, he wouldn't be sipping margaritas in Mexico while this debate is underway. Instead, he's wasting this House's time with a phony debate.

The great minds in the Premier's office—

Hon. George Smitherman: Is that what you did when you went travelling with Andy Brandt?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman:—probably with the advice of Minister Smitherman, believe they can bamboozle the public. You can't have a debate on the economy without knowing the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just stop the clock for a second. Minister of Infrastructure, withdraw that comment that you just made.

Hon. George Smitherman: I withdraw.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a typical response when we raise legitimate concerns, Speaker.

Premier, families can't make adjustments to their budgets if they don't know whether this government is going to raise their taxes or cut their services. For once, at a time when Ontarians are looking for candid and direct answers, why can't you be straight with them? Is this motion really designed to set the stage for deficits and increased taxes?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The partners in the Pan Am Games bid are delighted we are trying to get this \$2-billion net investment in Ontario that will create 17,000 jobs. I'm sorry you don't support those initiatives at this time. That's what transparency's about, dealing honestly with these situations.

We have laid out a plan. We look forward to hearing what you would do differently. We think your prescription to date of cutting corporate taxes at this time is not the only part of a comprehensive plan.

They have offered nothing but a bunch of pablum. The people of Ontario are looking to this Legislature for

leadership. We need a debate on the economy. We welcome the opportunity for that debate so that we can further reinforce the appropriateness of our policy decisions to date and make adjustments as we go forward in a very challenging world economy.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This afternoon, this House is going to be debating a government motion that essentially says to anxious Ontarians, "Your government agrees that Ontarians are facing hard economic times and that your jobs and savings are at risk, but there's absolutely nothing we can do about it."

Why doesn't the Premier spare us this afternoon's theatrics and admit right here and now that the motion is an admission that his government has no intention of implementing the bold new initiatives that are desperately required to deal with this economic crisis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, and I say again to this honourable member that her leader also asked that we have a debate in this Legislature at the earliest possible opportunity, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

The member opposite says that they have other ideas—great. We look forward to hearing those. We look forward to having an opportunity here to get everybody's perspective on what is happening in the global economy, the impact that's having on Ontarians here.

We have a five-point plan in place. We're proud of that plan. We will continue to revise and strengthen that plan in order to further strengthen the Ontario economy, but I disagree with my colleague who says our plan is not working. I look forward in the supplementals to tell her exactly why we continue to make progress under that plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the Premier is refusing to admit is that his government's lack of action over the past five years is directly responsible for Ontario's disastrous economic situation. The Premier knows very well that the 235,000 lost manufacturing jobs and the 40,000 lost forestry jobs have nothing to do with the global banking crisis. He knows very well that the economic crisis that has devastated Ontario's manufacturing and resource community has been unfolding over the past five years. He has been in power those past five years, and it's a direct result of his failed policies.

Why won't the Premier admit that all this afternoon's motion really is for is to say to Ontarians that his government has no clue as to what to do about the economic crisis that it has created in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say with the greatest of respect to my honourable colleague, for her to claim that somehow all that ails our domestic economy, the Ontario economy, is exclusively the result of Liberal government policies is incredible. Nobody believes that, and I'm confident that she understands that.

A number of years ago, we understood that if we're going to get the best jobs, we needed the best workers, so four years ago we put in place our Reaching Higher plan, and today we have 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities. Years ago, we understood the value of investing in infrastructure, and because for three successive budgets we've invested billions of dollars in infrastructure, there are over 10,000 workers today in Ontario on Ontario construction projects. We've been on the job.

1100

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier's Reaching Higher plan put us at the bottom of the barrel; that's the reality. His five-point plan is a five-point failure. At a time when Ontarians want assurance that their government will be there to help them through the tough times, all this Premier can do is offer a resolution that is going to be debated this afternoon, a resolution that tells them that the policies they are going to get at this time of economic crisis are the very same policies that have already failed to prevent the collapse of Ontario's economic foundation in the first place. When will the Premier own up to the fact that his resolution is in fact proof that he has no plan, no idea about how to deal with the economic crisis, and that under his leadership, Ontarians are essentially on their own?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I talked about how our early and decisive action on education has landed 100,000 new spaces in our colleges and universities. We also have 50,000 more apprenticeship opportunities, and we have 10,000 more young people graduating from our high schools every year. I made reference to the fact that because of our early and decisive action on new investments in infrastructure we have some 10,000 people working on construction sites today in Ontario.

Something else we understood a long time ago was that it was going to become very important, in a knowledge-based global economy, that we become much more adept at turning our ideas, Ontarians' ingenuity, into products that are irresistible for sale to the world. So we created a Ministry of Research and Innovation, and so far, we've put out \$1.5 billion into over 1,000 research and commercialization projects. My friend may not like our plan, but she can't disagree that we have a plan and it is proving to be effective.

THUNDER BAY ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, back to the Premier: This question is about a specific region. If there is a region that demonstrates just how badly this Premier's economic policies have failed, it's the Thunder Bay region. Since 2005, northwestern Ontario has lost 6,900 forestry-related jobs. In addition to this, Thunder Bay alone has lost 1,500 manufacturing jobs, or nearly one third of all of its manufacturing employment.

On October 22, this government is going to be delivering an economic statement. Will that statement, like this

afternoon's resolution, merely confirm that this government intends to continue with the failed economic policies that have already devastated communities such as Thunder Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've had the good fortune, during the course of the past five years, to visit the grand and great city of Thunder Bay on a number of occasions. I can tell you that I know they are experiencing real challenges, particularly insofar as it relates to the decline of the forest sector—something that is experienced in other parts of the country and, indeed, this continent, as my colleague well knows. But I can say that we've brought close to \$1 billion to the table for supports for the forestry sector.

We have made all kinds of new investments in the health sector in the city of Thunder Bay, whether it's the new medical school or new—I think it's the molecular research institute. We have invested in other kinds of manufacturing opportunities in that community as well.

The most important thing I want to say to the folks in Thunder Bay is that we've demonstrated our commitment to work with them. We are going to continue to find new ways to strengthen them. We're going to get through these challenging times the way we've always done that in Ontario: by working hard and working well together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've been to Thunder Bay as well, and I want to talk a little bit more about the blow that Thunder Bay has taken under this government. The unemployment rate there has risen by 30%, and fewer than half of Thunder Bay's unemployed even receive the federal employment insurance benefits. The Premier's inability to convince his own federal Liberal cousins on the need for EI reform is especially devastating to communities such as Thunder Bay. Failed fairness campaigns, weak resolutions and an economic statement that will provide very little, that's what this government is offering Thunder Bay. When will the unemployed workers there finally see a real plan from this government? Or will it be more of the same, all talk and no action?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: It is in fact the case that the government is investing in advancing the technologies, making investments in the next-generation jobs, making the investments in that particular region in the particular industries that the member has already mentioned. It is getting ahead of that, as the government has been attempting to do over the past five years. That has been the government's plan, making those investments, not only in the knowledge economy in order to have those workers, the skilled workers and the apprentices, on the job, but also by making the changes in the technologies, so that those companies in that industry can be competitive in a global market. As innovation around the world changes, innovation has to change here. That's why the government made the investments in innovation, technology and manufacturing, in particular, around the forest industry—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What this government may not like are the cold, hard facts that we've been laying out all morning long. His "Fairness for Ontario" campaign flopped spectacularly, failing to convince even his federal Liberal cousins to make the EI reforms needed to protect laid-off Ontarians. This afternoon's economic resolution simply says to anxious Ontarians, "Don't expect your provincial government to be there in tough times. There is nothing we can do to help." That's what that resolution says, and on October 12, I fear it will be yet more of the same, with an economic statement that offers precious little to Ontarians.

Will the Premier stand in his place now and tell us it isn't so? When will he finally do something, or will he continue to wave a white flag, telling Ontarians that they are left to their own devices and that their government has nothing at all for them?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Some waving, some flag. An additional \$60 million invested in the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp—would the member say that's not doing nothing? No, I would say to the member. In fact, the member voted against it. Twenty-five million dollars to support the creation of a centre in Thunder Bay for research and innovation in the bioeconomy, focused on forestry—the member says that she's been to Thunder Bay. Really? Is that not an investment in that economy? Yes, it is; and you voted against it. Nine point seven million dollars to complete funding of Ontario's commitment to develop the Molecular Medicine Research Centre in Thunder Bay—those are real investments in the future jobs and future industries around innovation in Thunder Bay, and it's thanks to the local members of provincial Parliament for Thunder Bay and the leadership of this government. That is a serious investment in a great part of Ontario.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, beleaguered Toronto taxpayers—homeowners and renters alike—are reeling. The GTA housing market is down 3% and falling; in Toronto, it's down 6%. Your City of Toronto Act gave taxing powers to the one person who is happily ready to take you up on it. Telling the mayor of Toronto to go ahead and tax away is not my idea of protecting our citizens; it is blatant "not my problem" downloading. Mayor Miller has brought in the land transfer tax, the personal vehicle tax and the 3.8% property tax hike last year. When is this going to stop? Are you, Premier, going to let this man continue to beat the life out of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I see our relationship, this Legislature's relationship, differently, obviously, from my honourable colleague. I think the people of Toronto have duly elected their representatives to make decisions on their behalf insofar as municipal issues are concerned, and that is in fact what is happening. Is the member

honestly suggesting that if we don't like what this particular council is doing, we ought to interfere? And if he doesn't like what this council is doing, does he have suggestions with respect to any other councils around the province with which we ought to interfere? I think we should let people, in their good judgment, elect those folks that they think will best serve the public interest and allow them to do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That is shifting the blame. The people of Toronto and Ontario are dealing with terrible financial hardships and fear for their future. The Premier's economic plan plus Mayor Miller equal a formula for disaster, and that is happening now. Yesterday, he told Torontonians to expect a 2% to 4% tax increase in the coming year. We are watching property values plummet by burdening Torontonians with more taxes, and it needs to stop. When, Premier, are you going to take some responsibility for your own actions instead of downloading taxing powers and blame to Mayor David Miller? Will you intervene and assist Torontonians now?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Something exciting is actually happening in the city of Toronto; my friend may have overlooked it. For the first time since I've been Premier, there are three commercial tower constructions taking place. You can find them at Bay and Adelaide; you've got the Telus tower and another—there are all kinds of exciting new investments taking place in the city of Toronto, so I'm just not as gloomy about Toronto prospects as my colleague.

I say again, I think it's important for us to understand the separation in terms of our responsibilities and the municipal council of Toronto and its particular responsibilities. I am not as eager as my colleague opposite to begin to interfere, intrude and insinuate myself either into the city of Toronto's responsibilities or any other municipal council's responsibilities, for that matter.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, having reviewed your economic motion to be tabled this afternoon, I see repeated listings of shared priorities, key priorities and multi-point plans, but try as hard as I might, I cannot find one single mention of the need for action to protect the most vulnerable Ontarians living in poverty or those who are developmentally disabled. There is no mention of the most vulnerable amongst us in this government's economic motion.

My question is a simple one to the Premier: Is this government, through its motion this afternoon, signalling its intent to renege on its commitment to the poor and the disabled?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think yesterday the Premier was as clear as clear can be that our commitment

to reduce poverty in this province is as strong as, if not stronger than, it has ever been before. When an economy is facing challenges, we need every single person to be at their very best. We need every child to get the education they need to be successful. We need every newcomer to get the skills they need to be at their very best in this economy. We need people with disabilities to be able to use their abilities for the benefit of themselves and for all of us. Our commitment is strong, stronger than ever.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. What I just heard was a whole bunch of empty and flowery words. This government promised to reduce poverty by a specific amount with specific actions—the so-called 25 in 5. It promised to help the developmentally disabled and their families only a scant few weeks ago. I saw and heard nothing in the motion this afternoon or nothing in the minister's statement to this House just now that would confirm any of these plans. Rather, the government seems to mention poverty when it wants to lower expectations and talk about what it cannot do at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question: Are the poor and the disabled destined to be the first casualties of the government's new five-point plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate that the member opposite is anxious for us to come forward with our poverty reduction strategy; so are we. That is why we are on track to release the poverty reduction strategy by the end of the year, as we committed to. We are working very hard to make sure we get it right. We are working very hard to make sure that it reflects what we heard on our consultations, because thousands upon thousands of people in Ontario have contributed to this strategy. We are taking the time to get it right, and I ask the member opposite to be patient—wait just a few more weeks—and we will be releasing this strategy on schedule.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. With McMaster University, a world-class university in Hamilton, my constituents and I have been following the movement of the Minister of Finance's Bill 100, the Ontario tax exemption for commercialization, very closely. Although Bill 100 falls under the Minister of Finance, I've been hearing a great deal of criticism regarding the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Of interest to both the university-based and private sector innovations is the availability of venture capital. It was said in this House by a member of the Conservatives that "access to capital for small firms and start-ups is increasingly difficult" and that the government has "provided no adequate replacement." I've been telling the people of Hamilton who are working hard to create the jobs of tomorrow that our government invested \$90 million in the Ontario venture capital fund to address this issue. Minister, is the—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. The Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association wrote a letter to the federal leaders in this election and said, "Do you know what you need to do? You need to do what Ontario has done. You need to act as a catalyst to instill the venture capital market to come to the table and work with us to ensure that there's a sufficient supply of venture capital to take the great ideas that are created in this province and commercialize them right here." So I want to thank my predecessor, the Premier, for creating the Ministry of Research and Innovation, and for creating the Ontario venture capital fund, which today is up and running. Our \$90-million investment has now been leveraged by the private sector. It stands at some \$205 million. If that fund were to be created today, I think, given the turmoil, that there would be some difficulty. But because of the wise leadership of our Premier, we've created that fund. It is up and running and open for—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm glad to hear that the Ontario venture capital fund has been so successful and is being used as an example of what needs to be done by experts in the field.

Another concern of the researchers at the university is the amount of funding that is invested in basic research. I think of the example of the laser. When Einstein first thought of the laser, many thought it would have no practical use. Looking back, we now know that Einstein was far ahead of his time. In fact, it would be difficult to visualize what the world would be like today without lasers for watching a DVD or listening to a CD.

A member from the third party said that the NDP believes in basic research. The member said we must ask ourselves what discoveries we are sacrificing by diverting funds from basic research. Minister, is funding being diverted from basic research? Can you outline examples?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I had a discussion with my good friend the member from Hamilton Mountain, and we were surprised by those comments made by the third party. When we invested, in the last budget, an additional quarter of a billion dollars into research, do you know who voted against that? The NDP. They voted against a quarter of a billion dollars. That adds up now to \$625 million for research, basic research, the kind of research that's going on at McMaster University, one of our world-class universities. Since 2003, our government has invested just under \$76 million into 214 projects at McMaster University. So if they're going to stand up for McMaster in Hamilton, then you have to support our researchers. That's why we voted for the increase. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for thinking ahead and understanding that we needed to put more great ideas in the pipeline, more great ideas for Hamilton and for McMaster, and we're proud of our voting record on this side of the House.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question for the Premier: As you know, homeowners across Ontario are opening their mailboxes to find massive property assessment increases that will result in higher property taxes for many Ontario families and seniors. To make matters worse, while many Ontario families and seniors are now seeing declines in the value of their homes, you decided to lock them into assessed values as of January 1, 2008, at the height of a hot housing market, for four years. Premier, given these uncertain economic times, is it appropriate to whack people with massive assessment increases and then to lock them in at inflated values, with no relief until 2012?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Seniors and others in Ontario need to know that those assessments do not lead to tax increases. And that—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They may want to laugh at the economic circumstances. We don't. We introduced in my last budget a property tax credit for seniors. That property tax credit will come in very handy next year. It will be phased in starting in January. That member voted against it. If anybody needs to reconsider a policy, it's that member and his party. We are standing behind Ontario's—

1120

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not only are families going to be whacked with property tax increases because of your new assessment scheme; they're seeing higher taxes, higher utility costs and higher costs for basic groceries, and these past two weeks they're seeing their savings and investments evaporate before their very eyes. During this time, you've also proposed to hit Ontario families and seniors with a brand new tax on tires, computers, televisions, microwaves and other consumer goods.

Minister, when you were speaking about Stéphane Dion's new plan to increase taxes through his so-called green shift, you said that "massive shifts in tax burden at a time when there's uncertainty" would be a mistake. Will you take your own advice and scrap the new McGuinty tax on tires and electronic goods?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite knows full well that there is no tax increase on those items. I will charitably suggest that he is mischaracterizing what the government has done to ensure we have a good system of recycling that may save taxpayers money.

There is no question that we are in challenging times. Only one party—only this government—has laid out a plan that invests in those areas we can invest in that will see Ontario through these challenging times.

