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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 9 October 2008

Jeudi 9 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer and the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2008, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr. McGuinty to acknowledge the economic challenges facing the province and continuing to implement an economic plan.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: It is with some considerable degree of caution that I begin my remarks this morning, hoping that the thoughts I will express to the House and to my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills will give them reason for confidence and hope, but wondering if they will, such is the magnitude of the economic concern we are facing today in the province of Ontario.

“Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself....” I begin by quoting the greatest of all 20th-century American Presidents, Franklin Roosevelt, because a well-developed and well-defined sense of history can be a calming guide for us today. We know that today's crisis in the world's financial system originated in the United States. The current situation cries out for effective political leadership, but our American friends will have to wait some three months for new presidential leadership. Let us here in Ontario hope that we will not have to wait some three years for effective political leadership from across the aisle in this House.

The fallout of the disintegrating American economy is being felt here in Ontario, Canada. We feel it in the form of diminished consumer and business confidence, panic selling of shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange, depressing the prices of equities, falling real estate values, factory closures, uncertainty and anxiety. As I said yesterday in this House, my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills are anxious about losing their retirement savings, their jobs, possibly even their homes. They rightly expect all governments to respond effectively with the strong leadership that these days require. What do we see from the First Minister of the province of On-

tario? A motion before this House which seeks to absolve the government of accountability for any bad economic news which might still be forthcoming and abdicate responsibility for any difficult decisions the government may decide to take and blame them on the Legislature as a whole.

Yesterday, the Premier claimed that he is “open to advice.” Well, I have some advice: I feel he should start to listen. In response to the most recent provincial budget, which was tabled in this House on March 25, I responded in a press release. I quote from this press release from March 25: “The economy is slowing down, their overall spending is out of control, they have no margin for error, and their expectations for year-end savings are inflated. I think it's very likely that they won't be able to balance their budget at the end of 2008-09. That means a deficit is a real possibility.”

My concern at the time when I read the budget papers that accompanied the budget speech was that the provincial government, having budgeted and planned for a very modest surplus of around \$600 million and indicating expectations for in-year savings that were extremely optimistic—my belief, as I asserted at that time, was that the government may very well have been moving toward a deficit in this fiscal year. At the time I thought we wouldn't know for sure that there was a deficit in the fiscal year 2008-09 until the final accounts were done, but judging by the language in the response from the Minister of Finance as well as the Premier in recent days, it appears that they're aware that we're on track for a deficit, although they haven't yet acknowledged it. Politically, apparently, they don't want to acknowledge it until after the federal election, and then perhaps we'll get a more accurate stating of the finances.

I was reading this morning's *Globe and Mail* before I came into House. I would call your attention to the article which appeared in the *Globe* written by Murray Campbell. He talks about this resolution and this debate that we're participating in today. He refers to the resolution that the Premier presented yesterday as being “offensively partisan.” He goes on to say, “In effect, he”—the Premier—“is asking the opposition to endorse Liberal economic policy, so it's no surprise that both rival parties say they won't vote for it.”

We have offered, through the last five years, constructive and positive suggestions as to what the government should be doing with respect to the province's finances. Most recently, in the lead-up to the provincial budget this spring, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its normal round of pre-budget

hearings, and as a member of that committee, along with the member for Haldimand–Norfolk and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, I participated in those hearings. We listened to the people of Ontario who had an interest in coming forward to give us their advice and their best suggestions as to what ought to happen in terms of the next provincial budget. I would just like to refer to some of the suggestions that we brought forward as part of our dissenting report on the prebudget consultations.

We pointed out the fact that if current trends at that time were to hold, Ontario was going to be moving toward a have-not status within Confederation. We pointed out the fact that Ontario, under the McGuinty government, had become one of the slowest-growing provinces in the country. We indicated that Ontario's growth in 2007 was the slowest in Canada for the first time since the 1991 recession. We also pointed out the fact that four out of five major banks ranked Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces in terms of economic growth for 2008 in terms of their projections. We indicated that the provincial government should undertake an immediate plan to reduce the tax burden on business and new business investment. We asked the government to fully eliminate capital taxes in Ontario immediately. We asked that the government reduce taxes on small business in particular, because, as you know very well, small business is the greatest generator of job growth in our economy. Over the years, 80% of new job creation tends to be in the small business sector. We called upon the government to begin a serious push to address the very real concerns about future energy supply in Ontario and uncompetitive prices relative to our competing jurisdictions. We urged the government to fix the roads, bridges and waterways on which our trade depends, eliminating once and for all the ballooning infrastructure deficit. Those were some of the points we made.

As our report continued, we quoted Warren Jestin, the chief economist at Scotiabank. His quote was, "Ontario will be, at best, flat and" possibly "on a negative trend with respect to interprovincial migration." That supported the fact that we had put forward that Ontario was in the midst of the biggest out-migration in history. In other words, huge numbers of Ontarians, many thousands, were leaving the province to pursue and seek opportunities in other parts of the country. We offered these suggestions, this advice, in good faith to the provincial government and we were ignored.

0910

My constituents who are listening to this debate today I'm sure are asking a number of questions. One of the questions might be: "Why had the government introduced this motion yesterday, and called it for debate?" Clearly, the government would say that they are responding to the state of Ontario's economy and they're concerned that new action has to be taken to protect and strengthen the economy. Because of the stock market crash, we've seen in the last number of days a dramatic devaluation of the stock markets, both in Canada and Ontario. The TSX has gone down a considerable number of points. The New York Stock Exchange and the

NASDAQ have experienced the same kind of turmoil, as have stock markets around the world. In fact, I've read that almost three years of increases in the stock markets have been wiped out in a number of days.

We have seen a tightening of the financial system in the United States and Europe. We have seen Wall Street investment banks that have weathered all the storms of the last 150 years—even going back to the Civil War—fail and go bankrupt. We've seen massive intervention in the financial system in the United States try and shore it up. Yesterday in Great Britain, the Labour government of Gordon Brown announced that they were going to buy preferred shares in many of the British banks, so as to ensure their solvency and prevent their failure.