We believe that the investments we are making are the right ones. We wish they'd support the notion of a debate on the economy. We look forward to what they have to

say, and to what others have to say. We will lead Ontario through these challenging times, and we will be better and stronger when we're done.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last week, the minister denied cutting funding to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare and other hospitals that have been successful in an 11-year pilot project to do community-based lab testing. I have this letter from the ministry to Barry Lockhart, chief executive officer of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, dated August 14, 2008, which says, "This letter is to provide notice to you that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is hereby terminating" funding to this pilot project between the minister, Gamma-Dynacare and Algonquin Healthcare.

Can the minister clarify for us today if he is responsible for the termination of this lab project?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm happy to comment, as I did last week, that in 1997 there was a pilot project that we set up around lab services in Muskoka. It was independently evaluated, and the determination that was jointly arrived at was that it would be better, in fact, to provide laboratory services in the same manner in which all Ontarians receive them.

The member makes allegations that somehow there are reductions in services. That is simply untrue. All that is happening here, on the basis of independent advice and the evaluation of this particular service, is not to continue with the pilot, and to return the service to the exact same basis on which Ontarians right across the province receive it. That's what I said last week, and that's what I say today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I agree there was a review. The review showed that the community-based lab testing done by the health centre was excellent and should be continued. We have a letter from the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN that says they did not make that decision. We have arguments coming from Muskoka Algonquin health centre's CEO. He says he argued with the government, saying that the community-based lab increased productivity, reduced application and shortened the time to receive results. It makes bulk purchasing more effective, the volumes help them retain expertise, it makes it easier to cover the 24/7 in-patient lab, it sustains what they call bench strength in the lab in case of emergencies, local physicians prefer it—the list goes on and on. The LHIN doesn't want it closed, the hospital doesn't want it closed and he's telling me that the ministry doesn't want it to close. Can the minister tell us today if he will guarantee that his government will continue to adequately fund—

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

Hon. David Caplan: The government is adequately funding the service and will continue to adequately fund the service. I can say that to the member directly.

But, in fact, the ministry is working very closely with the community lab provider, the Muskoka Algonquin

Healthcare hospital and the North Simcoe Muskoka Local Health Integration Network in the transition and planning process to ensure that all residents of the pilot communities in Bracebridge, Huntsville and Burks Falls continue to have the timely access they would expect to have for laboratory services in their community. In fact, that's precisely why they had the evaluation of the pilot, and it was determined that this would be the best way to provide those particular services.

Regrettably, this member has tried to suggest that somehow services are being eliminated or reduced, which is simply not the case. I would hope that the member would stand in her place and correct her record and indicate that these facts that—

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

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, you finished sitting before the estimates committee yesterday, and I wanted to ask you a question regarding one of the issues that came up during the hearings.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek made a number of assertions and allegations regarding section 50 reprisals and the role of the Ministry of Labour's safety inspectors. Minister, could you take some time to elaborate on the roles and responsibilities of Ministry of Labour inspectors and how they perform their duties to ensure the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Act?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the fine member for Ottawa–Orléans for the question and bring some clarity to what did take place in estimates yesterday.

It's important to understand that the Ministry of Labour's inspectors do respond when a violation of a provision of the Occupational Health and Safety Act is alleged. Our health and safety inspectors visit workplaces where the reprisal has taken place to investigate the health and safety concerns related to that complaint. This may result in an inspector issuing orders for any underlying health and safety violations that may lead to the reprisal of that complaint.

Section 50 reprisals are addressed by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. If the employee is represented by a union, though, the employee can ask for an arbitrator to review and conduct that in place of the employer. If a worker files a reprisal complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: There are a number of constituents who have contacted my office regarding a complaint that they had before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Their concern is primarily about how long it takes to get a decision from the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Can you please tell us how many complaints the Ontario Labour Relations Board has received in the last year,

how many of those cases were settled by the parties in discussions with labour relations officers and how many are outstanding?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again to the member: If the Ontario Labour Relations Board decides that there has been a reprisal, it has a broad range of remedies available to address that reprisal.

In regard to the number of complaints we had, in 2007-08 the Ontario Labour Relations Board received 184 complaints under section 50 of the act alleging wrongful discipline or discharge for acting in compliance with the act. Of this number, 83 cases were carried from 2007-08. Of the 184 cases, 68 were settled by the parties in discussion with labour relations officers, 26 cases were dismissed, five cases were granted and the remaining 81 are pending. Furthermore, the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour inspectors is to ensure that our workplaces in the province of Ontario meet the standards of the Occupational Health and Safety Act—

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Premier. In these tough economic times it is especially important for government to tighten up its spending and make sure that all programs and expenditures are efficient, necessary and based on real results. It is the right of Ontario taxpayers to know exactly where their hard-earned money is going and what they are receiving in return. For example, the Minister of International Trade and Investment is in the Middle East, and despite our best attempts, we have received no information regarding the cost of the trip, the itinerary, the companies that are involved or the expectations. So much for transparency. For instance, what kind of companies are accompanying the minister? Are they construction companies taking advantage of the development boom in Abu Dhabi, Dubai or Saudi Arabia?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm very pleased that on behalf of Ontarians we now have a minister exclusively devoted to pursuing international trade opportunities.

Minister Papatello is in the United Arab Emirates. She is working hard to attract new investment to Ontario. I believe this is Ontario's first-ever mission to that part of the world. She's leading 20 Ontario companies. She's meeting with a number of companies in the following sectors: design and engineering, energy, climate change, sustainable development, investment firms, construction, small business and airlines. I think that's exactly the kind of initiative that Ontarians want us to pursue, and that's why Minister Papatello is over there now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Thank you, Premier, for that answer. That was actually an answer, and I appreciate that.

There are construction companies in that list. Premier, the Oakville Hospital is being delayed because there's a

lack of ability of Ontario construction companies to build that hospital, according to you. Yet here you are sending construction companies over to Dubai, over to Abu Dhabi, over to Saudi Arabia to build buildings there. I would suggest, Premier, that those construction companies should be building a hospital in Oakville and not going over to Dubai to build buildings there.

Premier, will you bring those construction companies home to build a hospital in Oakville, where Ontarians need medical care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: To the honourable member's question: Indeed, because Ontario has been so dedicated to rebuilding infrastructure, much of which was a deficit left behind by the previous government, it has been the case, most certainly in Oakville and in one other circumstance in the province of Ontario, that we have had to somewhat slow our very, very ambitious and aggressive schedule of rebuilding the hospital capital infrastructure.

I can tell the honourable member that it is possible for companies on the one hand to be active in the Ontario market and on the other hand to look for opportunities to expand further. We'll work with all of those companies and make sure that the strong foundation and skills that they have because of our infrastructure investments give them the opportunity to be active in other jurisdictions. This is about exporting our skills and gaining revenue for the people of the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. We have reached a new milestone in the province—I'll be nice today, for your benefit. I have heard some very interesting election advertisements paid for by the federal Liberal Party. One ad calls Ontario Canada's rust belt. Premier, do you agree with your federal counterparts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm happy to say to the member that this is a very interesting week on the federal election front, if the speaker wishes me to speak to it. Finally, albeit arguably too little, too late, there is a recognition of the importance of making investments in industry directly by way of the federal government's investment, however modest, in the auto industry. Finally this parade that has been led by Premier Dalton McGuinty sees some interest in it from the Prime Minister, no doubt with the federal finance minister kicking and screaming.

That is the approach, that is the future and these are the issues, as Ontarians consider the Premier's fairness campaign, that Ontarians will be making decisions upon in the next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: It was bad enough when the federal Conservative Jim Flaherty said that Ontario was the last

place to put your investment dollars, but now we have the federal Liberals calling Ontario Canada's rust belt. Premier, can you do the right thing for Ontario and implement the NDP's three-point plan—institute a Buy Ontario program, create a refundable Ontario manufacturing tax credit and implement an industrial hydro rate? When will you do the right thing for Ontario? And wasn't I nice today?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes. It's relative, but yes.

Fighting for Ontarians is exactly what this government has committed to throughout the duration of the federal election. The Premier has come forth and said that he is not going to endorse a party. He wants Ontarians to think about the fairness campaign and make decisions based upon the reality that Ontario is not getting its fair share of the fiscal federalist funds. In fact, Ontarians' tax dollars are going out of Ontario, and Ontarians are being, frankly, discriminated against on a per capita basis when it comes to health care, funding for new Canadians and a host of other areas. That is what this government's fighting for, that's what the Premier's fighting for, and I'm sure the member, with his new genteel and affable demeanour, will be fighting for the same thing too.

DIAMOND MINING

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and it's regarding the De Beers Victor diamond mine in northeastern Ontario.

As I'm sure the members of this House are aware, De Beers Canada officially opened their Victor mine this past July. It's approximately 90 kilometres west of Attawapiskat, in the James Bay lowlands. This is the first diamond mine in Ontario, and we are thrilled to see it officially in production and open.

In addition to the \$1 billion that De Beers has invested in the development of this mine, the 1,100 construction jobs and approximately 400 new full-time jobs, I understand that the mine is expected to create \$6.7 billion in GDP economic impact in Ontario. This is significant.

Could the minister elaborate on his recent trip to the Victor mine and what this opening means for Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Huron-Bruce, who, the members will also know, cares a great deal about mining, as she represents the community of Goderich, home to the largest salt mine in North America, which is a great thing.

In terms of the Victor diamond mine opening, it was incredibly significant in a number of ways. It's certainly the beginning of a definitive diamond industry here in Ontario, and it's a business model of industry partnering with First Nations and local communities.

I did have the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Victor diamond mine on July 26. The thing that continually struck me and stays with me still was the overwhelming sense of optimism and pride that people felt there, whether it was workers, staff, De Beers execu-

tives, or the elders who were in attendance. There was a strong sense that this project was a very positive thing.

There are many other value-added diamond opportunities, but perhaps I'll get a better chance to discuss those in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You will. Supplementary.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Minister, I know that all the members of this House appreciated your impressions of the official opening of the Victor mine, and I know that they will be equally interested to hear about future opportunities in the diamond industry, moving forward. I'm sure members will be particularly interested in what steps our government is taking to ensure that the Ontario economy benefits from this great resource that we have.

Specifically, Minister, I would like to know what effect the success of De Beers's Victor project has had on diamond exploration activity in other parts of Ontario. Also, Minister, now that we have a producing diamond mine that's up and running, what is our government doing to create and capitalize on a value-added diamond industry here in this province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's a great question. There's no question that diamond exploration both in northeastern and northwestern Ontario has taken off in recent years, in some measure because of the De Beers mine. Currently, there are more than 25 companies exploring across the north for diamonds, with estimated expenditures of \$29 million in 2007.

I'm also proud to inform the House that as a result of an agreement in principle between the McGuinty government and De Beers Canada, we have taken the next step to expand our new diamond industry. The agreement between De Beers and the province means that 10% of the Victor mine production, by value, will be made available for activities such as cutting and polishing in Ontario. That's an estimated \$25 million a year worth of rough stones to be processed right here in Ontario. This opens the door to a vibrant Ontario diamond cluster that could one day include diamond trading, jewellery manufacturing, marketing and tourism, among others. This is a very, very good story for the province of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Minister, on October 2 you stood in your place and said, "We believe that if we can capture kids who maybe are disengaged from school and get them interested ... they'll stay in school, they'll graduate and they'll be a functioning part of our economy."

It appears that you have already decided that some students are more important to save than others. Minister, if you feel so strongly about engaging our youth, why did you and Minister Best refuse to support the CARES program that administers cost-effective general education diplomas to high-risk youth in your fourth-quarter allocation earlier this year? Why do you refuse to

reallocate funds to this program? It's not new money, Minister.

1140

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The policy of this government and our actions to date have created opportunities for kids who have been disengaged from school, who have become re-engaged in school and who are graduating. The fact is we've got 10,000 more students graduating from high school every year. That is a testament to the programs that we've put in place.

If the member opposite is talking about GED certification, I would ask her to have a conversation with the ILC, which is the Independent Learning Centre, and with TVOntario about what we're trying to do to make sure that more adult students, particularly in the north, have an opportunity to complete the GED. In fact, our record on adult education goes far beyond anything that the previous government ever dreamt of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Minister, as a parent and grandparent, it really breaks my heart to see these young people who have been failed by their parents, failed by the system and failed by the government. They are at the mercy of a very violent high-risk district.

Minister Wynne, I want you to look in the gallery. Jessica Mackay is in the gallery today; she's a single mother of two. She was referred to CARES through corrections. She admits that if it had not been for CARES, she would be buried alongside 21 of her friends, she would be on welfare, or she would be in jail. CARES has helped Jessica turn her life around, and she is now enrolled in a college corrections program. She intends to pay it forward, Minister.

Currently, the program is only funded through non-government money. As Minister of Education, how can you justify denying these high-risk youth the right to an education and hope for a productive life?

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I would be happy to meet with Jessica. I'm not aware of this particular case. I'd be absolutely happy to meet with her.

I know that at the end of the year there are always a number of organizations that come forward looking for financing. What I can tell you is that we are working systematically to increase capacity in adult education so that in 2008-09, there will be a \$7-million increase in our adult education programming. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and I are meeting together to coordinate.

The member opposite will know that I wrote a report, when I was parliamentary assistant to Minister Gerard Kennedy, that talked about our concerns around the lack of systematicity in adult education. We are working to coordinate that, to make sure that the resources are there and to make sure that the right programs get funded.

As I said, I would be happy to talk to this young woman.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. A few weeks ago, I visited the village of Weston in northwestern Toronto. I got the chance to meet with the members of the Weston Community Coalition. They're worried about your government's fast-tracking approach to the environmental assessment that's going to put Blue22 across that city and basically divide that community in half. We want to know, and they want to know: Why are you allowing this fast-tracking of the system?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, one of the ways in which we deal with our greenhouse gas emissions and one of the ways in which we can improve our environment is to get more public transit out on the roads. This government has got about 52 projects on the go right now, at a cost to us of about \$17.5 billion. It's all intended for one purpose only: to get cars off the road and people using transit. We felt that the proper thing to do was to have an environmental assessment done with respect to transit within a six-month time period. That's why it was done.

I know there are some issues with respect to the whole Weston situation. Certainly, our member there has brought them forward on numerous occasions; she has been a strong advocate for that.

We want to make sure that we get the transit projects up and running as quickly as possible, having due regard to the environment as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, you should get your own facts right, Minister, because the community of Weston is not saying no to Blue22. They're saying they need to have a system of crossing that's not going to cut their community in half. They understand, as everybody else does, that we need to move to public transit. The second part is, this is a private project. Why didn't we do it with GO in some sort of public investment?

But the question is this: You as the government made a promise that you would in fact do a full EA. Why are you breaking your promise to the people of Weston and fast-tracking this EA, and shortchanging the people of Weston with their concerns?

Hon. John Gerretsen: In actual fact, it will be up to the proponent, which I understand is Metrolinx in this case, as to what system they want to use, whether or not they want to continue with the old environmental assessment or utilize the new six-month rule. We think that the six-month rule with respect to transit is the right way to go as far as environmental assessments are concerned because we want to get as much transit on the books and actually in use by the people of Ontario and Toronto as quickly as possible. And I'm sure that your own Toronto members totally agree with that.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, the issue of emer-

gency waiting times is well-known to all the members of this House. This issue is not new; this is something that my constituents in London–Fanshawe have been coming to my office and telling me about. This summer, the London Health Sciences Centre issued a bed alert because the hospital's critical care beds were operating at full capacity; that is, they were filled with ill patients who could not be moved to make room for other patients. What steps is the minister taking to alleviate this problem?

Hon. David Caplan: I want the member to know—and I appreciate the question from him—that I have confidence in our hospitals to take care of the critically ill patients. I'm going to continue to work with our partners in health care to develop better strategies to reduce ER wait times.

Our government has committed to tackling emergency room wait times and has invested \$109 million in a comprehensive strategy that includes ways to reduce ER waits both inside and outside of the hospital. We enlisted the help of Dr. Allan Hudson to be our wait-times czar. We're setting ER wait-time targets, providing incentives to hospitals to meet those targets. We've invested close to \$2 million in the South West LHIN to provide increased community alternatives to hospital care such as home care. We've also invested \$45.6 million to develop 608 long-term-care beds in London to improve quality of life for our seniors to better alleviate the pressures in our hospitals.

There's a great deal more to do. I appreciate the advocacy of the member from London–Fanshawe.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise to correct something that I said in the House last week. It will take me a moment to describe it. In May, I believe, the member for Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, raised an issue regarding the assessment of so-called granny flats. He again raised the issue in June and I undertook to respond to him. We did not at the time. Through you to the member, I want to apologize for that oversight on our part.

I do want to report to the House and to the member that as a result of his inquiry and diligence on this particular file, we are going to be bringing forward an amendment to the Assessment Act to deal with it. I wanted to thank him for that and for raising the issue with us.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the members to join me in welcoming the former member from Kenora, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments, in the east members' gallery: Frank Miclash. Welcome today.

And welcome three guests of mine, Ab, Dan and Sam Chahbar from London, in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome today.

PETITIONS

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to read this petition which has been collected by Derek Forward, who joins us in the east members' gallery today.