We have seen the loss of manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario—something that I've talked about in this House going back to 2005, calling upon the provincial government to come up with a plan to enhance our competitiveness, to save these jobs and make Ontario a magnet for new job-creating investment. I introduced a private member's resolution in 2005 calling upon the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to conduct hearings into the competitiveness of our manufacturing industries. Eventually, the resolution was debated and passed by this House. I also had an opportunity to bring a motion to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, asking that we pursue these hearings as soon as possible. That motion was passed. Unfortunately, the government has not seen fit to allow those hearings to take place. I would submit that if those hearings had taken place and if we had had a broad public discussion about the issues facing the competitiveness of our manufacturing industries, involving business leaders, involving academic experts and involving organized labour, we could have, as a standing committee, come up with an action plan which we could have tabled in the House and again encouraged the government to take appropriate action to fix what is wrong in terms of the competitiveness of our industry. I would submit that if we had done that starting in 2005, recognizing the challenges that we knew were on the horizon—or at least that some of us identified, if the government could not or didn't—we could have saved some of those jobs, and we could be in a stronger economic position today as a province.

The government would also point to the anxiety that exists in our communities over declining real estate values. As you know, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—or, as we know it, MPAC—has recently sent out notices of reassessment for properties across the province. Over a period of time, I suppose every property owner in Ontario will receive their notice of reassessment. This is something that had been put off by the government until after the election, and now we are looking at about three years of catch-up. Certainly people in my riding are opening these assessment notices, and they are shocked by the increase in MPAC's assessment of the value of their property. They believe—and quite properly believe—that this may very well lead to a whopping property tax increase.

People are also very concerned about the retirement savings. Many of us who have had the opportunity to save for our retirement through the vehicle that Canadians most properly use, the registered retirement savings plan, have investments in the stock market, through mutual funds perhaps. Many of us have investments in bond funds as well, which may very well be of concern. Not everybody puts their retirement funds in the mattress or under the bed or in a sock. The fact is those investments are of concern to people today, and when they receive their statements from their mutual fund companies, I'm sure there is going to be, again, a great deal of shock because of the reduced value of the stock market. For people who have been fortunate enough to have a public sector pension fund like, for example the teachers' pension fund or the Ontario Public Service Employees pension fund, those pension funds are heavily invested in the stock market as well, and they will have experienced massive devaluations as a result of the stock market crash, which of course puts the retirement savings of people, through their pension funds, to some degree in question.

But we also have to point out that the political motive of the government in bringing forward this motion yesterday is to continue its practice of playing a blame game. This government is talented in many ways, and one of its most well-developed talents is to point the finger of blame at anybody and everybody when something goes wrong, rather than accepting government responsibility and accountability for the mistakes they make.

For a number of years, they've put a great deal of effort into blaming the federal government for everything that's wrong in the province of Ontario; in many cases, for things they could have some direct influence over if they took an appropriate change in policy. They've blamed the opposition. When they took office, they blamed the opposition for a deficit that quite frankly wouldn't have existed if we had been re-elected. When you think back to the last year of the Ernie Eves government, in the first quarter we experienced a significant number of economic challenges: SARS, mad cow disease, the hydro blackout. All of that happened within the first few months of that fiscal year, being 2003-04.

Of course, we had a provincial election in October 2003, more than halfway through the fiscal year, when unfortunately the Conservative government was defeated, and the new Liberal government came in and had a political interest in inflating the deficit as high as they possibly could so as to blame the outgoing government for any challenges they were going to face in that first year. Clearly, if we had formed the government again in 2003, we would have tried to balance the budget—I believe we would have. The fact is, the provincial government needs to accept responsibility for at least half of the fiscal year 2003-04 and will have to accept responsibility for inflating that deficit number.

The text of this motion, as we know, says that the government is planning to make adjustments where necessary. We have to question what the government has in mind in that regard. Certainly I listened to the Premier

yesterday. I'm sure there will be other speeches today by government members. We don't know exactly what the government is thinking in terms of making adjustments where necessary. Does that mean higher provincial income taxes at a time when the economy is struggling? Does that mean they're going to run a deficit? Does that mean spending reductions in non-priority areas they might identify that we don't know about yet?

Certainly there are huge expectations out there among interest groups that exist in the province of Ontario. The government spent a lot of time addressing the poverty issue, as they saw fit to do, having promised to do something about it. We don't hear too much about that from the government at the moment. There are a number of other areas, whether it be infrastructure in my riding or new hospitals that need to be built. We just don't know what the government has in mind when it says, "make adjustments as necessary."

The second question my constituents are asking relative to this debate is: What is the government's record on managing the economy? As we know, the government has now been in office for five years. I talked earlier about the deficit they claimed they inherited in 2003, which in fact was grossly inflated to suit the political purposes of the government of the day. We need to talk about the out-of-control spending that the provincial government has pursued in the last five years. Their spending is up 50% in five years, which is something that the Leader of the Opposition pointed out eloquently yesterday. We need to point out the tax increases this government raised—in its very first budget, the biggest tax increase in history—even though the Premier promised not to raise taxes. We need to talk about over 200,000 manufacturing jobs lost, going back to 2005. I talked about that, as well as my resolution in the Legislature that I wish the government had listened to.

The government has, of course, what they call a five-point plan. I find it interesting to observe the Premier during question period when he talks about his five-point plan. He normally makes reference to his notes when he recites the five-point plan. It would appear that he doesn't have the five-point plan in his head.

The five-point plan is in the 2008 budget, the most recent provincial budget. Just quickly, what the government says they're planning to do is a five-point plan to strengthen the economy. The budget says that the government will make investments in the skills and education of our people, the government will accelerate investments in infrastructure, the government will support innovation, the government will lower business costs and the government will strengthen key partnerships to maximize future potential. That's the five-point plan. It's completely motherhood. Any government in the history of Ontario would say they are trying to do all these things. To suggest that this is an effective government strategy or plan to deal with the economy is overstating it in the extreme.

0920

We know that on October 22 the government will release its fall economic statement. We have been calling

upon the government, going back to June, to bring forward an economic statement with up-to-date and current assumptions for growth, because we know that the growth assumptions that were used in this budget, when it was released in March, are completely out of date and need to be calibrated downwards based on the new realities. It would appear that the government doesn't want to release its economic statement until after the federal election. I assume they don't want to negatively impact on the fortunes of their fellow Liberal candidates who might be in tight races on October 14, next week. Clearly, that would suggest that we are in for some pretty bad news on October 22. It would appear that the government hopes to pass this resolution before the October 22 statement and use it as a pretext and excuse, perhaps, to raise taxes, run a deficit or cut spending.

The third question I believe my constituents are asking with respect to this debate is, where is the leadership that Ontario needs today? The leadership that Ontario needs today is on this side of the House, and I would hope that the government will finally begin to listen, as the Premier indicated that he would. We have called upon the government to bring forward an economic update immediately. We've called upon the government to bring forward a complete financial statement. We've called upon the government to help people who've lost their jobs. We've called upon the government to put out the welcome mat for investment, and address the issues of taxes and regulation. We've called upon the government to bring forward some public sector restraint. And we've called upon the government to work in co-operation with all levels of government. I would urge the government members to listen to what is coming forward in this debate from the opposition parties, because we have been raising these issues now for five years. Listen and learn, and let's work together to address this serious economic situation that we are in.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to start off by saying that I was very disappointed yesterday. The Premier and his party brought forward their discussion on economics in the province and were looking for input from the opposition party and the third party. We sat listening to his delivery and then, when it came to the opposition's turn, Mr. McGuinty and most of his cabinet left, and also did not even listen to our, the third party's, presentation. So if you want to discuss economics and you want to be concerned about the party, that doesn't show a lot of respect for our opinion. I was very disappointed.

Now, getting into jobs and the economy, this resolution finally acknowledges that Ontario is facing a serious crisis. The McGuinty government has ignored the threat of recession for some time now. Last December, when delivering his fall economic statement, the finance minister said, "The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong"—December 13, 2007. Then last spring, when the asset-backed commercial paper mess was beginning to unravel and bank economists were lowering

their expectations, the finance minister stated, "The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient"—March 18, 2008. The McGuinty government chose to ignore these looming problems and instead chose to use terms like "resilient" and "fundamentally strong" to get around debating what could be done to reverse the course. Speaking of debating, I don't know why this resolution was brought forward at this time—it might have something to do with an election; I'm not sure—but this should have been done before, not after.

Manufacturing and resource sector workers in this province have been witnessing a recession for years now. They know the economies in their communities have not been "fundamentally strong." There's a jobs crisis in the Ontario manufacturing and forestry heartlands. Since July 2004, almost 230,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. This list could go on, but here are some examples that are more recent: 430 jobs, 80% of the workforce at DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg. In Niagara last month, 800 jobs lost were at John Deere in Welland and the temporary layoff of 480 at Abitibi-Bowater. Lost, since June 2004, were 100,000 manufacturing jobs in Toronto and 25,000 in Hamilton. Can you imagine the impact on my city, where we're from? That's 25,000 jobs and a population of just under 500,000. Can you imagine how many other people that impacts, as well as small businesses? Thunder Bay's manufacturing jobs: half of them gone. In addition, 230,000 jobs lost in manufacturing; more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and about 35,000 indirect jobs have been lost.

I shouldn't have to tell the members opposite how important manufacturing and resource jobs are to this province. These jobs are not just important because manufacturing jobs pay an average of \$2.50 per hour more than an average hourly wage in this province. These jobs are not just important because, in addition to paying better, these jobs come with good pensions and good benefits. Workers who have lost good jobs over the past few years would be stunned to know that it is only now that the McGuinty government is proposing a resolution acknowledging that the province faces significant economic challenges. It's shocking, frankly, that it has taken the McGuinty government so long to come to this conclusion. Dalton McGuinty has pretended that the current jobs crisis is limited only to manufacturing and forestry, but anyone who knows anything about the Ontario economy knows that manufacturing and resources represent the foundation upon which Ontario's service economy rests.

The second quarter economic accounts released by the Minister of Finance last week showed that the output for the manufacturing sector continues to decline. But the real news is that when you combine reports from the first two quarters of this year, it becomes clear that the rest of the economy is no longer picking up the slack, and we are ending up with declining output in many sectors of the broader economy. In other words, job losses in previously untouched sectors—retail and financial services,

for example—may very well be on the immediate horizon.

The TD Economics report yesterday forecasts a negative employment growth in 2009. The report reads: “Real GDP growth in Ontario is expected to barely advance in 2008-09, placing it last”—last, Speaker—“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 this province” hard.

The McGuinty government has heard from unemployed workers, seen the bad statistics and read report after report forecasting job losses, and they now acknowledge that trouble is on the horizon. So what do they do about it? They table a resolution reaffirming that their so-called five-point plan is working. Confusing, to say the least. When confronted with real evidence that the plan isn't, in fact, working, the McGuinty government's strategy is to proclaim in this House that it actually is working—220,000 manufacturing jobs lost in five years. The plan is working, they say. The forestry sector decline is wiping out towns in northern Ontario. It's working, they say, the plan is working. Reports showing falling growth and serious job losses looming in all sectors? The plan is working? I'm not sure.

This resolution is a declaration of inaction. The NDP has always been the party that puts families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a job is the best way to make sure that working women and men share in Ontario's prosperity. The NDP believes that government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime to an employer are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable jobs, and not be retrained to go work in Alberta or Saskatchewan.

The McGuinty government doesn't believe in an activist government. Mr. McGuinty has stood on the sidelines showing absolutely no leadership, while factories and mills downsize and close all over our province, costing hundreds of thousands of jobs. I repeat: 230,000 manufacturing jobs and tens of thousands of jobs in the forestry sector.

Dalton McGuinty's watch has not been good, quite frankly. The Liberals think that the market must always be the final arbiter of what jobs survive and what jobs disappear. Well, I'm here to tell you that the NDP doesn't see things that way.

0930

We believe that sometimes the market works and sometimes it doesn't. When it doesn't—and this is one of those times in Ontario's economic history when the market definitely isn't working—the government must step in on behalf of hard-working men and women and set things right. There are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist government action now. Instead of putting real proposals on the

table, the McGuinty government tables a resolution in this House saying he isn't prepared to act to protect jobs in this province. He says that his five-point plan will support Ontario workers through the gloomy economic forecasts we hear about every day. But this five-point plan has failed to sustain manufacturing and resource jobs, so it sure won't do a thing to sustain jobs in other sectors that may get hit.

Contrary to Mr. McGuinty's do-nothing approach, the NDP has been putting real policies on the table for the past couple of years. Here's what we've been fighting for:

- a five-year guarantee of the industrial hydro rate;
- a jobs protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties;
- a Buy Ontario policy;
- tougher plant closure legislation that could ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant or mill from closing in addition and enhanced mandate severances. Bill 6, which I brought forward last year, is still sitting on the books. It was passed for show on second reading in the House, it got to committee and the Liberals shot it down. Not only did they shoot it down, they didn't even read it—unbelievable;
- expansion of severance eligibility and increase of 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 they close or leave the country, including not only severance, but holiday pay and money owed for hours worked; and finally,
- the refundable manufacturing resource investment tax, which seems to have worked well in Manitoba. Yes, their economy is slightly different, but it seems to be having a major impact on saving jobs.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward in the past few years to deal with Ontario's job crisis and every last one of them has been rejected.