"Whereas the current system" of beer distribution, "practice and" management "of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly' is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

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

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, thereby allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, which numbers just over 10,000 signatures to date. I pass it to my page, Michael.

1150

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "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 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, which will see 16 new labour, delivery, recovery and postpartum (LDRP) birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall in 2008, 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."

I will affix my signature to this and pass it to Asha.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically the 'near monopoly' of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility, convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario, and

"Whereas The Beer Store 'near monopoly', is controlled by 'for-profit, foreign-owned companies' and these companies are not accountable to the people of Ontario, and these companies do not act in the best interests of the people of Ontario;

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

"That legislation be introduced that will permit the retailing and distribution of beer through alternative and additional grocery and supermarket retail channels that will fairly compete with The Beer Store, therefore allowing an accessible, convenient, safe, well-regulated and environmentally responsible retailing environment for beer to become established in the province of Ontario."

I've signed this.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "Whereas the CARES program has successfully mentored 1,500 high-risk youth through their challenging pursuit of a general education diploma; and

"Whereas the high-risk youth in the CARES program have been referred by law enforcement, correction services, family and children's services and Ontario Works as a proactive step towards changing their lives and giving these youth a chance to succeed; and

"Whereas children should not be written off by the government but offered the chance to better themselves and the lives of their children through their own merit; and

"Whereas the general education diploma should be a right in the province of Ontario, not a privilege; and

"Whereas the province has repeatedly funded high-risk youth activities in community centres and agencies across this province;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Minister of Education to provide CARES with the funding necessary to continue to provide mentoring, counselling services and a

general education diploma to high-risk youth in the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Scarlett.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from a number of constituents in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I agree with this petition, I shall affix my signature and send it to the table.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise to table several hundred signatures in support of Bill 25, An Act to proclaim April 2 Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario, by members of the St. Stanislaus-St. Casimir Polish Parishes Credit Union, forwarded to me by the Catholic Youth Studio, and also from St. Anne’s Catholic Women’s League in St. Thomas, Ontario. The petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada’s multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario dur-

ing his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario’s diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member’s bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim” April 2 “Pope John Paul II Day” in Ontario.

As a proponent of this bill I’m pleased to add my signature.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is about fairness for the people of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the federal government gives more support for economic development, health care and infrastructure to other parts of Canada, and unemployed workers in Ontario get less employment insurance support than in other parts of Canada;

“Whereas the federal system of taxes and equalization extracts over \$20 billion from the people of Ontario every year above and beyond what Ottawa invests in Ontario;

“Whereas laid-off workers in Ontario get \$4,630 less in employment insurance than they would get if they lived in another part of Canada;

“Whereas federal health care money is supposed to be divided equally among all Canadians, but right now Ontario residents are shortchanged by \$773 million per year;

“Whereas the federal government provides economic development support for people living in the north, Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the west, but provides no economic development support for southern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the federal government stop gouging the people of Ontario and treat them fairly.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign my signature to this petition.

GASOLINE PRICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Petition for Gas Tax Fairness.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the skyrocketing price of gasoline is causing hardship to families across Ontario; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government charges a gasoline tax of 14.7 cents per litre to drivers in all parts of Ontario; and

“Whereas gasoline tax revenues now go exclusively to big cities with transit systems, while roads and bridges crumble in other communities across Ontario; and

“Whereas residents of rural communities in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock have been shut out of provincial gasoline tax revenues to which they have contributed; and

“Whereas whatever one-time money has flowed to municipalities from the McQuinty Liberal government has been neither stable nor predictable and has been insufficient to meet our infrastructure needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to redistribute provincial gasoline tax revenues fairly to all communities across the province.”

I'm going to hand this to page Sarah.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got another petition asking for fairness for the people of Ontario:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

1200

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government”—whoever it may be—“to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers.”

I fully support Ontario's unemployed workers, and I affix my name to this petition.

STROKE THERAPY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a complete lack of government-funded outpatient therapy for stroke survivors upon discharge from hospital in the city of Cambridge; and

“Whereas, on October 29, 2004, a state-of-the-art government-funded outpatient day hospital program, which included therapy programs for stroke survivors discharged from the hospital, was cut by the Cambridge Memorial Hospital due to a lack of provincial funds;

“We, the undersigned stroke survivors, caregivers, family members and friends of stroke survivors in Cambridge, Ontario, draw your attention to the following:

“That the absence of a government-funded outpatient therapy program leaves many stroke survivors who are unable to pay for private therapy with a gap in services. As a result of this lack of therapy, many survivors despair and regress; and

“That therapy is critical to restoring a survivor's ability to function and become rehabilitated and reintegrated in the community, as opposed to being forced to enter a long-term-care facility, thus saving the system money while greatly improving the quality of life for stroke survivors and their families; and

“That outpatient therapy is relatively inexpensive. A full-time physiotherapist, occupational therapist and a half-time speech pathologist and social worker required to deliver the service cost less per day than one bed in the hospital;

“Therefore we request that the Ontario government give priority to restoring a government-funded outpatient therapy program in Cambridge, Ontario, to provide desperately needed rehabilitation for stroke survivors (and others with similar needs) after discharge from hospital.”

As I agree with the contents therein, I sign on the face of it.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with identity theft.

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 75, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature,... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

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

“(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

“(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.”

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A quorum is now present. The honourable member from Davenport can complete his petition.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This petition is about identity theft. I will not read the petition from the beginning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just the last paragraph.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: “(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

Certainly, I agree with this petition and I’m proud to sign my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for petitions has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1205 to 1500.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I stand in support of CARES, an organization committed to educating our high-risk youth in some very challenging neighbourhoods. The Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, was right about one thing today. In her brief entitled Ontario Learns—Strengthening our Adult Education System, Minister Wynne said, “One of the reasons it is important for our provincial government to establish a focus on adult education is to encourage ... solutions to particular local problems and to support the strengths of all deliverers.” I hope that Minister Wynne is able to put partisan politics aside and help the CARES group continue their important work with high-risk youth.

It costs millions of dollars more to taxpayers of Ontario to keep young people on welfare or in prison for the rest of their life than to break the cycle right here and now. I am asking, on behalf of these young people who want to help themselves, that we give them the opportunity to become productive citizens, proactively engaged in their communities, whose children will grow up with a fighting chance.

CARES has approached Minister Wynne once and has also been refused by their MPP, Minister Best. All they want is to keep their doors open. I hope Minister Wynne will finally make that happen.

FORT WILLIAM REDSKINS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to congratulate the Fort William Redskins football team as they celebrate the team’s 50th anniversary of winning the 1958 Dominion Intermediate Football Championship. That year, led by legendary quarterback Albert Davey, halfback Albert Filipovic, punt returner Harvey Littleford and defensive stalwart Sherry Wishart, the team beat St. Francis Xavier

10-0 at snow-covered Thunder Bay’s McKellor Park before 3,500 delirious fans, who tore down both goalposts after the game.

I was pleased to recently address their annual reunion breakfast in Thunder Bay. Our community is proud of the dedication and commitment the team members have shown in preserving and celebrating this rich sport’s heritage. The team members have set a fine example, inspiring players and fans, young and old, by holding these annual reunions for close to 36 years.

This reunion of some 150 surviving Redskins and their family reps coming from all over North America included the presence of their esteemed coach Jack “Baldy” James from Calgary who, with the assistant coach Harold “Snowball” Harri, directed them in the 1940s and 1950s to 10 straight city championships, six western Canadian titles and northwestern Ontario’s first and only Canadian football title. Also present at the reunion were former players of the Fort William Ukes and Port Arthur Mustangs. Several of the Redskins went on to Canadian Football League careers, including Lefty Tait and Vic Marks, Joe Delvecchio and George Grant.

I want to congratulate the Redskins committee members, including former players, who put this event together: Sherry Wishart, Ed Cox and Bob Cameron, Rob McCormack, Morris Stoyka, Bob Loney, Bob Tindall—who’s the head of the quarterback booster club—and Ken “Casey” Campbell.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. John O’Toole: This government’s review of the provincial-municipal fiscal partnership was supposed to be completed in early 2008—in fact, earlier than that. It was delayed to the spring, then the summer. Most recently, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has claimed an agreement may be reached by the end of the month.

The province and municipalities will soon be preparing their budgets. They’re doing so in a climate of economic uncertainty, to say the very least. More than ever, it is important to have a fiscal agreement between the province and the municipalities. By ignoring deadlines and timetables, this government is proving that it doesn’t take the provincial-municipal fiscal service review very seriously, just as this government doesn’t take seriously the loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs or the need for an inquiry into C. difficile or the lack of family doctors or the need to increase the hours of care in long-term-care homes.

A new deadline of October 31—by the way, it’s Halloween—was mentioned recently in the Toronto Star. Municipalities cannot help but wonder if it will be a trick or a treat from the McGuinty government when the new deadline for the provincial-municipal service level review rolls around.

It’s clear: They’ve delayed, dithered and denied, and I can assure you that the people of Ontario are watching

for one more broken promise from a government that has a notorious record for continually breaking its promises.

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to be able to rise in the House in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week in Canada. During this week, the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health seeks to engage in an education campaign designed to raise public awareness around the reality of mental illness.

On Monday, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, I had the pleasure of attending the first annual Leaders for Mental Health kickoff breakfast hosted by the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health. Many distinguished leaders in the Ottawa community came together to hear and share personal stories about how mental illness has touched their lives or the lives of someone they know. Daniel Alfredsson, captain of the Ottawa Senators, is championing the youknowwhoiam.com campaign to raise awareness. As we sat together, we learned that one in five individuals will be affected by mental illness at some point in their lifetime.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, the Royal Ottawa Foundation for Mental Health is working hard to raise funds in support of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre so that they can continue to provide high-quality care, both now and in the future.

For far too long, there has been a negative stigma about mental illness. It is my hope that through Mental Illness Awareness Week, we can reduce that negative stigma, while promoting positive best practices and encouraging all community members to come forward to support this worthwhile cause.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My constituents in Wellington-Halton Hills are anxious today. They're anxious about losing their retirement savings, their jobs, and possibly even their homes. They expect all governments to respond effectively to this economic crisis, and rightly so.

But the McGuinty Liberal government's performance in question period today was disappointing in the extreme. The finance minister, for example, now says that we need a debate. He should have acknowledged that reality a long time ago. We absolutely needed a debate, but we needed one before, not after, the crisis hit. We needed a debate at the beginning of June, when John Tory and our caucus first called for one.

Based on this government's record, it has no intention of listening to any new economic ideas. They just want to play the blame game. That's why this government's motion is nothing more than a disingenuous and shameful charade.

We look forward to offering our constructive suggestions, as we have in the past. The people of Ontario deserve no less.

We call upon the McGuinty government to change its high-taxing, out-of-control-spending, blame-spreading course.

My constituents, some of whom have already lost their jobs, are expecting better than phony motions and non-answers. It's time the Premier answers for his government's failed economic policies. It's time he changes course. It's time he provides the strong leadership that these days so desperately require.

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'd like to thank Premier McGuinty for his leadership in trying to bring the 2015 Pan American Games to southern Ontario. The benefits both to our economy and even our share of confidence as hosts are significant.

These Pan Am Games will be generating more than \$2 billion of economic activity and should attract over 250,000 tourists and 7,500 athletes from 42 countries.

As you know, the games would be spread across the region from St. Catharines to Toronto. The job creation numbers alone would top over 17,000. It would also help build a better public transit system, more housing and great sports facilities, as has been done in other cities that hosted sports events, such as Turin, Italy, and Barcelona, Spain.

I attended the recent launch for the Pan American Games a week ago with our former Premier David Peterson and our Minister of Health Promotion. I'm convinced that we have the best, most competent people leading the bid, and I hope that all members will support them.

I certainly look forward to having the Pan American Games here in Ontario in 2015.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I rise today to speak to a matter which is costing our province dearly. Ontario is being hard hit by the financial crisis in the US, the high Canadian dollar, and the irresponsible economic management of the federal government. Former CAW president Buzz Hargrove said, "The federal government's lack of attention to the crisis in the manufacturing industry is nothing short of scandalous."

1510

In this time of economic instability, it is imperative that we act to find solutions to the problems we are facing. That is why, as well as the many substantial initiatives that the McGuinty government is already undertaking, we are calling on Ottawa to resolve the unfair way in which we are being treated in the national equalization system. Allowing Ontario to keep more of its own money would give us more tools to help stimulate sectors of the economy that have been hit so hard.

The federal government needs to step up and support programs in Ontario just as it has in other regions when

they were facing economic challenges. The federal government budgets nearly \$1 billion for regional economic development programs but not one cent of it is spent in southern Ontario. A southern Ontario economic development program would provide the additional assistance to sectors of our economy that sorely need it.

ALBERT NAULT

M^{me} France Gélinas: If I mentioned the name Constable Albert Nault, most people wouldn't know who I was talking about, but this is about to change. This Sunday in Sudbury, there will be a very special ceremony to dedicate the bridge on the Highway 17 southeast bypass in the memory of Constable Albert Nault.

Constable Nault was the first Sudbury area police officer to be killed in the line of duty. On December 21, 1931, shortly after midnight, Constable Albert Nault began his beat patrol by conducting property checks off the CNR freight sheds. In 1931, that was a rough area of town. Not long afterwards, Mr. Nault was found shot to death. To this day, his revolver has not been recovered and his murder remains unsolved.

Constable Nault was 35 years old when he died. He left behind his wife and four young children. Mrs. Catherine Kaattari is Constable Nault's granddaughter. She's the one who has spearheaded the effort to honour her grandfather's memory. Constable Nault's children, his family, and indeed all Sudburians, look forward to the Sunday ceremony to honour Constable Nault's place in history and give him the public recognition he so rightly deserves.

It is my pleasure to invite all Sudburians to Tom Davies Square at 11 on Sunday, and I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their support in making this happen.

YOM KIPPUR

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of my Jewish constituents in Willowdale, and indeed across the province, who will begin observing Yom Kippur at sundown this evening.

Yom Kippur, which translates as the Day of Atonement, is the most solemn and important religious Jewish holiday. This holy day is observed with a 25-hour period of fasting and prayer. Yom Kippur follows on the 10th day after Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. According to Jewish tradition, on Rosh Hashanah, God inscribes each person's fate for the upcoming year into a book which is not sealed until Yom Kippur. The 10 days in between are the 10 days of repentance and offer the opportunity for self-reflection, introspection and seeking forgiveness for any wrongdoing.

During this time, individuals greet each other with the Hebrew phrase "Guhmar Chatimah Tovah," which translates as, "May you be inscribed in the book of life." In these last hours of the 10 days of repentance, I would like

to wish all of those who will be observing Yom Kippur, Guhmar Chatimah Tovah, may you all have a peaceful, healthy and fulfilling year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Reports by committees? Reports by committees? The member for Beaches–East York.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. I was reflecting on the Jewish New Year.

I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr14, An Act to revive 1068080 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY ÉCONOMIE DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll begin by reading the motion:

I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province faces economic challenges created by the high dollar, high international oil prices, the US economic slowdown, international economic turmoil, and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India especially;

That just as Ontario families do when finances get tight at home, the Ontario government should make adjustments as necessary to its finances while protecting our shared priorities, such as health care, education, the environment and public safety;

That the investments made over the last five years in vital public services and Ontarians' key priorities like skills training, infrastructure, education and health care will help Ontario weather the economic challenges in the short term and emerge stronger than ever;

And affirms our strongest possible support for Ontario workers and families and for a healthy, growing economy by continuing to implement the five-point economic plan that includes: investing in the skills of our people, making targeted tax cuts, investing in research and innovation, investing in infrastructure and partnering with businesses, while also expanding trade ties within Can-

ada and internationally and seeking fairness from the federal government for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. McGuinty has moved government notice of motion number 87. Mr. McGuinty?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am very pleased to participate in the debate about the economy. This is an issue that weighs heavily on the minds of all Ontarians, and members of this House should have the opportunity to express their thoughts, and by that, I mean their concerns, their criticisms and their advice.

I want to make it clear that our government is open to advice. Ontario, indeed the world, finds itself in uncharted economic waters. This challenge will demand the best from all of us, so I look forward to criticism that is constructive and advice that is thoughtful.

For five years now, we have been moving forward with our plan to strengthen our economy. We will not abandon that plan. It's a solid plan, and we've made considerable progress under that plan, but we remain open to building on it, to improving it so it better meets our needs in light of changing circumstances.

In my remarks today, I want to do four things. I want to acknowledge the reality of our economic challenges and the impact these are having on our families and businesses. I want to address the causes of our economic challenges. I want to inform Ontarians of the plan we have in place to help us overcome our challenges and of the progress we are making under that plan. Finally, I want to reassure Ontarians that, just like previous generations in our province who faced and overcame their challenges, we, too, will overcome ours.