I'd like to move an amendment to this resolution calling on the government to adopt this proposal—we've already done that; sorry. I will give another chance for the government to accept it.

For the New Democrats, politics is about people. It's about a fair deal for the people who have built and continue to build this province. It's heart-wrenching to attend union meetings across this province where proud, strong, middle-aged workers break down while telling their story of how their jobs were lost, how they can't pay their mortgage, can't put food on the table, are facing bleak futures and few job possibilities, and can't send their kids to college or university. Not only are these families facing a loss of income due to job loss, but to add insult to injury, there is no protection to their severances, benefits and hard-earned pension plans. If we want to talk about the real causes of poverty in this province, let's look at the manufacturing and resource job losses in the province and the poor treatment of workers in their time of need. They spent a lifetime paying their taxes and helped build their community and their province, but

when they needed help, the government was nowhere to be seen. That's not right, it's not fair, and I can guarantee you that the NDP caucus at Queen's Park will do everything we can to make sure that working men and women of this province are fairly rewarded for their hard work and put as much pressure on the folks across the way as possible to ensure that provincial government is there to lend a helping hand when Ontarians need it.

This is even more important when facing a job crisis that in all likelihood will extend to other sectors of our economy. Seventeen years ago, the Legislature was debating what the government should do, faced with a deep recession. Here is one quote from that debate: "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.

The financial crisis and regulation: Ontarians are looking at the stock market with a sense of angst. Yes, stock markets go up and down, but this is different. It seems that every day, the world central banks take extraordinary actions to prevent our financial system from completely collapsing. The Federal Reserve and the Bank of Canada have been pouring dollars into the banking system to keep it afloat. The United States and the European countries have committed hundreds of billions, perhaps trillions, of dollars to nationalize financial institutions in a desperate attempt to turn things around. The stock market swings—wild, unpredictable and seemingly irrational—worry people. Ontarians' savings are tied up in the stock market, pensions, mutual funds, RRSPs and so on. Ontarians are worried about their financial future and want their savings protected from these wild swings.

They are also concerned about their jobs. Stock market crashes and job losses tend to go hand in hand. We've already seen 230,000 jobs leave this province in the last five years, but Ontarians are concerned that the worst is yet to come. The financial and retail sectors have so far been left relatively unscathed by lower growth. In the United States, this hasn't been the case; retailers and banks are laying off workers all over the country. When Ontarians look to newspapers and television for reasons why the stock market has been acting this way, they are inundated with terms like "asset-backed commercial paper," "toxic mortgages" and "default credit swaps." It's a complicated problem, but all signs point to a lack of regulation and oversight that allows speculators to take excessive risks, and every day, taxpayers and citizens are paying the consequences of their bad bets.

Ontario has jurisdiction over securities regulation. We have argued through the debate that Ontario needs to take a more active approach in protecting and sustaining jobs in our province. But Ontario also needs to take immediate steps to strengthen securities regulation. We need to prevent this from happening again. We'd like to offer some real solutions on security reform:

—The creation of a financial products safety commission just like we have for consumer goods, as recommended by one prominent economist, would address the invention of new financial products not intended to manage risk but to create risk.

—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.

—Strengthen regulation that restricts leverage for all financial companies. Leverage is the proportion of debt used in speculation and is one of the causes of the current crisis.

—Deal with the conflicts of interest that are so much a part of our securities regulation system. Organizations that regulate the mutual fund and investment dealer sectors police themselves while also acting as a trade association and promoting themselves. This is a clear conflict of interest, and that simply has to stop now.

Obviously, these are just a few proposals, and we look forward to hearing more from the province and the Ontario Securities Commission. But we need to act now to protect Ontario's savings from more wild swings and the jobs impacted by financial markets.

I can only speak from my experience in the city of Hamilton, and I can tell you that in the last 20 years, I've seen probably 50 to 60 major employers pull out of the Hamilton region and go back to the States, to Europe, to Mexico, to South America, throwing thousands and thousands of Hamiltonians out of work—good-paying jobs, anywhere from \$40,000 to \$70,000 jobs, which are above average but sure stimulated our economy. If you drive down Barton Street in Hamilton, it's like a ghost town. Every second store is closed or boarded up. I remember the days when it was a booming area—cars, people, shoppers. Not now. And where are all our young people going? They're going west, where the money is, where the good money is, or to the oil rigs off Newfoundland.

When are we going to start attracting major manufacturers to our province? That's the problem. We can diversify, we can put money into education, we can put money into retraining, but if they don't have a job to go to, they're going to go elsewhere. So we're going to pay taxpayers' money to train these guys in trades and crafts and train doctors and nurses, and they're going to go to other provinces. They're constantly courted by the United States; they come here and offer them houses, offer them packages to go south. We probably lose 30% of our doctors and nurses to the United States.

0940

I just don't understand. We're sinking all this money into the Big Three, we're sinking all this money into all these other areas, yet they keep laying people off, taking the money, and we don't see any results. I can only speak for my area, but not one major manufacturing company has come back to Hamilton. I could go down a list: Otis Elevator, CIL, Massey Ferguson, Procter and Gamble,

Inglis, Westinghouse—it goes on and on. We're talking thousands of jobs.

Our tax base in the Hamilton area used to be 70% industrial, 30% residential. It's now 70% residential, 30% industrial. So what happens? It's hard to believe when a hard-hit community like Hamilton and area pays some of the highest residential taxes in this province. Unbelievable—and half of our people are out of work. Our seniors are on fixed incomes. It's just unacceptable. It's got to change. This government should be moving in the direction of attracting major businesses to the hard-hit communities in our province, not always bolstering the communities that are reasonably well and can survive. Believe me, Ontario is west of Burlington. There is another part of this province that's been ignored. We've got to move.

The government has put money into health in Hamilton, but that doesn't give John Smith, the truck driver, a job. It gives researchers, nurses and doctors employment, but the bulk of our population is not being dealt with.

It's got to change. It's got to change fast or everything is going to get worse. I'm very, very concerned about our economy and the future of this province. Hopefully, the government sometime will listen to the opposition.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: It's a real privilege for me to have a chance to participate in the debate over this resolution and indeed in the debate over a matter which is first and foremost for all of us in our considerations. These are challenging times, to say the least.