I'll begin with a few facts about our economy. During the past five years, the Ontario economy has grown steadily. We have 450,000 more jobs, our unemployment rate has fallen from 7% to 6.3%, and we've made these gains in the face of a high dollar, the high cost of oil and a sluggish US economy. These are all facts, but they're hardly the full story.

Nous avons connu d'importantes pertes d'emplois dans le secteur manufacturier pendant plusieurs années. Il s'agit du même genre de pertes qu'ont connu les États-Unis, le Royaume-Uni et l'Australie.

Depuis 2002, on estime que nous avons perdu 200 000 emplois dans le secteur manufacturier.

1520

The fact is that we've experienced severe job losses in manufacturing over several years now—the kinds of manufacturing job losses seen in the US, the UK and Australia as well. It's been estimated that 200,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario since 2002. Our forestry workers have also been hit hard.

We've created many more jobs than we've lost, but that's little consolation to Ontarians who have lost their jobs. A job loss should be seen for what it truly is. It's not a statistic; it's a hardship, it's traumatic and it's especially hard for parents with young families to support. Many Ontarians who are losing a job are getting another one fairly quickly, but some are not and their

pain is real. We are committed, we are determined to do everything we can to help those families. I want to acknowledge the very real worry felt by all our families, even those that have not been touched by job loss.

We find ourselves today in a period of tremendous global economic uncertainty. Ontarians are understandably anxious and concerned for their future. I say to all our families: While we can't control global economic events, there is no better place to find shelter in the storm than right here in Ontario. We have enduring strengths, a shared commitment to look after one another and a sound plan to grow stronger. Of course, I'm talking about our five-point plan to grow the economy.

We knew from the day we first formed the government that beating out the Chinas and the Indias meant we needed to do a better job of turning the remarkable ingenuity of Ontarians, their creative ideas, into brand new products. That's why, three years ago, we created our province's first Ministry of Research and Innovation. By the end of this year we will have invested \$1 billion to support about 1,000 research and commercialization projects which are helping us create the jobs of the future. We're not stopping there. We created a \$205-million venture capital fund to attract investment in new companies with high growth potential, and we're offering a 10-year tax exemption to new businesses that commercialize Canadian ideas, so that our home-grown ideas can be turned into hometown jobs.

We've also long understood the need to invest in our infrastructure. That's why we got right to it three years ago when we launched a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure plan. Then, in 2006, we launched Move Ontario to help build transit, roads and bridges in every municipality in Ontario. Next, in 2007, we launched Move Ontario 2020, a massive \$17.5-billion public transit plan for the GTA and Hamilton. Then, just this year, we provided \$1.1 billion directly to municipalities for their infrastructure needs, like roads, bridges and transit. It was because of our decisive action on infrastructure years ago that I can report that today there are 21 major construction projects under way through Infrastructure Ontario, employing thousands and thousands of construction workers, and there are another 10 projects in the pipeline—all this because we understood and we moved quickly.

Something else our government understood from the beginning: It takes the best workers in the world to get the best jobs in the world. So, again two years ago, we launched our Reaching Higher plan, a plan to dramatically increase funding by \$6.2 billion in post-secondary education. Thanks to that investment, there are now 100,000 more young Ontarians in colleges and universities, and 50,000 more learning a trade. Because of new funding in our high schools, over 22,000 more kids have graduated from high school instead of dropping out—but we didn't stop there. Just this year, we launched Second Career to help laid-off workers get the higher skills they need for their next career.

I recently read a story about a laid-off auto worker from Bowmanville, Jeff Statham. He's 38 and has two

small kids at home, but because of Second Career, Jeff has the support he needs to train for the job he has always wanted. He wanted to be a police officer. We're helping him to get there.

Une solide économie a besoin d'une solide main-d'œuvre qui travaille pour de solides entreprises. Nous comprenons l'effet qu'ont les impôts sur nos entreprises et nous savions qu'en allégeant ce fardeau, cela les aiderait à connaître le succès et à créer plus d'emplois.

A strong economy needs a strong workforce working for strong businesses. We understood the impact of tax on our businesses, and we knew that lightening the load would help them succeed and create even more jobs. That's why we've already cut business taxes by \$1.5 billion. Fully phased in, our tax cuts will save our businesses nearly \$3 billion annually. Because of a very early agreement I reached with Prime Minister Martin, our new harmonized corporate tax collection system will save Ontario businesses a lot of money starting next year, up to \$100 million annually in compliance costs and another \$90 million in corporate income taxes.

This brings me to the last point in our economic plan. Ontarians have always understood we're at our best when we work together, so five years ago we made it clear we were ready to work with Ontario businesses to partner with those that wanted to grow by investing in their workers or in new technologies. Since then, we've invested \$500 million in the auto sector to generate \$7.5 billion in new investment and thousands of jobs. We're proud of our auto workers, who have made Ontario the number one auto producer in North America. Yes, we've lost jobs, but we'll keep fighting for more. The auto sector has a bright, green future in Ontario, and we are eager to help build that future.

We also see a bright future for a stronger manufacturing sector generally. That's why, three years ago, we created our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. So far, 18 projects have generated \$880 million in investment and created or retained 4,000 jobs. Again, we didn't stop there. Earlier this year, we launched our Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to help new businesses create the jobs of the future.

Our support for the forest sector has created or secured nearly 5,000 jobs and generated \$368 million in new private sector investments since 2005. We increased the rural economic development fund by \$30 million over four years to support jobs and economic growth in rural Ontario.

I can tell you that our partnerships with business are paying off for our workers and their families. Over two years ago, I visited Diamond Aircraft in London to celebrate our government's partnership with that business, a partnership that saw us invest \$10 million in that company's expansion. Two years ago, Diamond Aircraft had 340 employees; today, they have 600. That's progress.

Back in July, I visited a company in Vaughan called 6N Silicon. They build solar panels. We are investing nearly \$8 million in 6N Silicon, and they're opening a new manufacturing plant, creating 84 new jobs. That's progress.

In Alliston just last month, Honda officially opened a new engine plant. We were proud to invest \$15 million to kick-start that plant, a plant that's going to employ 340 people. That's progress too.

But it's important that we acknowledge that it's not enough, not as long as some families are hurting. We're going to keep working hard until all our workers and their families can find opportunity in this changing economy.

Finding that opportunity means looking beyond the US when it comes to trade. That's why, during the past five years, we've opened up seven new international trade offices. It's why we now have a minister, Sandra Pupatello, exclusively focused on enhancing our international trade ties. It's why Minister Pupatello is today leading Ontario's first-ever trade mission to the United Arab Emirates. And it's why, later this month, I will return to China with people representing Ontario's environmental technology businesses.

Not only have we moved aggressively to exploit opportunities outside of Canada; we've also moved just as aggressively to obtain fairness for Ontarians in Canada. We want a full partner in Ottawa, a fair partner in Ottawa. This Legislature has been united in our demand for fairness, and for good reason. It's now well documented: Ontario taxpayers are sending over \$20 billion every year through Ottawa to other provinces to cut their taxes and invest in their programs.

1530

Si Ottawa nous traitait équitablement, et si nous pouvions conserver plus de nos impôts ici en Ontario, nous pourrions progresser bien plus avec notre plan en cinq volets visant à renforcer notre économie. En particulier, nous pourrions accorder un meilleur soutien aux Ontariennes et Ontariens qui perdent leur emploi, nous pourrions accroître l'infrastructure permettant de créer des emplois, et nous pourrions fournir plus d'aide au secteur manufacturier qui crée des emplois.

If we were treated fairly by Ottawa, if we could keep more of our taxpayer dollars in Ontario, we would move faster and further with our five-point plan to strengthen this economy. In particular, we could better support Ontarians who are losing their jobs, we could build more infrastructure to create jobs and we could provide more assistance to manufacturers who provide jobs. You see, as proud Canadians, Ontarians want more than anything else to build a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada. Giving us fairness will give us the tools we need to get that job done.

The events of recent days, with wildly fluctuating stock markets, failing US banks and a spreading global financial crisis, have Ontarians very concerned. Some, especially our seniors, are very worried about losses to their retirement savings. The truth is that none of us knows exactly how global economic events will unfold. We do know that Ontario will be affected; we don't know exactly how. But just as we need to be honest about the global economic challenge before us today, so should we be honest about something else, and that is our

truly remarkable proven ability as Ontarians to overcome whatever challenges come our way.

Every generation of Ontarians has faced and overcome challenges unique to its time. The first Ontarians—our First Nations—and then our settlers who followed centuries ago fought the harsh elements and carved out an existence for themselves here, and we won. In the early days before we were even a province of Canada, we faced invasion and rebellion, and we won. Some of our generations faced world war and fought for our freedom, and we won. Ontarians came together to beat back the economic despair of the Great Depression, and we won. We overcame the OPEC crisis in the 1970s and economic slowdowns in the early 1980s and 1990s, and we won. Through it all, Ontarians have remained steadfast and strong and resilient. We have always come back stronger, and this time will be no different.

Our commitment to Ontarians is this: While your government can't do everything, we will do everything we can to help. We will keep moving forward with our plan to grow this economy. We will keep investing in innovation, in the skills and education of our workers, in infrastructure, in lower business taxes and in partnerships with business. We will keep fighting for fairness from Ottawa. We will keep seeking new economic opportunities around the world. And if changing circumstances demand it, we will change our plan to make Ontario stronger. Above all, I want to ensure the people of Ontario that we are in your corner. We are going to get through this together, and we're going to look after one another. We will do what Ontarians have always done: We will overcome our challenges, and we will build a better, stronger, more caring Ontario for all our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This just in from the TSX: I'm sure it's gone up by 200 points.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: At the outset, I want to take a few minutes—and I think it's appropriate—to talk about the process and how we arrived where we are today, in terms of the motion that is before the House. I think it's appropriate, especially for Liberal backbenchers, and especially the newer members of the Legislature, to understand what happened here.

We heard the Premier in his address: "We're at our best when we work together." Fine words, but let's take a look at the process used to bring this motion before the Legislature today: no consultation, no discussion, no effort to reach out to the opposition parties to deal with this matter or the wording of the motion. Traditionally—historically—when we've looked toward all parties to support a message that came out of this Legislature, we've worked together on the wording. It may have taken a day or two, or even three, to work it out, to finesse it so that we could have comfort levels within all three parties represented in this Legislature. Regrettably,

that didn't happen. In this instance, this motion was sprung on the opposition at the end of the business day yesterday.

We have House leaders in this place who, again, traditionally meet weekly to talk about the business of the House, negotiate the schedule for debate and, sometimes, negotiate ways in which we can arrive at a consensus on a range of issues going forward. Again, that did not happen.

I want to compliment at least two members of the Progressive Conservative staff, Julie Kwiecinski and Glen Stone, who worked late last night to ensure that the members of the official opposition were as well informed as we could be going forward with what the Premier and his colleagues have described as an emergency debate.

We're very disappointed in the process, and we're very disappointed in the approach. The Premier has used fine words here today, and we would have trouble disagreeing with many of them. But the reality behind those fine words is very disappointing: certainly, not one iota of effort to make it, in his words, "our best when we work together." There's no question that these are challenging times, and we should find ways to put partisanship aside.

We're having a great deal of trouble not only with the way this matter has been handled, in terms of excluding the opposition parties from the process, but also with the wording of the motion itself. There seems to be a real effort here to pat themselves on the back with respect to policies that now have been in place for about five years. We have to, regrettably again, question the sincerity. Actions belie words in this instance, and there's too strong an element of self-serving contained within the wording of the motion.

We also have concerns about motivation, in terms of laying groundwork for changes that may be planned by the government. We specifically raised two of those concerns in question period today, related to the potential for deficits or increased taxes, without getting any meaningful response from the Premier or his Minister of Finance.

When we talk about sincerity—and I want to talk about the past two weeks since the House has been back—obviously, the economy is the issue worldwide, not just in Ontario or North America. We have pressed the Premier and his colleagues on not just our concerns, but the concerns of families, seniors and communities right across this province.

1540

We've asked specific questions about the state of the economy, questions like, "How much of the \$800-million reserve fund has been used?" Another question: "What's the update on your commitment to find \$1 billion in savings and efficiencies, a commitment made in the March budget in order to achieve a balanced budget?" Seven months after the start of the fiscal year, we felt it was a reasonable request for people—not just the opposition, but the people of this province—to know where we stand with respect to achieving that goal. Con-

sistently, the minister and the Premier would say, “Wait until October 22. You’ll find out on October 22, when we give you an economic statement.”

Today he’s asking us to discuss the economy without knowing the state of the province’s books. I would ask any fair-minded person sitting in this chamber or viewing the proceedings to tell us how you get where you want to go if you don’t know where you’re starting. I think that’s a legitimate question. You can’t find a solution if you don’t know what the problems are. That’s the position the Premier and his colleagues have placed us all in.

For the past two years, this government has ignored warnings from both opposition parties and renowned economists, including their own economic advisers, and they have continued on their merry taxing-and-spending way.

Only a few weeks ago, with the economic storm clouds circling, they spent up to \$2.7 million of taxpayers’ money on a party for themselves and their friends in Windsor. When you look at that sort of thing, it’s a relatively small example, I suppose, in the context of the total budget, but it’s the sort of thing that people who are out of work or threatened with losing their jobs, communities, should be deeply offended by. Struggling families, communities, would, I suspect, be deeply offended if they only knew about it, and regrettably, partly because of the House rules that have been changed by this government and the declining coverage of this place, not too many Ontarians are aware of that.

The more I think about this motion that’s before us, the more I believe it’s a cynical, shameful stunt—regrettably so; I don’t come to that conclusion easily—and perhaps giving false hope to families and communities who are genuinely concerned about their future. As I said earlier, I also believe that the other underlying motive behind this motion is to lay the groundwork for tax increases and/or deficits or both.

As we discuss and debate the current economic situation, from the Progressive Conservative perspective, I want to make one thing very clear: There is still every reason to believe in Ontario, to have hope for a bright future. The location of this province hasn’t changed; it’s a strategic location, and whatever people may be saying today about our proximity to the United States market, it will continue to be a blessing for us and for generations to come. The natural resources of this province are still here. We can and we must find ways to conserve them and to seek benefit from them, at the same time helping us build a stronger Ontario. Our farmers are still the best in the world, capable of growing the highest-quality food. Our people are still among the smartest, the hardest-working people in all the world.

In this province, as the Premier referenced, we have a proud heritage of leadership: economic leadership; leadership on a range of social policies, including health care and education; and, I should add, leadership in nation-building. It has come from a combination of hard work and smarts and from strong, steady leadership that put growth, leadership and prosperity at the core of the mandate received from voters.

In one sense, today’s debate is welcome, although very late. I think most of us recognized, at least on this side, the warning signs of impending trouble. We saw them growing around us, and we’ve been asking the government to give people a chance to air their views. Our party leader, Mr. Tory, suggested earlier this year that we work together—political parties, government, business, labour and others—suggested that we sit down for a summit. He wasn’t the only one; I believe OPSEU also suggested this: to sit down to see if we could agree on elements of a problem that was surely arising months ago when he made that suggestion. That’s fine if we could agree on at least some of the solutions. The McGuinty government said no.

We’ve been asking for an economic and financial update for months and if we’d had that summit, and an update in the spring, we might have put some measures in place by now that would actually be helping to save jobs today or to attract some new investment. Again, no update, no information, no action taken by the McGuinty government. Even with an update—now, we have an update still weeks away. We have a debate today. If it was a straightforward debate, the result of consultation and agreement between the parties, it would demonstrate not only goodwill but perhaps illustrate a different approach by the McGuinty government, one that would show recognition that we are indeed in very different times.

If the resolution put forward was the result of some discussion and negotiations involving all members of the provincial Parliament, it might show a sense on the part of Mr. McGuinty and the folks in his office that times of crisis require all hands on deck. Maybe it would show that he realizes, in times of crisis, that you want to reach out to all MPPs, MPPs from all parties, to ask for their ideas and ask for their help, and I think that’s what people expect.

That’s not what this is about, regrettably. What we got was more public relations: a resolution surely designed to score political points for the McGuinty Liberals while people are continuing to lose their jobs, fearing they are losing their homes and their pensions and are looking for leadership, not political games. This is a resolution designed to give the government a blank cheque, perhaps to raise taxes again and perhaps run a deficit. It’s a resolution to promote the myth that Ontario really can’t do anything on its own to keep jobs, to attract jobs, to help people who are struggling; the myth that, somehow, Mr. McGuinty and his ministers are just innocent bystanders who’ve been victimized by stormy seas around us. We heard more of that blame game here earlier.

And that’s the central problem. Mr. McGuinty, I think, really believes that Ontario got to the top of the mountain by accident, that we are entitled to stay there by right. He closes his eyes to the fact that we’ve been sliding down that mountain for some time—and with his policies speeding up that decline, not stopping it in its tracks. He’s allowed this province to slide down, to decline in

far too many areas where we used to be leaders. I'll discuss some of those in a moment. He's assumed that some kind of "Let's hope for the best" mantra, repeated often enough, will be a substitute for action and real leadership.