I must say really appreciate the privilege in this House today of following on the comments by the honourable member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I really enjoy his presence in this Legislature and his passion for his community. But I do wonder slightly, and I'll wonder aloud, whether his passion with which he concluded his remarks around the desire to see manufacturers return to the Hamilton community, take root there and provide economic opportunity for individuals to support their families, and for that community, which I have a long association with, to prosper—how he feels, in the context of the current federal election campaign, about a \$50-billion tax increase for these very same corporations that the member wants to see setting up in Hamilton. I'm not sure how he rationalizes that in the context of the party which I know he supports, taking the view at the federal election that they would put about \$50 billion in additional tax burdens on those very same corporations. I don't think, somehow, that's going to be the path to the success that we all dream about for Hamilton.

I must say I was a little bit surprised by some of the honourable members' comments about Hamilton that don't really reflect the optimistic viewpoint I've experienced in my visits to the Hamilton community, in my engagement with people there. The honourable member did acknowledge that there's been very substantial investment in the Hamilton community. No doubt, the nature of the investment and the nature of the job growth

that has occurred in Hamilton is different than in some of Hamilton's history, but I really look to Hamilton as a community that continues to emerge, built on the strengths of research capability at McMaster University and extraordinary investments, which are reflected in construction crane—very, very evident in the Hamilton community—about the continued emergence of the health sciences sector.

I will speak a little bit later on to some of those very direct infrastructure investments that are helping to fuel the economic prospects and, indeed, to provide an optimistic viewpoint for the future of the Hamilton community. I think in a certain sense it's appropriate to use Hamilton as a community symbolic of the exercise that we're engaged in here in the province to transition to the jobs of the future. Health sciences is one of these very good examples, and it's an example where there has been very important and evident progress in the Hamilton community.

This debate that legislators will take up here is a crucial one, for it is also a sign to the people of Ontario that, as they do, we have our eye firmly fixed on the economic circumstances and we share in this struggle with all Ontarians. It is a time of some great uncertainty, and it is a time, therefore, that calls upon government to act in a proactive way, to set a vision and a destination point and to courageously lead our province in that direction.

I understand, having served as an opposition member, how it's important and a part of the responsibility to put on the record those concerns—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: The member for Durham is doing what he does well, which is muttering under his breath.

I think that there is importance in this debate in terms of being able to characterize for the people of Ontario those efforts that we're making.

I listened carefully yesterday to the Leader of the Opposition—that is, the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislature, as the opposition party does not have a leader who has a seat in the Legislature—the member for Leeds—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think one of the members just offered to step aside to make way for Mr. Tory.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Was it you?

Hon. George Smitherman: If I heard the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock properly, she's going to step aside and allow a by-election to occur so that Mr. Tory could visit himself in this Legislature. He once had a seat here. I'm not sure what happened.

We set out on a path, recognizing the importance of setting that destination in mind for the economy of the province of Ontario. We've been working to cut business taxes. We eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers and resource-based industries. Some members in this House who call for action related to manufacturing and resource-based industries voted against those tax decreases. We cut capital taxes for businesses by 21%, and we made it

retroactive, which meant that they got cheques back, and there is further action in that area.

Infrastructure is the second of a five-pronged strategy to advance the economic prospects for Ontario—economic prospects in the short term in terms of the 100,000 or so people who are actively working in Ontario today on rebuilding and addressing the infrastructure deficit that has plagued our province, but also making investments in the infrastructure of our province, which is about the foundation of our province to be successful going forward. I want to talk more about infrastructure. I'll leave those comments to just a few minutes from now.

A third in our strategy was to support innovation. Obviously, there is an extraordinary evolution going on in a wide variety of areas—in my responsibilities as Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, thinking of the energy side, the emergence of more green technologies does provide a glimpse into the extraordinary array of opportunities there are for the ingenious minds of the people of the province of Ontario—the best-educated workforce in the western world—to apply themselves and to create the devices and the products and the services which will be in very strong demand over the course of the next several decades, particularly as we grapple with the challenges and the opportunities related to climate change.

Those investments have supported things like new laboratories, equipment and research; they've created a venture capital fund to help support some of the capital needs of those companies that are creating the high-quality and high-paying jobs of the present and of the future; and also, resources put aside to support the biopharm investment program to attract new pharmaceutical investment in the province of Ontario. Indeed, I had the privilege of attending at one of the ground-breakings for an impressive new facility, actually here in the city of Toronto, at one of the long-standing players, Sanofi, known to many as Connaught Labs, at the heart of some of the most important health sciences history that our country knows, and a company deeply connected to research that has in its pipeline the capacity to affect quality of life for a lot of people out there.

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This ties in well to our fourth strategy, which is partnering with business. You know, it's one thing to come to a Legislature and to talk about the necessity of investment in the manufacturing sector, as the member who spoke before me did. But he's from a party that's supporting a \$50-billion tax increase for businesses and he is also from a party that doesn't consistently demonstrate their capacity to actually be engaged, to create partnerships and to be mindful of the necessity of working with those who are prepared to make investments and to bring employment.

We have a different strategy. Our auto strategy has invested about \$500 million and leveraged \$8 billion in new private sector investments. We all recognize that here in the province of Ontario we have a very proud history, and a very proud and strong future as well, with

respect to the auto manufacturing sector. That's not to say, and certainly not to pretend, that there aren't challenges which have been experienced by many of the people who work in that sector. But at the same time we must be mindful of the opportunities to ensure, on a go-forward basis, that the people in the province of Ontario have the opportunity to continue to participate in what will always be a very big piece of the Ontario economy. We're very excited, and I'll be going to the community of Woodstock soon to participate with them in the groundbreaking for their new hospital. We're very excited to see coming to life the Toyota plant, which is a very tangible piece of demonstrable progress and a very good sign of how investing some of the people's resource is able to lure these very important investments.

Our advanced manufacturing investment strategy and our Next Generation of Jobs Fund are further examples of our willingness to partner with business, to give them the support and the resources that they need to ensure that the employees that they have for today are appropriately trained for the jobs and the opportunities of tomorrow. I just want to tell you that on this point about partnering, we have seen derisive comment, I think it's fair to say, from each of the opposition parties around these strategies. We have seen the Conservative Party evolve over time from the corporate welfare comments propagated very often by the former member for Whitby, who now serves—perhaps just for a few days longer—as a member of Parliament and as the Minister of Finance in the country of Canada, the same individual who has been noteworthy for his active campaigning against the province that he is deemed to represent in the House of Commons.

At the heart of it, our fifth strategy is the one that has always been at the strength of Ontario, and that is to invest in our people. I mentioned before that we have extraordinary bragging rights insofar as the workforce. The people of the province of Ontario are the best educated to be found anywhere in the western world. We want to make sure that their skills are sharp. We've made extraordinary progress in bringing more opportunities to the fore through the investments that we've made in our post-secondary education sector. I think that of all the things we can point to through the initiatives that our government has led over the last five years, one of those killer facts, one of those things most noteworthy: The people of the province of Ontario should know that investments in the post-secondary education system, in our colleges and in our universities, mean that today there are 100,000 more individuals participating in post-secondary education opportunities than five years ago. This is 100,000 more people getting the skills that they need to ensure that Ontario will be in a competitive position going forward. We've got 10,000 more individuals, through the efforts that we've made in enhancing the quality of our high schools, graduating from high school. This is a further example of the steps that we're taking to allow people to ladder up, to have a good foundation in education, to go back for retraining as necessary, to con-

tinue to enhance their skill set and see those skills evolve as our economy evolves and the nature of employment evolves.

We've got 50,000 more apprentices working. We've had some questions in the Legislature from the johnny-come-lately school of politics, from the official opposition, on the matter of apprenticeship, but where were they through the period of time, for eight and a half years, when they were the government, in preparing Ontario for what they now say were evident transition-area matters going on in our economy? Why did they not have the foresight through those many years, when the predictions of an aging workforce were first out there? Why did they sleep through those opportunities? Instead of investing in post-secondary education and in apprenticeship models, they chose to go with a strategy of tax cuts, and in 2003-04 they left us holding the bag for their irresponsible actions and a more than \$5.5-billion deficit to boot.

Our strategy is clear: It's investing in the people of the province of Ontario.

I want to return to the subject matter that I have lots of responsibility for and is near and dear to my heart, and that's infrastructure.

The first thing I want to do is apologize to the people who are at home and who, over the course of the last several months, in their travels here, there and everywhere in the province of Ontario, have experienced some of the delays from traffic associated with road and bridge construction. I have many privileges associated with my job, and the greatest one, the one that I enjoy the most, is the privilege of travelling about this vast and beautiful province of ours. My travels last weekend took me to Sudbury for some family business; I married into Sudbury. I drove up Highway 400/69 to Sudbury. Five weeks ago I had done the same trip, and in the time since, yet even more impressive road building and preparation for the next phases of road building are evident there, as we shrink the province of Ontario through enhancements to our transportation system and provide the people in northern Ontario with more connections to the communities in the south. This is one very, very strong example.

As I travelled around here in Toronto, or as I travelled earlier in the summer from my mother's farm in Ravenna in eastern Grey county down to Windsor, I came upon so many places where local detours were necessary because our government has made investments in infrastructure which allow counties and municipalities to rebuild bridges which were otherwise threatened. Yet we receive only criticism from the opposition party, particularly the official opposition. They didn't want to see the more than \$1-billion investments in communities. They characterize that spending as reckless. We characterize that spending as essential to make sure that the essential infrastructure of the province of Ontario is there. We want to get past the neglect that has created infrastructure deficits totalling \$100 billion, and we have been working with a very different approach than the party that came before us.

I had the privilege of serving as Minister of Health for more than four and a half years in the province of On-

tario. Unlike the ministers from the previous government—including you, I might say, in deference to you, Mr. Speaker—I was very lucky because I was part of a government that wasn't intent on closing hospitals, but instead was intent on building them.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm being heckled again by the member from Durham, but if he was more gregarious, outgoing, and optimistic, he would stand in his place and acknowledge a new regional cancer centre which has come to life in Oshawa through investment by our government. He would acknowledge that as we stand here today, in the community of Ajax there is a hospital undergoing a \$100-million renovation that was necessary when his party was in office, but instead they dedicated themselves to other tasks, not the essential tasks of building the infrastructure that's necessary.

This year in the province of Ontario, we're spending just about \$10 billion to build up the infrastructure. This is in comparison to not many years ago, when the official opposition was the government, when infrastructure investments were a small percentage of the kinds of investments that we've been making to build back the infrastructure to support the economic profile of the province of Ontario.

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I know that we'll have viewers who have tuned in from a variety of different places in the province, and I want to highlight, just on hospitals alone—keeping in mind that we've got transit, we've got schools, we've got post-secondary education, we've got road building and bridges also going on—what is happening in real time, as we speak:

—Credit Valley Hospital: 270,000 square feet of new construction and 70,000 square feet of renovations; more hospital beds, and double the number of labour and delivery rooms; expanded cancer treatment centre and increased diagnostic services.

—Hamilton General Hospital, which I spoke about earlier: Consolidate the current acquired brain injury and rehab services from 14 different buildings to one site; 44 beds and more efficient ambulatory programs.

—Up on the brow of the mountain in Hamilton, Henderson General Hospital, a hospital slated for closure by the previous government, is undergoing an extraordinary renovation. The construction cranes can be seen for miles and miles. We're adding oncology and critical care beds, providing more capacity in emergency services. I think that emergency room was threatened with closure by the previous government. Instead, we're putting a lot of the people's money into rebuilding their necessary infrastructure.

—In Ottawa, the Hôpital Montfort is doubled in size and will be officially opened very soon. I had a chance to visit there not long ago to tell them that we were going to bring a new MRI to that site. This is another example in our Ontario where the McGuinty government is investing the people's resources in building up their infrastructure in an instance where the previous government intended to close it.

—North Bay Regional Health Centre: huge new hospital. Mike Harris couldn't deliver a new hospital in North Bay. Monique Smith delivered a new hospital in North Bay and a new hospital in Mattawa, the opening of which I'm looking forward to participating in on October 25.

—The Ottawa Hospital's regional cancer centre program, on two sites—new cancer capacity coming to life in Ottawa.

—Rouge Valley, Ajax and Pickering I mentioned before; yesterday, Runnymede Healthcare Centre—they topped off the new building. In Sarnia, Bluewater Health: a big, beautiful new hospital; same thing in Sault Ste. Marie. I saw it recently from the air and it is magnificent. Sudbury Regional Hospital, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Trillium Health Centre Mississauga, Trillium Health Centre West Toronto—all of these examples of infrastructure investment, jobs for Ontario in building Ontario's future.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start by saying we're actually in government order number 11, and we are basically debating the amendment to the amendment. That's Mr. Prue's amendment to Mr. Runciman's amendment from the notice we debated yesterday, which is notice number 87. That's where Premier McGuinty started off by a self-congratulatory style of saying, "It's not our fault."