Perhaps even worse than any of that is the fact that Mr. McGuinty and his government seem prepared to just settle for an Ontario that is declining—it is not the leader in Canada anymore—where a barely passing grade is just accepted as being good enough. Well, I can tell you that our party, the Progressive Conservative caucus and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, never have accepted and never will accept an Ontario that strives for nothing more than a passing grade. We cannot and we will not accept an Ontario that is anything less than it can be: the economic leader, the leader in delivering top-quality social programs, a nation builder like no other.

1550

Unlike the Premier, we Progressive Conservatives understand that if you believe in Ontario being all it can be and must be, there goes with that an important set of responsibilities: the responsibility to take steps yourself to do whatever you can to build a strong and dynamic economy. Without it, we simply can't offer opportunity. We simply won't have the money to pay for the crucially important social programs.

It's fine to demand things from others, whether it's the federal government or individual citizens, and it's fine to point to external circumstances which make our challenges even more daunting. We all recognize that. But in the end, you don't have any credibility talking about those things, you're not doing what the people sent you here to do, if you do not at the same time accept some responsibility for yourself, if you don't actually do anything and everything you can to make the situation better. And you don't have any credibility if you're seen to be playing cynical political games while a crisis is sweeping across the province. People losing their jobs, people worried about losing their pensions or their homes, have the right to expect more than to see the Premier playing political games.

As our leader, Mr. Tory, said earlier today, Mr. McGuinty should be trying to score investment and jobs for Ontario, not scoring political points for himself and his party. It's those kinds of games that have people so turned off with all politicians.

I will be tabling an amendment at the end of my remarks which I would like to hope—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: —very rude. Rude.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: He is talking about the government, Speaker, just to make that clear.

I'm going to be proposing an amendment at the end of these remarks which I would like to hope members opposite can support, because it lays out not self-congratulatory rhetoric but some ideas on how we can actually encourage job creation and investment, show some government restraint and create more training opportunities. That's just to cite a few examples.

The Liberal government should be very clear at the outset about the motion in the form it is proposed. The notion that we would support a resolution which endorses the big-taxing, big-spending, job-crushing policies of this government was cynical—ridiculous from the outset. It won't happen because we believe those policies have contributed to the mess we're in today. That's why we will try to amend it, knowing that Mr. McGuinty should have taken this seriously and played it straight from the outset.

I think it would be helpful to take a few minutes to review just where Ontario stands today and put some facts on the record on how far we've fallen—a quick look at some of the policies that the government has put in place that have helped us to get where we are today—and then, again, review some of the steps that we believe could and should be taken to reverse the decline and start the process of getting Ontario back on top. We know the province is falling behind. The fiscal agenda of the government is one that has been eliminating our competitive advantage over the past five years, driving business investment and jobs into neighbouring jurisdictions—we're seeing that on an almost daily basis—jurisdictions that offer lower tax rates and a more attractive business environment. Other provinces across this great country are seeking to become more competitive. They are lightening their tax burden, providing economic stimulus to create jobs, but Ontario at the same time is falling further and further behind.

This year, the TD Bank reported that the province is on track to becoming a have-not province—not a proud moment in our history. On the unemployment front, for the first time in 30 years Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Our unemployment rate remains above the national average and is being forecast, without the latest meltdown, by all the major banks to stay that way through 2009. On the housing starts, I'm not sure I have the most up-to-date figures here because I know there were new stats out this week, but the ones we do have, housing starts declined almost 28% in July to 59,000 units; in 2007, we were down 7.2% in terms of housing starts.

International merchandise exports: Over the first six months of this year, the value of those exports is down almost 13%. Manufacturing sales, over the first six months of this year, are down 7.5% from the previous year.

We heard the Premier in his comments referencing his pride in job creation. I think we need a little clarification on those statistics that the Premier, his ministers and his backbenchers frequently refer to.

We have gained a total of 449,600 new jobs since October 2003. Over half those new jobs—we want to put this on the record—236,300 jobs, are public sector jobs, versus a mere 154,300 in the private sector. That represents a 22% increase in public sector jobs versus a mere 4% in the private sector. Since October 2003, Ontario created more public sector jobs than all other

provinces combined. Think about that. That's clearly unsustainable as we go forward.

Let's talk about the job situation. We know what has happened in the forestry, fishing, mining and oil and gas sectors—significant job losses. In manufacturing, we've lost 213,000, and I hear different numbers from our friends to the left that are even higher than this, but from the stats we have, 213,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in this province since 2004—many, many communities impacted by this. We heard of Goderich just a week or so ago. Smiths Falls neighbours my riding, and my friend Mr. Hillier, who's not here today—really impacting Smiths Falls. In Gananoque in my riding, they've lost three manufacturing operations in the last two years. You can go across the province looking especially at these smaller communities, seeing the jobs disappear, their tax base becoming dramatically eroded.

There's another one we should comment on in terms of the record of this government, and they can't escape it. It has to be drawn to the public's attention in terms of their responsibility for the situation we're in today. It's not completely their responsibility; we will agree that's the case. But they've tried to avoid any degree of responsibility, and we have a responsibility on this side of the House, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, to make sure the public, the taxpayers of this province, the people who are losing their jobs, the people who are worried about their futures, the communities impacted, are made aware of what this government has done over its past five years and what they're failing to do as we go forward.

Runaway spending: The fiscal policy approach of this government appears to be focused largely on increasing government revenues in order to fund government spending. If you take a look at the current economic outlook, that's a policy that is increasingly risky and economically harmful.

The Premier, Mr. McGuinty—his government has increased total spending by \$27 billion or 40%, to \$96 billion today from \$69 billion when it took office. Total program spending has increased by nearly 50%, up \$28 billion.

1600

If you want to put this in some perspective, let's take a look at historical spending. Bob Rae, that renowned Liberal, when he was Premier of this province, only managed to increase total spending by 21% in five years versus 50% by this government. The only one that even comes close is a gentleman by the name of David Peterson. I happened to be around in those days, and the spending of that government wasn't at the same clip as this. They increased spending by 45%; we're now looking at 50%. They did 45%, and I recall very vividly the governor of the Bank of Canada expressing serious concern about the spending of Mr. Peterson's government, which was having an impact on driving up inflation in Canada; that's how bad the spending was under Mr. Peterson, and we know where that led us. We know that led this province into a recession, exacerbated by decisions made by their successors in the NDP govern-

ment. They led us down that path, and clearly they learned no lessons whatsoever from the Peterson era, the position it placed this province in and the years it took us to get out of the fiscal bad shape they placed us in.

Instead of using unprecedented revenue to provide tax relief or pay down the debt, this government has used money to fuel—we've seen it—year-end spending sprees. We all remember—what was that called?

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Slushgate. That's the word I was thinking of, the slush fund at the end of the year, with no controls, no applications, no oversight, simply flushing money out the door to friends and allies. That's the Liberal approach to safeguarding taxpayers' dollars.

As this government continues to mortgage our future against future taxes, total debt in Ontario is continuing to climb. It's up to \$168 billion, or \$13,125 for every man, woman and child in Ontario—not something to be proud of. Interest on the debt now eats up over \$9 billion every year. That's just under \$25 million a day in debt interest repayment.

Uncompetitive taxes are another one we should talk about. I have a quote from one of the close economic advisers—I could speak to his comments all day, really, but I'm only going to use one of his comments—Dr. Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, whose advice, for the most part, has essentially been ignored by this government. I'm quoting Dr. Martin here: "In Ontario we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world."

The reality is that Ontario imposes the highest effective tax rate on capital in Canada. Ontario's effective tax rate on capital is higher than the worldwide average and higher than rates in the United States, and the variation of tax burdens on business activities is increasing, not decreasing. What that results in is increased interference with boardroom decisions that are going to be taken with respect to these tax burdens. What happens, as the Minister of Finance should know, is that decisions are taken that steer resources to the most profitable business opportunities, and we're seeing that on a daily—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Like Toyota coming to Ontario?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Certainly you can point to some modest examples.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We sat and showed courtesy and listened to the Premier, and now Mr. Runciman is trying to speak and they're talking and they're mocking him. Let's have a little decorum—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I listened very carefully. There are some interjections from time to time, even from you. So I think that—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'll be the judge of what—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just take your seat, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Is that partisan?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think we all should recognize that we need decorum in here. Thank you.

Member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I know that these are difficult messages for the Liberal members to hear, especially their cabinet ministers who have been making these decisions over the past few years. If there is an advantage to this debate, we will be able to put some proposals on the table—but at the same time, hopefully, more and more people will become aware of the failings of this government, which they have been unwilling to address and correct, and will be aware of the fact that there are answers; there are initiatives that we can undertake at the provincial level which, if not completely addressing all of challenges we face, can moderate the impacts on the good people of the province of Ontario.

I was talking about uncompetitive taxes, and that is an especially sensitive point with the government, but we have their own advisers telling them this—and not just Roger Martin. We just recently saw Don Drummond from TD Economics referencing this issue as well. I know that Mr. Drummond is not only a close adviser; I believe he helped initially when this government came into office in preparation of at least their first budget. I'm not sure if they're just cheek by jowl on going forward, but I give Mr. Drummond full marks for publicly telling us just what the challenges are with respect to taxation levels in this province. I talked about the variation of tax burden and the impact that that's having on boardroom decisions.

Another point on this: While the marginal tax burden on the cost of doing business in Canada has declined, Ontario has maintained the highest effective tax burden on costs. The minister's shaking his head over there, but this I believe is from the C.D. Howe Institute. If he wants to debate the C.D. Howe Institute, I'd love to be sitting in on that debate. Ontario also maintains the highest tax burden on investment in Canada—the highest tax burden on investment in Canada.

One more before we leave this area of uncompetitive taxes: We also impose relatively high taxes on service companies, including growth-enhancing, knowledge-based industries where the earnings are rising faster than the rest of the economy. For example, Ontario's marginal effective tax rate on capital is a punishing 46.2% on communications and 42.4% on business services.

We heard the Premier talk about his five-point economic plan. He talked about investing in skills and knowledge. We know that the much-vaunted Second Career strategy, supposed to help 20,000 unemployed workers—even the goal was less than 10% of those who'd lost their jobs since 2005; even that modest goal is not being achieved. Despite them blowing their horns on this one, the last numbers we heard, 1,100 people had

applied and about 600 people were actually participating in this program—600 people out of well over 200,000 people who have lost their jobs in this province. It's nothing to boast about.

Another issue that they talk about in their five-point plan is expanding the number of Ontario apprentices. They've said that their goal is to increase new apprentice registration from 110,000 by 32,000 annually—yet they have failed to take action to address the problem of apprenticeship ratios which effectively prohibit businesses from hiring apprentices. We've raised this in the House on a continual basis. All of us, especially in the smaller, less-populated ridings, have small business-people coming up to us and saying, "We've got young people who want to get into the electrical trades. We can't do it because of this ratio," where the Liberal government says you have to have three tradesmen for one apprentice. In effect, you've got to have three teachers with one student. That's what this government is saying. We have these thousands of young people wanting to get into trades when there's a real need for them in this province, and this government won't allow them to do it.

1610

We ask this week after week. We've been asking it for months. "Let's address this real challenge, real need," and we get nothing but bafflegab from the minister responsible, because on this side of the House we know what is behind all of this. It's a sweetheart deal with the unions; nothing more, nothing less. This is payback for Working Families, that group of unions called Working Families that spent millions of dollars to re-elect a Liberal government and elected them back in 1993 too.

That's the reality behind this, and it's truly, truly shameful when we have young people out there looking for jobs, wanting to learn a trade, and this government, because of a backroom deal with unions, won't let them learn that trade. That's the reality. It's truly shameful.

Hon. George Smitherman: You didn't even have any apprenticeship opportunities.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We had lots of jobs; no pressure. You're losing hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Stop the clock. We just had a little session a bit ago about decorum, and I'd like to remind all members of that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Another part of the vaunted five-point economic plan that they keep falling back on is investing in infrastructure. The last budget actually contained relatively little infrastructure investment for this year. They allocated \$60 billion for a new infrastructure plan over 10 years, to commence only once ReNew Ontario is complete in 2010. There is still no real plan for long-term stable funding for municipal infrastructure. They continue to pick and choose municipal winners and losers through a revolving-door process. We're entering that again shortly, I gather. That's the reality in terms of that component of their five-point plan.

Lowering business costs: That's a bit of a laugher. The McGuinty government has actually increased the cost of

doing business in Ontario. That's the reality. Look at the job-killing capital tax. We would not have a capital tax today had the Liberal government not postponed the 2003 Progressive Conservative budget plan to fully eliminate it along the schedule of the federal government. That's the reality.

Corporate income taxes: The Fiscal Responsibility Act, which you brought in, and the minister will remember this, eliminated all of the corporate tax measures announced in the Progressive Conservative budget. Both the corporate income tax and the manufacturing process income tax rates were raised back to 2001 levels: 14% and 12% respectively. Under our plan, corporate taxes would have continued to decline to 8% for general corporations and manufacturing and processing businesses by 2006. That act also froze the small business income tax rate at 5.5% and cancelled the scheduled rate reductions that were in the previous government's budget.

The McGuinty government has significantly increased the cost of doing business in Ontario. Faster-growing provinces, and I referenced this earlier, of all political stripes are moving in just the opposite direction: British Columbia; even Saskatchewan's former NDP government reduced corporate income tax rates; Alberta, which is not terribly surprising; and Manitoba's NDP government. This government has been going in the opposite direction.

Red tape: The reality again is, this government has done nothing to reduce the regulatory burden on business, which is costing the economy an estimated \$5 billion annually. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 2,212 Ontario businesses who responded—that's 66%—said that the overall burden of provincial regulation has increased during the past three years. Again, that's another message this government doesn't like to hear, but that's the reality out on the ground, out in the communities, out in the business world.

Number four, on strengthening the environment for innovation: According to the C.D. Howe Institute, their new 10-year corporate income tax holiday for commercialized intellectual property is ill-designed. They say it doesn't work and it has proved to be totally ineffective in jurisdictions where it has been tried. The government's biopharmaceutical investment program, which is a component of their Next Generation of Jobs Fund, doesn't include jobs created as an eligibility requirement for program funding.

Mr. Frank Klees: That's incredible.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, it is incredible. How can the government pick and choose the areas where Ontario can be globally competitive, when they don't even tie in jobs created as an eligibility requirement and they have narrowed their focus in terms of who could qualify for assistance under the program?

Mr. Frank Klees: There's no plan.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: There really is no plan.

I should also mention, as I referenced the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which, again, was one of these

launches with all the horns blaring—it was launched on March 3 of this year with a 45-day turnaround guarantee. Two hundred days ago, they made that 45-day guarantee. Since then, we have only heard of one announcement, 200 days later. Therefore, I think we have to conclude that either the program is grossly underfunded, or the government is rejecting applications, or, as I've seen with the eastern Ontario development fund, the bureaucracy put in place is just horrific and is turning people away.

The Minister of Finance is here, and I know he has talked about his economic statement coming up on October 22. Certainly, we think he should have fast-tracked that statement as best he could, in terms of having the figures to do so, because of the situation we're facing. I want to indicate to him that we're counting on him to open the books, to allow taxpayers to see what the true situation is. We recognize, and you've acknowledged in your comments last week, that the province is in serious financial trouble. You hinted that we may run a deficit. Obviously, it's difficult to, as I said earlier, plan a path forward without knowing what your starting point is. Minister of Finance, we want to suggest that your statement must provide a full accounting to Ontarians. Empty assurances that the plan is working simply won't cut it anymore. Your statement must include complete details on revenues, reserve funds, in-year savings, unspent resources and so on. Most importantly, it must include plans to save and attract jobs and to help those who've already lost theirs.

1620

I'll put on the record, and this is really a starting point, Minister, some suggestions on what the province could be doing right now on jobs and the economy, knowing that we're facing zero economic growth this year and job losses are mounting. We also recognize that you are not helpless. There are six steps, which I'll go over very briefly, that you could be taking right now that would help stop the bleeding of jobs, provide hope and opportunity today, and help put Ontario back on top for the future.

(1) Provide the economic update as quickly as possible. Ontarians should not have to wait until November to find out what, if anything, the government plans to do to help and protect them.

(2) Open up the books with a complete financial statement. Taxpayers deserve to know how far off plan government finances have gone and if anything is left in the reserve fund.

(3) Help people who have lost jobs and those at risk of doing so. Use the reserve fund and savings from public sector restraint to provide tax relief for families and businesses, and more training or retraining for those who need to find a new career.

(4) Put out the welcome mat for investment. Simplify and reduce the regulatory burden without jeopardizing the public interest and provide a genuine customer service approach to investors.

(5) Show some public sector restraint. Do what sensible families do in tough times—discipline your

spending and look for value for money. In particular, put reasonable restraint on public sector hiring and wage increases, especially at the top of the scale.”