In fairness, I have to respect our House leader, Mr. Runciman from Leeds-Grenville. I think his tone yesterday was absolutely perfect. He talked about working in co-operation, in a conciliatory fashion, but he also pointed out the hypocrisy of the tone of the government's secret, last-minute putting of this on the government agenda with no consultation, and also accusing the opposition of not working in co-operation. If you read or pay attention to the remarks by Mr. Runciman, you would, I believe, in a non-partisan way, be impressed. I can tell you, after 10 or so years of being here and listening, he was extending what I definitely consider an olive branch in terms of trying to show some recognition for the families, those persons on fixed incomes, those persons with pensions, those people who are affected by this. I think there's something for all of us to learn on this. It's more than just the tone, I agree; it's also a lesson that we should learn—putting the people first—because they are the people who actually put us here to talk about it.

I think it's important also to put some wrapping around this, in the context of the government. It's kind of strange—I start the framing of my comments around a broader tone. The notice of motion by Premier McGuinty said, and I think it would be important to put that on the record: "I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario acknowledges our province is facing economic challenges created by the high dollar"—in other words, it's not his fault—"high international oil prices"—not our fault—"the US economic slowdown"—not our fault—

"international economic turmoil"—not our fault—"and increased global manufacturing competition from China and India especially"—not our fault. He goes on to really say that none of it is his fault. Well, what else is he doing? What has he done to encourage, stimulate or help the economy of Ontario if he can't take responsibility for this situation—and in fairness, Mr. Runciman said that he shouldn't, which in fact is the case; this is global. But the cynicism of it all is, why was this motion at the last minute brought in? Basically, it was to bump up the current election on Tuesday. The federal election is now framed around—the ballot question is the economy, and he's trying to blame Stephen Harper. That's what this is about. To be totally honest in how cynical you can be here, he brought this in at the 11th hour on the 11th day in the heat of night and the darkness of night, sprung it on the opposition, and the main issue was, it's not his fault; it's Stephen Harper's fault. Here we have an election federally coming next week, on the 14th. It's tragic.

I hate to sound cynical, but it's even more cynical when you look at the broader context of what this government does. Just on October 7, there was a government bill introduced by the Attorney General, the Honourable Chris Bentley. The bill is number 108, and it's called An Act respecting apologies. It's quite an interesting bill. In fact, I've talked to a couple of lawyers about, what does it mean for liability—not just for the medical community, but what does it mean for liability? What has this got to do with the motion we're debating? I'm going to read the explanatory note. It says: "The bill provides that an apology made by or on behalf of a person in relation to any matter does not constitute an admission of fault or liability by the person, except for the purposes of a proceeding under the Provincial Offences Act, and does not affect the insurance coverage available to any person.... The bill also provides that an apology is not admissible in any civil proceeding, administrative proceeding"—in other words, "We're sorry, but we're not going to do anything about it."

In fact, he could have started the speech yesterday by introducing or referring to this bill: "I'm sorry." What does Premier McGuinty have to be sorry about? Well, he could apologize for the number of bold-faced mistruths that he stated during the last two elections. One of them was the highest increase in taxes in Canadian history, the health tax, \$2.5 billion, about \$800 or more out of every single person's pocket. He said it was a health tax. Well, he may tell you it's a health tax, but have you got a doctor? Is your health care any better? We're paying more, but we're getting less.

But it's more straightforward than that. I suggest he should have used his mandate as the Premier of the province to exercise Bill 108 and apologize to the people of Ontario, apologize for the cynicism of trying to blame everything on the federal level of government and taking no responsibility for his inaction—in fact, his actions of creating more red tape, more regulations, more inspections and more tax burdens on the hard-working families of Ontario. And it's worse: The seniors are paralyzed.

Many people in my riding are very, very concerned about a number of things—the price of gasoline. They're also concerned about their electricity. This morning, I turned on the radio and what they were talking about was natural gas. All of this stuff is under the whim and the will of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Energy Board. He has some authority; he has some authority to protect people on fixed incomes who can't and will not be able to afford their heat for their home this coming winter. I can't believe it for the life of me. He actually went around and put in smart meters. He put smart meters in every home. Now, they're not really smart meters at all. What they are, for your electricity, are time-of-use meters. Then he subtly introduced some changes in the regulations of how you're going to pay for electricity. Electricity is going to cost you about 100% more if you use it at peak times of the day. The smart meter is a device that allows your utility to bill you at your home for the energy that you used at a particular time of the day. Now that they have the differentiated prices, if you use electricity at the high point of use, you'll pay about 11 cents a kilowatt hour, as opposed to 4 to 5 cents a kilowatt-hour. That's a 100% increase. Not only that; you're going to be paying for the smart meter itself. That's just one more example. We've got the health tax, and then we've got the whole idea of energy and the costs.

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With the economic climate, he says he has no tools to deal with the threat to our seniors' pensions and other capital accumulation mechanisms, one of which, of course, is pension accounts. It's a huge, huge issue, Mr. Speaker—or Madam Speaker; good to see you in the chair. That, to me, is getting down to—because I'm over 65 and I play close attention to these things. I can see in my own accounts that I have lost a considerable amount. I think of people who haven't had the privilege that I've had of a decent, secure job—General Motors, 30 years, as well as this job for over 10 years. I have accumulated money, primarily for my own future. I feel each of us should have a responsibility to do the best we can, without always depending on government to bail us out.

But there is a role for government. Don't tell me that he can't make changes. I know for a fact he can. He has been warned by myself and others. There's a very excellent report that some members may not have had the chance—or the interest, perhaps—to read. It's called the Wise Persons' report. That report is by a very well respected and recognized group of individuals. One of the people whom I've had the privilege of meeting and hearing is one of the most respected people on this issue in the financial industry. It's Purdy Crawford, and I think he chairs the Wise Persons' Committee. They have reported on the tools under the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, as well as the OSC, the Ontario Securities Commission, and the rules they make on securing pensions.

I can tell you that not too many people are paying attention, but those funds worldwide—you should know

this; I'm not making this up. On the pension side, it's so large that no one wants to talk about it. It's terrifying, actually. It's about \$4 trillion. It's huge. It's not some mortgage that failed. This is accumulated capital that sits in investments, longer-term, mostly bank stocks. How are bank stocks doing? They're down 50%, some of them.

In fact, the bailout, the \$700 billion in the United States.... I was just recently in Ireland. Their bailout for their banks is \$400 billion, and their population is smaller than Canada's—\$400 billion to bail out the Irish banks. Why? We think Ireland's so well off, but I could cite a few things.

Where would this money be? Real estate is usually a pretty civil investment. How about a pension fund that invests in a REIT or some other instrument in real estate, and that market goes south? The capital value of those one-time-secure assets has gone down. I can tell you, the market, the equity market itself, has gone down. Even the resource market has gone down.