This is clearly one where the government should have no trouble, but we saw today that they're clearly not, at the moment, anyway, prepared to do this, with some of the statements we heard from the members and the Premier as well:

(6) Work with other governments, not point fingers. People are looking for leadership, not excuses or political battles. In tough times, they need to know that someone is at the wheel, trying to avoid the icebergs on their behalf.

That wraps up my comments. I do have a motion, but I want to indicate that there is a great deal of enthusiasm amongst the Progressive Conservative caucus members to speak to this motion because they're hearing from their constituents on a daily basis. They know the concerns out there in the communities and within families about where this province is going and what the future holds for them, their kids and grandkids. We're concerned that this government for the past number of years has had the blinders on and has been unwilling at all to look at measures it could be taking and should be taking to at least soften the blow on this province and ensure that we can go forward in the future with great promise. So our folks are fired up about this. We're very concerned about the attitude of the government, the fact that they brought in a motion without consulting us—a partisan motion, not a motion encouraging all parties to participate in the sense of support, a very disappointing initiative in very challenging times by a government that purports to speak for all of the people, very disappointing indeed. I will close off by moving an amendment.

I move that the government motion be amended as follows: striking out all of the text after “that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges” and replacing it with the following:

“That, instead of seeking legislative approval to run a deficit and/or raise taxes, the government of Ontario take real action to address the province's economic crisis;

“That the taxpayers of Ontario deserve an immediate and comprehensive financial statement that fully opens up the public books, revealing the true state of everything from government revenues to reserve funds, what savings the government has found and how it plans to handle any financial shortfalls;

“That people who have lost their jobs or are worried about their future deserve a comprehensive and realistic economic action plan designed to save existing jobs, attract new jobs and investment and help the unemployed find new work here in Ontario;

“That businesses struggling to stay afloat deserve competitive taxes, less red tape, sensible apprenticeship ratios and a genuine customer service approach that welcomes new investment;

“That families working to make ends meet deserve to see their government do what they're doing in rough times, discipline their spending, look for value for

money, and that this should be reflected in sensible public sector restraint on hiring and wage increases, especially at the top;

“That all Ontarians deserve to see their government provide leadership in this crisis, partnership with other levels of government and accountability for the areas where it has control; and

“That putting partisan politics aside, all parties in the Ontario Legislature should work cooperatively to implement these steps and others that will protect people's jobs and investments, restore Ontario's competitiveness and put our province back on the path to prosperity.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved an amendment to the motion. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It has been my privilege over the last hour and a half to listen to two speeches, two ideas on the economic vitality or economic life of the province of Ontario. I'd like to begin by talking about the resolution that was initially put before us and perhaps toward the end I can deal with the amendment.

The resolution that was initially put before us starts out, as all resolutions do, by setting up a purport, a paragraph from which the rest flows, and if the purport, or the initial paragraph, tends to be wrong, I would suggest to you that the balance tends to be wrong as well.

I always read that first paragraph, although most people skip right to the “Be it resolved” at the end, and I always read it to see whether or not the government has its facts right when we start out and when we start to look at where they want to go on the economy. So the first thing I looked at was the challenges that are here in Ontario, and they cite our high dollar. I realize that the dollar is higher than it was three or four years ago. We all acknowledge that the dollar was artificially low and was trading in the 65- and then up to the 75-cent range for a long, long time. Then the dollar took off. The dollar took off to heights we had not seen since the Diefenbaker years, since the dollar was worth \$1.05 and made that lofty height about a year ago. The dollar was trading at US\$1.05 and seemed to be invincible and strong.

But since that time the dollar has declined some 14%. When we talk about the high dollar—and this motion was written and put on my desk yesterday—the dollar yesterday was trading at a little over 90 cents. When I came here this afternoon, just before I came into this chamber at 3 o' clock, I turned on the financial channel and looked at the figures that were going back and forth, and the Canadian dollar was trading at 89 cents. I don't know how many people are relying on the fact of the high dollar for causing or continuing to cause us grief, and I would acknowledge it caused us grief at \$1.05. I would acknowledge that it caused us grief when it was trading around parity for all those many months, but I have to question the government that is putting its whole financial picture here on a high Canadian dollar which, as I speak, is trading below 90 cents.

So let's get realistic. When we talked to the Premier months ago and he was not acknowledging all of the

economic crisis in the United States—he didn't see Fannie Mae, he didn't see Freddie Mac, he didn't see the mortgage crisis, he didn't see the job losses, he didn't see the trading patterns; he didn't see all of those as we stood up day after day to ask those questions—he always referred to the high dollar. Well, today, when he put his own motion forward, he referred to a high dollar at 89 cents, and if that's where the Liberals are coming from on this, I don't understand.

So I went on to look at the second real cause of concern that the Premier has. He says that it's the high internal oil prices. I drive a car, as most of the people in this room do and most Ontarians do, and even those who don't drive cars use transit and transportation, and they know the effect of high oil prices and how those high oil prices have caused inflationary problems and financial problems to households and to individuals. We know full well that when we were raising all the financial crisis that has ensued over the last years in this House, all of the turmoil in the United States—the markets, the declines in jobs, the mortgage crisis, Bear Stearns and everything else—the Premier and the finance minister kept talking about the high price of oil. Yes, it was high. It was trading at \$140 a barrel for weeks on end and continued to be in the stratosphere for a long time. But on the day that this motion is tabled before the House, on the day it's tabled before the House, oil declined to \$90 a barrel. That's way less than it was last year. In fact, this is the lowest we've seen it for months, if not years: \$90 a barrel. Just before I walked in here to listen to the Premier's speech, in which he refers to the high cost of oil, it was trading at \$88 a barrel. The last time I saw that was a long time ago—a long, long time ago.

1630

So I don't know. The Liberals are asking me to look at the crisis in terms of our high dollar, which is no longer high, and in terms of the high cost of oil, which is now down to where it was more than a year ago, and it looks as if it's continuing to decline. The cost of Brent is down to \$81; the cost of Texas was down to \$88, \$89, before I walked in here. I don't know what has happened in the last hour and a half. Maybe it went up or maybe it went down a few cents. But the reality is, it's not the high dollar or the high international oil price that is pushing this motion.

So I look down to the next one: the US economic slowdown. Now, there is no doubt that there is a slow-down in that country, and there is no doubt that the disastrous policies of George Bush have, over the years, caused that country to slide into an economic decline the likes of which it has not seen since the 1929 crash.

There is no doubt that the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where \$5 billion a day is being spent, the whole crisis around the financial institutions, the loss of big financial institutions like Bear Stearns and Lehman Brothers—all of those things surely have had an effect. I wouldn't deny that. But the stock market today—as I walked in, the Dow was up 135 points. Now, that may not be significant, given all of what's happened in the last

week. But I also have to say that I came in here expecting a great deal more than what is contained in this motion.

It went on to talk about the worldwide economic turmoil—I have to agree that that is happening; that's the one thing I do agree with—and then it goes on to talk about increased global manufacturing competition. Well, yeah, I guess we do have that. Canada is a signatory to NAFTA. Canada has signed on to many of the accords of the World Bank, at many stages, in trying to liberalize trade. And, of course, because we live in a developed country, a country rich in resources, a country where people are not expected to work for tiny, tiny wages, I guess we are facing some pretty stiff competition.

But I want to ask the question: If this is the rationale that the Premier is talking about—I waited for him to say, "We have to counter that with something." One of the obvious things is to be proudly pro-Ontario or proudly pro-Canadian, and for a government to proclaim that they are going to buy goods and services that are manufactured in or come from this country. I waited for a Buy Ontario policy or something to come from his lips, and sadly, I did not hear it.

So four of the five purports that were in the beginning—blaming things on the high dollar, which is no longer as high as it was; the high cost of international oil, which has declined significantly over the last month and is now at its lowest level in years; the US economic slow-down, which was not acknowledged before today; and the increased global manufacturing competition of a government that is not willing to acknowledge that this has been a factor in the past, and is unwilling or unable to proclaim a Buy Ontario or a Buy Canadian policy—seems to me to give very little credibility to that which flowed after.

I started to look at some of this other stuff; I started to look at what is in there. What struck me first is what is not in this motion. I remember those heady days of a year ago, in the midst of a provincial election campaign. I remember listening to the Premier while he was out there on the stump, talking to people about his bold and brave ideas for the people of Ontario. I listened intently to him then, and I listened intently to him again today. What was he going to do about those bold and brave ideas? He's got a whole bunch of tired things that he talks about in the body here, but what were the brave and bold things he talked about a year ago? There were two of them: One was the eradication of poverty—25 in five—by 25% over five years, and the second one he talked about is finally doing something for those people who live in this province and who are disabled. I was looking for something in the body of what he had to say today that would give me some measure of comfort that in the midst of this economic crisis he in fact was going to hold true to those bold statements that he talked about in the past.

On the issue of poverty, which I hold very dear: I asked many, many questions in this Legislature, as every member knows, and I have yet to hear answers that, at least to me, are satisfactory. But I listened today, hoping against hope that there would be something because the

Premier, following the election, instituted what he called his “poverty minister”—a minister responsible for looking after the poverty issues—and that was the Honourable Deb Matthews. She went around this province week after week, holding private consultation meetings with people, trying to find out what the government could do on the issues of poverty. I know they were private because I tried to get into many of them and was refused admission at the door. It was unsettling to me but, you know, I persisted and finally, on my fourth attempt in Scarborough, I was able to gain admission. But there were many, many of these poverty consultations that took place. I have yet to see the report, but we are given to understand that many things came out of those poverty consultations, the same that came out of the ones that I held myself.

I held my own in order to listen to poor people—to listen to what they had to say about living in poverty, what they thought their solutions were—and I am led to believe by the minister that in fact these same things will be reflected in the government’s report come December. What they had to say was that they were looking at economic security—or income security; excuse me. They were looking at, I think, not novel things but good things like the fact that there is not enough money on Ontario Works or ODSP to cover health, special diet, dental, drugs or back-to-school expenses. They had ideas that the minimum wage was inadequate. They had ideas about the respectful treatment of ODSP and OW recipients when they went into the welfare offices in the various municipalities in the province of Ontario. They talked about the need to end the clawback. They talked about the need for education and training and to reduce the complexity of the system so that ordinary people, often without the necessary tools or education, could access them. They talked about affordable housing. They talked about public and community services and education training and health care. They talked about government accountability and children’s health. They talked about so many things that I thought this Premier had embraced. Yet, when the financial curtain starts to close and the Premier wants to talk, he talks about everything except the poverty file.

When asking questions over the past couple of weeks, as I have, it seems to me that it is on the back burner; it seems to me that there are not going to be any monies available; it seems to me that the expectations created throughout all these public consultations and the Premier’s own announcements are going to be dashed.

Many people have heightened expectations. There is a group out there called 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. They have written so many letters. I just grabbed the most recent one that was on my desk just to quote a few lines. These are letters that they sent directly to Premier McGuinty and copies to all members of this Legislature. The last one, September 8, and I’ll read the first paragraph and then one later on, is pretty compelling:

“As we approach the beginning of the Legislature’s fall session, a historic achievement on poverty reduction

is within Ontario’s reach. Building on the past 12 months of consultation and deliberation, we are writing to urge you and your colleagues to put poverty reduction at the top of your agenda this fall and to deliver on a multi-year plan to cut poverty by 25% in five years, and at least 50% in 10 years, backed by significant investments.”

That’s what they wrote because they had pretty high hopes one month ago today.

1640

In the media release that accompanied this letter, they also wrote: “The 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction will continue to monitor the government’s commitment on poverty reduction. A series of public events are scheduled around October 17 (the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty) to continue to build momentum for a strong Ontario poverty reduction strategy.”

I looked at this motion. I looked and I looked and I looked, and I searched for some kind of commitment that the Premier was going to follow through on this on this much-vaunted plan, and there is nary a word. I listened to him intently today while he spoke for some 35 minutes, and there was nary a word. Not a single thing was said about the poverty reduction plan, so I must assume—and I think those people who are part of 25 in 5 and all of those 92 recommendations that were made and the hundreds of groups that came forward—that their hopes must be pretty much dashed. I think they’ll probably wait until October 22 to see them dashed completely.

I think that’s wrong because, quite frankly, if an economic strategy is to work for Ontario, it has to include the poorest of the poor. It has to include those people who may not have the financial wherewithal in an economic downturn to be able to survive. We have to look out for the children. We have to look for those who are disabled. We have to look for those who are unemployed. Surely that is the mark of a good government, and this government seems intent to ignoring the lofty goals it set out only one year ago.

I looked at what was in the motion and again listened intently to the Premier on the second issue, that of disabilities. It was only just two weeks ago in this House that we were arguing Bill 77. The government voted unanimously for Bill 77, and the two opposition parties voted against it. I have to tell you that I came in expecting to vote for Bill 77, because there had been some changes made by the government which would allow, in one case, for the regulations to be posted and, in another, to allow the posting on the walls in community agencies of the rights of disabled and intellectually disabled persons. But I couldn’t bring myself to do it, because the government would not commit itself to a number of key factors, including the rights of workers who work within the system and the rights of people not to have their homes entered without a search warrant and the like. There were other reasons as well.

But what was more important, I think, what was not said around that entire debate and what was not said or committed to by the government was that there would be any money made available to help those disabled persons

who live in Ontario and for those who are seeking alternate forms of help in order to allow them to live fully and within the community with their disability.

There were some considerable discussions that took place during the committee, and one of the people who came before our committee was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Pruessen. I had not met him before the committee days, but what he had to say to our committee was absolutely spot-on. What he had to say, I think, needs to be repeated today as we talk about the economy, because he clearly understood that for a government program with lofty goals like that one was, there would have to be a corresponding amount of monies made available in budgets or committed to by the government to make it happen.

So when I listened to the Premier today, I was looking for that. I was looking for some kind of signal or indication that his five-point plan would allow for social policy development, which he and his government seemed to have championed only last year. Well, Mr. Pruessen said it far better than I could, so I'd like to quote him in part. This is from the Hansard, I believe of August 5, 2008, when he appeared before the committee in terms of Bill 77 here in Toronto:

"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."

You can imagine, after days of asking questions in this House to try to determine whether the financial statement which is coming forward on October 22 will contain such a provision and not being answered, to see, in writing, the government's new plan—in writing, that there is no plan whatsoever to expand community services, there is no plan to look after the poor, there is no plan or monies conceptualized within the key framework of the much-vaunted five-point plan to do the initiatives that people

are counting on and in which they believe this government. Mr. Pruessen was absolutely right when he said that if the fine words and actions are not matched after the bill was passed, then it will be seen as a shell game. Sadly, that's exactly what I think has happened here; this has been a shell game.

I'd just like to quote some of the other people who had perhaps not as eloquent words but conveyed much the same message. There was the Fair Share Task Force, which wanted to address the issue of funding equity and wanted the commitment of the government. There was Autism Ontario, which asked for a commitment from the government for resources. There was Autism Ontario and another group of people, including Hiltz, Ensemble, Individualized Funding Coalition, that asked for adequate resources to be forthcoming. There were groups, which asked for legislative guarantees of support, and groups like Woodview that said that if the new legislation is to be effective, then adequate funding needs to be provided, and went on to say that while there are competing funding demands placed on government, the cost of not providing adequate services to adults with developmental disabilities is high. There is a group called Tayside that talked about making the funding of identified essential services with individual disabilities mandatory. Finally, there was, again, the group from Mississauga that Mr. Pruessen belonged to: "Problems that have been profoundly neglected for decades cannot be solved without the provision of significant resources—new resources."

It appears from my reading of this resolution that the only thing that is being affirmed is the government's five-point plan, and the only priorities that this government now has are confined to those of health care, education, the environment and public safety, and that everything else seems to have gone by the wayside. I think, very sadly for this government, that they are not doing what they were elected to do.

In terms of this motion, it's designed to highlight the government's five-point plan, which they stand here and say is much-vaunted and is a wonderful plan. They stand up on their feet every day, and no matter what questions they are asked, they go back to their five-point plan.

The government has, in fact, ignored reality and the threat of a recession for some time now. I remember, and it was only several months ago, statements by the finance minister. Last December, when he was delivering his fall economic statement, the finance minister said, "The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong." Then in the spring he further compounded that statement and further elaborated on that statement when he was being questioned about asset-backed commercial paper and the mess of the United States. When bank economists were lowering their expectations, the finance minister did not. He stated to this House, "The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient." This was in March 2008.

1650

In fact, the government chose to ignore the looming problems that manifested themselves day in, day out in the newspapers, week in and week out in countries like

the United States, across Europe and in the Canadian economy. Resource workers could have and did tell the government that things were not going well. Manufacturing workers did come forward and tell the government that things were not going well. The unions that represented both of those groups came forward and told the government that things were not going well. Surely the opposition parties echoed all of those statements in this House.

There was and remains a crisis in manufacturing and in the resource sector, particularly forestry, in this province. There were and remain huge numbers of job losses in those sectors. It is calculated that since July 2004 there have been 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector alone who have lost their jobs. We all know about those jobs. We all know where they have occurred because they have occurred in literally every community across this province. Only today, to wake up and see 430 new jobs, 80% of the workforce at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg—they're gone. Just last week, to wake up and read in the financial section of the newspaper about 500 jobs lost at Volvo in Goderich, about to be gone. It will devastate a small town of 7,500 people, absolutely; it is the major employer. To look at Niagara last month, 800 jobs were lost at John Deere in Welland, and the temporary layoff of 480 at AbitibiBowater. There have been about 100,000 jobs lost in the city of Toronto, where I live, in the past four years—100,000 jobs—and 25,000 in Hamilton. Almost half of the manufacturing jobs in Thunder Bay that existed five years ago are not there today.

All of these people could have told and did tell the Premier and the finance minister what was going on, but it appears until today to have fallen on deaf ears. Workers who have lost good jobs over the past year would be stunned to know that it is only now that the McGuinty government is proposing a resolution, and it is only now that they are coming forward with ideas to, quite frankly, simply reiterate their five-point plan. I think the workers in this province who have lost their jobs will be, and are, very disappointed.

The finance minister last week put out a second-quarter economics account and hurriedly called a news conference, which I attended. He tried to put on a pretty brave face, I want to tell you, in the face of the circumstances, by pointing out that although there had been a decline in the gross domestic product of Ontario in the first quarter, the second quarter had shown a tiny, tiny, tiny increase; I believe it was 0.1%. Overall, given the circumstances and what was contained within the body of his report, it was clear that notwithstanding the tiny, tiny increase in the second quarter, due largely to the selling of manufactured goods stockpiles, in fact, the province declined for a second quarter, which, most economists will state, is the start of a recession. It continues to decline.

Yesterday, TD Economics forecasted that there will be negative employment growth in 2009. Their report reads, "Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely

advance in 2008 and 2009, placing it last amongst its peers. The lagging nature of employment in reflecting economic conditions leaves significant downside risks to the job market, especially since the manufacturing sector is expected to continue to bleed jobs and this will disproportionately hit the province."

Again, what is the Liberal answer to all of this? To reiterate a five-point plan. That's all they have, that's all the place they're going, and with the greatest of respect, it's not going to work.

When confronted with the real evidence that the plan isn't working, the government is telling people that things are good. I don't know where they come from. I don't know whether the government has caught Harperitis. I watched the great debate on television, or most of it, in English, and a little in French, to watch the Prime Minister twist and turn about the economy. I will tell you that the people of this province and the people of this country were not buying into it because in the days, nearly a week, since that debate occurred, his numbers have continued to decline in all of the polls. Most of the people who were questioned about their changing from Conservative to some other party have indicated his not being empathetic to the cause of those who found themselves on the unemployment lines or for the state of the economy. I think that the Premier has caught the same disease in terms of what he is trying to say and in terms of how he is dealing with the losses. I have to ask: If the plan is working, why is the forestry sector's decline wiping out towns in northern Ontario? If the plan is working, how is it that reports show falling growth and serious job losses looming in other sectors? If the plan is working, show us where the plan is working.

We have always been a party that believes in putting families first and we have always been a party that believes that people should have a good job, a good-paying job. When and if it ever happens that good-paying jobs are lost, there needs to be a social safety net. I remember, as a young man, working in a place in downtown Toronto called Dunlop's. It was a rubber factory. It was a dirty, stinking place with a lousy safety record where men and women would walk around with appendages gone, limbs missing—who had been injured, who died young, who worked on machinery that could literally suck you through the machine in a matter of seconds to your death. I witnessed all of that. I remember when the place closed down that there was no social safety net but that the Legislature of the province of Ontario mandated and passed legislation as it was shutting down to protect some of the workers so that there was some monies when they left, so that there was some severance, depending on how long they had worked there; the province came forward, back in those years, which was in the late 1960s, to do exactly that. Now we're saying that people who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated unfairly, and where is the government's plan around all of that? There is absolutely nothing in the five-point plan that will deal with people who lose their jobs. There is nothing in the plan that will

see them educated in total numbers, save and except, I guess, the 1,100 who have taken advantage of a government plan that doesn't seem to be working.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in being activist, quite clearly. We have suggested many things to this government that we think are good suggestions. I am prepared, and I understand that if the government rejects the suggestions of the opposition, it is their right to do so. They were elected. They have a majority. But I would ask, if you don't like ours, what are yours? The five-point plan isn't about much. It is a statement of lofty principles that amounts to little or nothing. We are suggesting things like a five-year guarantee of an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates. That doesn't seem to be all that difficult. The country of Germany has an industrial hydro rate; indeed, most countries in Europe have an industrial hydro rate. We have to compete against jurisdictions in North America, and both of our neighbours, Quebec and Manitoba, have lower rates than we do. If we want to compete with them and with foreign jurisdictions in Europe, then we are going to have to have a rate that reflects that.

We are suggesting a jobs protection commissioner. The government has said no to this on every occasion, yet we believe it will help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs. The government doesn't like the idea. What else will you do to save the jobs?

1700

We believe in a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs. I don't think that's a radical idea. Certainly, almost every jurisdiction in the United States has adopted that; Mexico has adopted that; almost all of the European Community has adopted this policy. And if you don't believe in the workers and the products of this country, particularly of this province, then the Premier should stand up and say so. It is not always the economically right thing to do, to buy goods or service at the lowest possible rate, because the people we are buying from are ourselves, and we need to protect those jobs and those people because they are contributing constantly to our economy and our society.

We believe in tougher plant-closure legislation that would ensure everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing. In addition, we believe in enhanced mandated severance.

Many times, companies close even though they're profitable. They close because they can make more profit somewhere else, although they're not losing money here. I'm thinking about CanGro. I'm thinking about the last cannery that closed here in Ontario just a little while ago. Why did it close? It closed because you could grow the peaches and pears somewhere else a little cheaper, and we could import them—notwithstanding the cost of transportation—at the same cost. It seems to me that was a wasted opportunity as well.

We're talking about the expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations to allow people to make the necessary changes in their lives and to find jobs elsewhere, whether it be in Ontario or, as the Premier is wont to accept, they go out to Saskatchewan or Alberta.

We're talking about pension and wage protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from the employer when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy. Right now they're at the bottom of the heap. The banks have first right.

Mr. Paul Miller: Bill 6.

Mr. Michael Prue: Bill 6. My friend reminds me that his Bill 6, which was denied a third reading—

Mr. Paul Miller: Second.

Mr. Michael Prue:—second reading at committee, was not allowed to go forward, and would have done precisely that. We think that people who lose their jobs should not be at the bottom; they should be at the top, especially when, in many cases, they have given a lifetime of service to that company and find out that their pension, their assets and their severance are not going to be paid.

Finally, we believe in a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would provide a real incentive for manufacturers and processors to invest in the building, equipment and machinery that lead to high-paying, good-quality jobs.

We don't believe in willy-nilly tax cuts across the board. I'll be very blunt about that. When you do that, you give tax cuts to profit-making corporations that don't need it. I will tell you, for one, I don't believe that Exxon, Shell, Mobil or any of those groups need a tax cut from the province of Ontario. They made billions of dollars last year, and yet—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Hear, hear.

Mr. Michael Prue:—and the minister says, "Hear, hear"—that is the same thing that happened when the Minister of Finance stood up and lowered corporate tax cuts, because they were included, as every other corporation.

We believe that the tax cuts have to be targeted at those who are suffering, and right now, it's the manufacturing, industrial and forestry sectors that need those monies.

I give enough money to the most profitable corporations on the face of the earth every time I fill up my gas tank, and so does every other individual. I don't think the government of Ontario should be subsidizing them further, nor do I think we should be subsidizing very rich corporations like banks that charge usurious fees for things like credit cards. Every time I withdraw a little bit of money out of my account, I get dinged by a buck, or a buck and a half, to take money out of my own account. I rather resent that, and yet they get tax cuts, too. I'm not sure that the government wants to be, or should be, going there.

There are a few things I'd like to talk about as well, and one is the financial crisis regulations. Nobody has talked about this—not the Premier, not the leader of the

opposition—so maybe I can weigh in on that. People are watching the stock market in dismay every single day. People who would ordinarily not look at it from one week to the other are looking in dismay at the wild, unpredictable and seemingly irrational swings: up 500 points, down 800 points, up 300 points, down 900 points. This is all taking place in one week. This is what is happening for weeks and weeks on end. People think it's irrational, and they are worried. Ontarians' savings are tied to the stock market: their pensions, their mutual funds, their RRSPs and everything else; it's all tied together. Even members of this Legislature—probably most of them—get a very small amount of money each month in lieu of a pension, which is invested, in the overwhelming majority of cases, I think, in the stock market. They must watch this too, and they must know what's going on.

Ordinary Ontarians are watching as the Ontario Securities Commission is dealing with stock manipulation and fraud on an almost daily basis. When the finance committee sat down and discussed this with the OSC chairman and some of the senior people, they said there are more than, I believe, 250 charges laid per year by the commission against people trying to manipulate the market here in Ontario. Just so you understand that, there are about 250 trading days in a year, so quite literally, somebody is charged every day with trying to finagle the market, trying to do things they ought not to be doing, and those are the ones who get caught.

So people are looking at what's happening, and in the newspaper every day, people are inundated with all these schemes that are coming home to roost. Who would have known a year ago about asset-backed commercial paper? Who would have known a year ago about toxic mortgages or default credit swaps? The Ontario Securities Commission has jurisdiction over all these, and yet this government is not attempting to mandate them in any way to stop this fraud, and they should be. That should be part of the economic plan to bring security and stability to the largest trading unit in Canada, the one that is located here in the city of Toronto.

We would like to offer some real solutions to this government. I'm not making this in the form of a motion, although I do have an amendment to the amendment coming shortly. We would like to offer some real solutions on securities reform. First of all is the creation of a financial products safety commission just like we have for consumer goods—it has been recommended by one prominent economist. This would address the invention of new financial products not intended to manage risk but to create risk.

We know what happened to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We know that people were able to go out and get mortgages with absolutely no money down, and we know that when the cost of the mortgage went up and the price of the home declined, there were defaults on those mortgages literally across the entire United States of America, and that precipitated the financial crisis. We need to have a financial products safety commission that

looks into this to make sure we don't get caught in the same kind of bind.

We want to ensure that regulators oversee areas of finance that are now unregulated—to quote another financial expert, “If it quacks like a bank, regulate it like a bank.” This includes real regulation of hedge funds and large pools of capital that are able to manipulate markets for quick profits. We think that ordinary investors need this kind of protection, and ordinary people are looking forward to this government doing something about that in the middle of a financial crisis.

We're talking about strengthening regulation that restricts leverage for all financial companies. Leverage is the proportion of debt used in speculation and was one of the causes of the current crisis. What we're simply asking is to strengthen the regulations that exist and further restrict leverage for all financial companies so that they cannot and will not be allowed to get into the circumstances that have resulted in huge, multi-billion dollar payouts and buyouts in Britain, the United States, Ireland and, most recently, a day or two ago, Iceland. We don't want to be in the same circumstances, and we look to the Ontario government to do something about that.

We are asking that the Ontario government deal with the conflicts of interest that are so much a part of securities regulation. I was on the finance committee when we sat down, more than four years ago now, and looked at the regulations of the Ontario Securities Commission. The number one recommendation that was agreed on by all parties at that time was to separate the investigative function from the adjudicative function, to make it an adversarial process, so that the person who had done the investigation was not the same person who sat on the tribunal to decide. The government said they would do so in about a year. Well, here we are, three or four years into it, and nothing at all has happened. I would think that this would make for a much safer investment opportunity in the province of Ontario if we followed the advice that the finance committee was given at that time and that the government has ill seen fit to enforce. These are just a few of the proposals.

1710

I would like to conclude, and then I have an amendment to the amendment. Seeing that I still have enough time to do all of that, I'm going to. What I would like to conclude with—if I can just find my notes as to where I am—is a statement that we believe that politics in this chamber, this House, this Legislature and this province should be all about people, the 13 million people who call Ontario home, the 13 million people who work here and live here, the 13 million people who invest their lives in the prosperity of this province. It's about a fair deal for people who have built and continue to build this province; they're looking for a fair deal from this government. We only have to look at what happened in the United States when George Bush and his administration put forward the plan—some \$700 billion or \$800 billion—to bail out the financial sector. There was a near-riot that occurred in most of the United States and

certainly on Wall Street, and you had a whole bunch of legislators in the House of Representatives who would not follow suit. They were angry because they did not see it as a fair deal. People who were being bought out and were being backed were those same people who had ripped off the system.

There was a gentleman who was called before the legislative committee of the House of Representatives a few days ago. He denied the fact that he had been given a \$400-million buyout after his company had failed and that thousands upon thousands of people had lost their life savings, but he did admit that he did get \$250 million. I think the people of the province of Ontario want to make sure that their government here in Ontario will not countenance such an action and, in fact, will pass some legislation or regulations to ensure that that does not happen here.

It is absolutely heart-wrenching to go out and meet people who have lost their jobs. I've had an opportunity in the last few weeks to travel the length and breadth, I swear, of this province, going to places even in your own riding of Essex, Mr. Speaker. I have been in Windsor, London, Kingston, Ottawa, Oshawa, Kitchener, Stratford, Hamilton and so many places, listening to heartfelt stories of people who have lost their jobs. Some of those who are in their 50s and early 60s have lost their job and despair about ever finding work again. In some cases, they have been given inadequate pensions or severances and will live off those until the money runs out. In other cases, we see people who are younger and who are at the bottom of the seniority list. I met some of them in Oshawa. I met them, and they were on layoff. One of them worked one day a week and another one hadn't been recalled for duty for months, a young woman with two children, trying to bring them up herself.

They are in despair about what has happened, and we know that there is despair across the length and breadth of this province. When you look into their eyes, you want to tell them that you can do something, that you will try almost anything, and I am asking this government to try almost anything, not the tired five-point plan, but almost anything to get them back to work and to give them hope.

Surely, Franklin Roosevelt taught us all a lesson from 1932; surely, he said that the biggest thing to fear was fear itself, and he went about to transform an economy that was in much the same situation as we're about to find ourselves in. He did that by building upon the hope that people had so that they saw a brighter day, so that they saw that their government was trying to take the necessary actions.

The families who have lost their income due to job loss found out that there's no protection for their severances, for their benefits, for their hard-earned pension plans. We want to talk about the real costs of poverty. We want to talk about that, and we think the government needs to. What is the real cost of having a person with an intellectual disability live in poverty and be mired in poverty their entire life? They can get \$999 from the government, but if they get even a meagre part-time job,

it's clawed back. What is the real cost? What is the real cost in terms of initiative and human ingenuity? What is the real cost to their human dignity? What is the real cost of doing nothing for the kids? What is the real cost of having people live in dilapidated housing? All that needs to be addressed.

These are people, many of whom have spent a lifetime paying taxes, who found themselves in hard times. When they need a little help, it seems that the government is nowhere to be seen and only talks about its much-vaunted five-point plan. It's not right and it's not fair, and we need to do something about it.

Back in 1991 when the province was in the same difficult circumstances, Dalton McGuinty said something that I'd like to quote. He was not the Premier then; he was the Leader of the Opposition, or maybe—I don't know if he was the Leader of the Opposition then. He could have been—I'm trying to think back—but he was here in the Legislature, and he did make the following statement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Was it 1991 or 2000?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was 1991.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was probably the opposition leader then.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, maybe it was you. But Dalton McGuinty said the following in a speech to the Legislature. I'm not sure what his—it was the same Dalton McGuinty, though, and he said this to then-Premier Bob Rae:

"This House heard the disturbing news from the Treasury yesterday regarding our province's economy and the devastating impact the recession is having on employment.... I urge this government, I implore this government to develop and implement a program immediately to address the very real and specific needs of those affected by loss of employment." That was Dalton McGuinty, March 19, 1991, in this Legislature.

Before reading my amendment to the amendment, I would like to close by asking which Dalton McGuinty we will see on October 22. Will we see the Dalton McGuinty who declared that immediate government action was necessary to sustain and create jobs and protect workers during layoffs, as he said in 1991, or will we see the Dalton McGuinty who will talk about his five-point plan that seems to be going nowhere? I certainly hope it's the former, and I despair that it may be the latter.

This is a difficult debate. Oftentimes, governments have limited resources in what they can do. I remember standing here in the Legislature one day when Mr. Wilkinson, now the Minister of Innovation, stood up and was taking credit for a huge number of jobs that he said were being created by the government of Ontario. I stood up to chastise him a little and said, "My colleague, I hope you are going to take the criticism on the day when it comes—and it invariably will, given the cyclical nature of economics—when there are huge numbers of job losses." He assured me that he would not do that.