My sense is this: A Premier who stands up as a leader, as Mr. Runciman outlined yesterday, at the very least should have been honest with the people of Ontario. The first thing he could have done, Mr. Speaker—I see you're back—is give us, as Mr. Runciman asked for, a financial update. Most countries in the world—I know that in Great Britain, they're doing it on October 14. Ontario's going to do it on the 22nd, I believe. They should have brought that forward, in all honesty, in an atmosphere of collegiality and co-operation.

I believe, just reading the tone of our leader, John Tory, and our House leader, Mr. Runciman, that we would have a steady hand on the tiller and we would take some responsibility. At least we would take some partnership with you to do the right things. And Mr. Runciman—what we're debating in this government motion number 11 are his recommendations, which came out of public consultations that our leader, John Tory, and Mr. Runciman and the rest of caucus had with the sectors within our economy, the leadership in our economy. This included union, management, and labour and manufacturing leaders.

I have some clippings from this. Judith Andrew and others from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—small businesses, as we know, are very important. What are they saying? The two most important things they're saying: overtaxed and overregulated red tape. I can tell you that there's no quick fix. This is a third party, whose mandate is to represent small business: family restaurants, family small manufacturing businesses, family cleaning businesses, lawn service businesses, kennels, hairdressing shops, all these various things; families paying their bills, paying the inordinate expense of electricity bills. This, at the end of day, in all due respect, Mr. Premier, is about people. This is about our constituents, our collective constituents, and it's time to extend a hand to Mr. Runciman, as well as the NDP—Mr. Hampton—and take some responsibility in this climate.

Just recently, I spent some time, as I said, in two or three other countries, and I'm looking at a book here. I'm

just going to read some of the titles, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. Don't become confused. These are from other countries and it really does tell you a lot about how similar the real functions are. I'm running out of time. This is a statement here. The title is—and I'm going to validate this shortly—"Facing Into a Dismal Vista"—this is the Business and Finance publication—"Assurances our banks are robust does not so much inspire confidence as indicate the looming terror yet to stalk economic lives." The writer is the former senior government adviser in the British government.

Another headline in the same publication—it's all over Europe. This has nothing to do with Stephen Harper. In fact, the Canadian economy, in the overall scheme, globally, wouldn't be 5% of the total equation; it wouldn't be that big. Our economy is so linked to the United States; 80% of our total manufacturing economy is linked to the United States and if they catch a cold, we get pneumonia. So let's not be dissuaded in the election. Who would you sooner have their hand on the tiller? Stéphane Dion, who's going to increase taxes, or Stephen Harper, who's going to steady as she goes? That's what the question should be about, and Mr. Harper should have a strong minority government and have to work cooperatively in these troubled times. I would be satisfied with that outcome, but to swing right over and bring in another taxing-and-spending Liberal—I don't think so. That's not on the question. Read what's happening in the global economy.

If you look at the Prime Minister of England, he's a Labour Prime Minister and he's acting like a Conservative. They're looking to them for leadership. In fact, David Cameron, the upcoming Conservative leader in England, will be the next Prime Minister, I can tell you for sure. He's very popular. They've all had their annual general reviews and that's the way it sounds over there.

The next headline is, "Walk the Key Economic Planks
"Alan Dukes examines Ireland's myriad muscles and Achilles heels and concludes we have little cause to feel secure."

It goes on to outline how vulnerable the Irish economy is, the Celtic economy. The Celtic tiger is in huge, huge trouble—big time. All their expansion and growth is financed on the backs of these funds I talked about, which have all gone south.

I'm just reading these out. This is another one. This is a good example, and you should follow the money in these things is the advice from Stephen Harper. Lloyds TSB created the United Kingdom's biggest bank with the HBOS takeover. That's the Scottish bank that was taken over by Lloyds. The next title here is: "Bank of America Set to Buy Merrill Lynch for \$50 billion"—large, unimaginable sums of money and consolidation of money. Why? Because their capital base is completely gone, their capital base being what they considered to be their securities to secure their loans, the securities being the houses that they hold the mortgages on. Maybe a \$300,000 mortgage is now worth \$150,000. So if you put that across all of the condos and apartments and commercial buildings, they're in huge trouble.

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I'm going on here. I am trying to relate this to what this debate is about. The last one is the big bailout. This is about the US \$700-billion guarantee to the banks. And another one here is a very interesting sector. I'm going to wrap up by saying this. It says: "Public Sector: Insult to Injury. The new social partnership agreement further cossets state employees at the expense of the private sector," and it goes on to say the public sector will bankrupt the British economy. I'm not making this stuff up. It goes on to say that they have to cut almost €2 billion in expenses—€2 billion, a lot of money. Where should they start cutting? They start talking about health care. Let's relate this back to Ontario.

Mr. McGuinty led us to believe that he has no choice. He said the economy is in trouble. We all get that. In the next week or so he's going to come up with an economic statement, and the trouble is, he's going to say that there's a deficit. Now, that's not the only choice. He has three choices. Premier McGuinty and the finance minister, Dwight Duncan, have three choices. He can run a deficit. That's choice one, just keep on spending; even though the revenue is going south, going down, the expenditures are going up, because it's all payroll. The second one is, he could raise taxes. That's another choice. The third one is, he could cut expenditures. Those are the three choices of any government, of any party, of any stripe. Bob Rae had it. His revenues failed and he introduced the social contract. What was that? The social contract was to eliminate payroll, and a function of the payroll is what is going on in Britain, it's going on in the United States, it's going on around the world.

We'll see shortly what kind of leader Dalton McGuinty is. Leaders are elected to make difficult decisions, not to cut ribbons and smile and fawn and agree with everybody around the table. It's about making difficult but responsible decisions. Where his choices lie—this morning it's true as well. Mr. Caplan, the Minister of Health, said even though the information is available for patients with cancer on where to get the quickest treatment, he's not going to release that information. How cynical to put them, the government, first, and the people last. They've got it all wrong.

In my view, this is a time of great decision for the people of Ontario, not just the decision to elect another Liberal, Stéphane Dion, who doesn't have the foggiest clue about what's going on currently in the economy. To my view, what has to happen—watch for Dalton McGuinty's reaction, what he does of the three choices: raise taxes, run a deficit, or cut spending. I think he'll choose the first two: raise taxes and run a deficit.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I guess I enter this debate in a bit of an odd situation in the sense that, first of all, this is a debate that I think we should