It's very easy for governments to talk about the jobs they are creating and take credit for those, but it's very

difficult for governments to take the blame when there are job losses; they always have some other factor to blame it on. I'm saying that any government member who has stood in this House before and taken credit for job creation should be equally willing to stand in this House and take the blame for job losses. If you're not willing to do it today, then please refrain in the future from taking credit for job increases. Please refrain. If you're not willing to be on one side of the book, you shouldn't be on the other.

1720

I'd like to move an amendment to the amendment that was moved by my colleague Mr. Runciman, the leader of the official opposition. The amendment to the amendment reads as follows:

"That the government needs to immediately respond to current economic instability, the 230,000 jobs lost in the manufacturing sector, and the 40,000 direct and indirect jobs lost in the forest products industry by implementing a strategy that includes:

"—an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates;

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

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

"—tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing, and enhanced, mandated severance;

"—expansion of severance eligibility and an increase in advance notice in mass layoff situations;

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

"—a refundable manufacturing and resource investment tax credit that would provide a real incentive for manufacturers and processors to invest in the building, equipment and machinery that leads to high-paying, good-quality jobs."

I have three copies for the Chair and I'll send them down with page Justin.

In conclusion, the Premier finished his speech by asking all parties to commit and to give their input into how we can help, and these are made in that same spirit. I'm hoping that if the Premier is true to his word, and I believe him as a man who is, he will take a look at these and include them in his motion.

I also believe that the leader of the official opposition will accept those as an amendment to his amendment because they are intended to help the people of this province and intended to help the people in this time of economic turmoil.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Prue has moved an amendment to the amendment to the main motion.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Administrator of the province has assented to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

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.*

Bill 90, An Act to enact the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, 2008, to repeal the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act and to make related amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 90, Loi édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la négociation collective dans les collèges, abrogeant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les collèges et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.*

ONTARIO ECONOMY ÉCONOMIE DE L'ONTARIO (continued / suite)

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It's a great opportunity and privilege to stand here to debate and be involved in a very critical time in the history of our province and country, and I just want to put a few things forward for consideration.

First of all, there's been much discussion about the wording of the motion put forward by the Premier. There is much discussion about the process. But I think all of us in this House have to acknowledge the fact that what the Premier is saying very simply is that he would like all of us in this House to put forward our ideas on what we can do to make life better for the people of Ontario as we go through this very traumatic transition. He said he would accept criticism and suggestions, and he's open to listening to those, whether it be opposition or government members. Certainly that's what we're here to do.

The criticisms are acknowledged. There's no one here who's beyond criticism. The Premier himself said he accepts criticism, as we all are willing to do. But we must also accept some facts. The Premier, from day one, acknowledged the fact that if Ontario was going to be competitive, and that means create jobs and continue to grow this Ontario economy, we had to improve our skill set for the citizens of Ontario. That's why one of his first points of emphasis was investing in our universities and colleges and our public education system, because it was so evident that with the world flattening out—whether it be what's happening in India or China—we had to have the skills, abilities and knowledge set of our citizens on

the same level as anywhere in the world, because we're in competition with the whole world. That's why he invested, and we as a government invested, in our colleges and universities—\$6 billion. Six billion dollars—unprecedented. We have invested billions of extra dollars in our public education system for the same reasons.

From day one, the Premier was looking down the road in terms of the challenges. A lot of people don't think that's very sexy, and it doesn't make the front page of the paper. But if we don't have people who are literate, skilled and who have the training for this new economy, there's no way we'll be able to have the wealth in this province not only to provide basic services but to help the disadvantaged and the poor. The poor can't be helped unless the economy is strong, and the economy isn't strong unless people have those skills that you need in the 21st century.

It doesn't come by inheritance. We don't have oil in the ground here in Ontario. We had, in Sarnia, years ago. We have to work for everything we've ever had through our blood, sweat and tears. Our farmers, our miners, our small businessmen work. There's nobody giving them oil out of the ground.

We have to be entrepreneurial; we have had to be entrepreneurial here in Ontario. We work in factories; we work in mines. This is what people in Ontario have always done and they're proud of that, but it doesn't mean that the people of Ontario aren't as good as the people of Alberta. The Alberta economy is booming and the price of oil is going through the roof. We have to stand up and defend the people of Ontario and look where we're at and where we're going.

It's not just the present government in Ottawa. We had this same problem with the former Liberal government in Ottawa. I remember having face-to-face discussions with former Liberal colleagues, saying, "Don't you guys get it?" Everybody in Ottawa stands up for Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. You guys go to Ottawa and your mouths are sealed. You don't even mention the word "Ontario," God forbid, when you're in Ottawa.

These were the Liberals I was talking to. We had some people saying, "Don't raise that with Liberals. You're going to be in trouble." Well, the Premier had the backbone to confront the Liberals in Ottawa at the time and told them, "You have to speak up for Ontario. We have to have fairness for the people of Ontario, not for the government of Ontario."

The money that leaves Ontario leaves the pockets of those hard-working miners and farmers in Ontario and goes to the pockets of other Canadians in other provinces, who love that Ontario money. All we're saying is, keep a little bit here because our farmers and miners and our small business people need that at this time. We can't keep shipping these hard-earned dollars to the rest of the country at this time. Even it out a bit.

The Premier has been forceful with Paul Martin, he's been forceful with Prime Minister Harper, and the same thing: Liberals and Conservatives saying, "Let's stand up for fairness," and he's done that right from day one.

He saw that unless we became more innovative, unless we started to be more futuristic in our approach to our economy, we weren't going to succeed with a standstill attitude. We can't always be looking out the rear-view mirror. That's what we've been doing for too long in Canada, perhaps. He is saying, "Look ahead," and that's why the Premier established the Ministry of Research and Innovation, the first ministry of its kind in Canada to invest in new ideas and new technology so we can create the next generation of jobs. He did that. That's not something in a five-point plan. He did it. We have that ministry, and it's active all over Ontario, creating new jobs.

In the last budget we established something very concrete for people losing their jobs, the Second Career plan, saying that people need help to bridge into a second career. This gives someone up to \$20,000 over two years to get into a new career. You're laid off perhaps as a miner and now maybe you want to become a police officer. That will bridge you. That's something we did in the budget. The \$1 billion is there. So you can't say, "The Premier doesn't care. It's just now because he's got the motion, all of a sudden he cares." In the last budget, \$1 billion was there because the Premier did care—and all of us. I'm not saying the opposition doesn't care; I just want to remind them that that \$1 billion was there in the last budget to help people who lose their jobs.

1730

They talk about the forestry sector and the commodities sector in Canada. We gave \$1 billion to stabilize the forestry sector. Perhaps the opposition could tell us what we're going to do to bring the forestry sector back when the Americans, who buy most of our forestry products, aren't building homes anymore and aren't buying Canadian lumber. What do we do? Are we going to give away our forestry products to the Americans—to do what? The Americans are not building homes. Sad to say, they're in foreclosure. They're not building anymore.

Our cars—somebody said we should have a Buy Canadian, Buy Ontario strategy. That's great. We would all love that. But what do we tell the Americans who buy most of our cars made in Ontario? Eighty-five per cent of the cars made in Ontario are bought by Americans. So if we say, "We're just going to buy Canadian," what if the Americans then start saying, "We're just going to buy American"? That's why you can't have these simplistic bromides all the time; you have to look at the complexity of things. We do promote buying Canadian. We're buying streetcars in Thunder Bay. We're spending I don't know how many hundreds of millions of dollars to make work for people in Thunder Bay who are building these fine subway cars in Thunder Bay. So we are trying to do that, but there's no perfect, magic bullet here.

We've always heard the other bromides. "All you have to do is have competitive tax cuts, more tax cuts." It's been tried. The Americans have tax-cut themselves to death. Literally, they've done that. The tax-cut king has

been President of the United States for eight years. That's all he's done, billions and billions. Has it helped forestall the financial meltdown? No. Has it helped the housing crisis in the States? No. Tax cuts are great, and we all try to look for targeted tax cuts, but it's not a bromide that solves anything.

Everyone was saying a year ago, "Oh, Ireland; we've got to be more like Ireland. It's the Irish miracle." Ireland is in recession.

Mr. John O'Toole: You bet your ass it is.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham well knows that. They were tax-cutting to beat the band in Ireland. They are now in a deep recession.

So tax cuts, yes, but very targeted and very thoughtful tax cuts. But across-the-board corporate tax cuts are very problematic, especially when you need those dollars, because we know that a tax cut means a service cut. We've seen it. We were here for eight years and we saw those, because that's the money that you forgo that could be used for building highways and new power plants.

The other situation that is unprecedented is what's happened to the United States financial markets. Sad to say, what happened there has impacted the whole world, not only Ontario. So the real challenge for us within this province is to try to get strategies in place which deal with this international meltdown, which is extremely complex, because the talking heads on CNN don't have any answers. You see 10 talking heads and they've got 10 answers. Then I always say to myself: Where were they when these derivative schemes were being drawn up, these hedge funds in the year 2000 when Phil Gramm, McCain's financial adviser, thought of a good way of dodging the regulations so they can put in these hedge funds and make billions from Lehman Brothers and everybody? Nobody of the talking heads and the financial gurus said, "Hey, this is wrong," because they were all lining their pockets with these billions of dollars, gambling with the money of the people who wanted to put their pension money into Wall Street and had no choice.

The other day I was in Lady York. Lady York is a small grocery store on Dufferin Street. I was talking to the gentleman who works in produce. I said, "How are things going, Oratio?" Oratio owned a small grocery store. Then, at 62 or 63, he had to sell that; now he's working in this other store. He said, "I'm very, very upset. That Mr. Bush, he cost me \$60,000 out of my pension." Oratio doesn't have a pension. He worked for himself. His financial adviser told him to put the money into segregated funds or something. Anyway, this ordinary, hard-working man who immigrated to Canada, worked his whole life, saving, saving, saving, thought he was okay: All of a sudden he looks—60,000 bucks gone.

How many Oratios are there all over Ontario, not because of anything that they did or didn't do, but because the cowboys on Wall Street and cowboys in all these financial—what do you call them?—boiler shops thought of these schemes to get rich? Everybody said,

"Wow. Look. It's happening there. I'm okay." Now that's all hitting ordinary people who have no defence against what's happened.

That's why we are trying to take this into account, because we cannot do it without your federal government. As I've said, I don't care whether it's the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Greens or the Bloc in Ottawa; we need their help because we have to have a voice in Ottawa.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They want to take away seats from Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: Talk about a voice. As the member from St. Catharines-Dalhousie says, the latest scheme they have, and the pages should listen to this, to redraw the electoral map is basically to require—for a new seat in Ontario, you need 200,000 voters. For a new seat anywhere else in Canada, you only need 100,000 voters.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In the west.

Mr. Mike Colle: In the west, especially. So we would lose more voices. It's bad enough that many of our federal MPs never mention the word "Ontario" when they go to Ottawa; we're going to have even less of a voice if this seat redistribution takes place. We need strong voices in Ottawa. Again, this is part of what the Premier said.

I've been reading a petition here for the last two years about EI unfairness. Why should a worker in Kitchener have to wait longer to get his or her EI benefits? Why should a worker in Kitchener get \$4,300 less in EI benefits than a worker somewhere else in Canada? Why do you have to go through hoops in Toronto to even dream of getting EI? Then, if you're not in EI, you're not eligible for retraining, because many programs require that you're EI-eligible.

So what do our friends do when they go to Ottawa—the MPs? They never mention this. They sit there and they never mention that there's this giant rip-off of Ontario workers, especially now at this time. The Premier has been saying that. He's also been saying, "Why does every part of Canada have an economic development office that helps areas, but there's no federal economic development program for southern Ontario, where all the manufacturing loss is taking place?" You would think that's the first place you'd have an economic development program from the federal government. We don't have one. So maybe, when the federal candidates come to the door, ask them why there's an EI gouging of Ontario workers; why there's no economic development plan for southern Ontario; why we lose 12 seats with a redistribution; why, in the transfer of health care money back to Ontario, there is a shortfall of hundreds of millions of dollars. We can go on and on and on.

As we know, there are billions of dollars—not millions, pages; do you know what a billion is?—leaving Ontario people's pockets because nobody in Ottawa will speak for the people in Ontario. Remember: It's not just here at Queen's Park. This money that goes into equalization leaves Orléans, it leaves Cambridge, it leaves Stoney Creek, it leaves Scarborough, it leaves East York,

Durham and Hamilton. How can you justify all this money leaving Hamilton to go to other parts of Canada when the Hamilton people need the money? Let the money stay in Hamilton, I say. Instead, the money leaves the poor people who are struggling and goes somewhere else, and our friends in Ottawa sit there and say nothing while the rip-off continues.

That's why the Premier's upset. That's why the Premier has launched this fairness campaign.

Another thing, the Building Canada program of infrastructure: We're short \$970 million. That means that bridges, hospitals, schools, sewers, could be built in Hamilton, could be built in Orléans, could be built in Ajax—Ajax needs the sewers. Instead, the people in Ajax have to subsidize the people in the rest of the province. That's not right; it's not fair. The Premier's saying that.

Again, this is an unprecedented time. That's why it's important for us to look at and listen to new ideas. I thank the member from East York and the member from Brockville, the Leader of the Opposition, for some ideas. We need to have ideas, and I know the Premier is open to the ideas. But we also have to be pragmatic in understanding that we cannot do it alone. If our cities are to be

solvent and our cities are to be economic hubs, as they have been, we need to work this thing out. There's going to be no magic bullet. There's going to be no simple solution.

I'm sure what we are going through right now at Queen's Park is happening in every elected democratic Legislature in the western world. France is in recession. Italy is in recession. Iceland is on the verge of total bankruptcy. I don't have to mention what's happening in the United States. In the United States, they still don't even have basic health care.

We said that we are going to commit to the basic services and try to do our best. We won't be able to give everything to everybody, but our health care, our education, our policing, helping the poor—we're going to do our darnedest to keep those programs in place, because that's what Ontario's good at. We're going to try to be better, but there's a lot of work to do, folks.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. This House is adjourned until 9 a.m. of the clock on Thursday, October 9.

The House adjourned at 1743.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Ageloniitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Oraziatti
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziatti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, Kevin Daniel Flynn
France Gélinas, Randy Hillier
Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott
Peter Shurman
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Continued from back cover

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Beer retailing and distribution	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	3187
Hospital funding	
Mr. Joe Dickson.....	3187
Beer retailing and distribution	
Mr. Bill Murdoch.....	3187
Education funding	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	3187
Child custody	
Mr. Jim Brownell.....	3188
Pope John Paul II	
Mr. Frank Klees.....	3188
Federal-provincial fiscal policies	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	3188
Gasoline prices	
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	3188
Employment insurance	
Mr. Mike Colle.....	3189
Stroke therapy	
Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....	3189
Identity theft	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	3189

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Education funding	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	3190
Fort William Redskins football team	
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	3190
Municipal finances	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3190
Mental Illness Awareness Week	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....	3191
Ontario economy	
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	3191
Pan American Games	
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	3191
Federal-provincial fiscal policies	
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	3191
Albert Nault	
Mme France Gélinas.....	3192
Yom Kippur	
Mr. David Zimmer.....	3192

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private
Bills**

Mr. Michael Prue.....	3192
Report adopted.....	3192

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Ontario economy / Économie de l'Ontario

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3192
Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	3195
Mr. Michael Prue.....	3201

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier).....	3209
---	------

**Ontario economy / Économie de l'Ontario
(continued / suite)**

Mr. Mike Colle.....	3209
Debate deemed adjourned.....	3212

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 8 October 2008 / Mercredi 8 octobre 2008

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Child and Family Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008, Bill 103, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2008 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les services à l'enfance et à la famille, projet de loi 103, Mme Matthews	
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	3163
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	3164
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3165
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	3165
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	3165
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	3166
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	3166
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3169
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	3170
Mr. John O'Toole.....	3170
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	3170
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3171
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	3176

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3176
--------------------------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Ontario economy	
Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	3176
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3176
Ontario economy	
Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	3177
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	3177
Ontario economy	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3178
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3178
Thunder Bay economy	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	3179
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3179
Hon. Michael Bryant.....	3179
Municipal taxation	
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	3180
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3180

Poverty

Mr. Michael Prue.....	3180
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	3180

Research and innovation

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....	3181
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	3181

Taxation

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	3182
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	3182

Laboratory services

Mme France Gélinas.....	3182
Hon. David Caplan.....	3182

Occupational health and safety

Mr. Phil McNeely.....	3183
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	3183

International trade

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	3183
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	3183
Hon. George Smitherman.....	3184

Ontario economy

Mr. Paul Miller.....	3184
Hon. Michael Bryant.....	3184

Diamond mining

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	3184
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	3184

Education funding

Mrs. Joyce Savoline.....	3185
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	3185

Environmental assessment

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	3186
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	3186

Access to health care

Mr. Khalil Ramal.....	3186
Hon. David Caplan.....	3186

Property taxation

Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	3186
-------------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	3186
--------------------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover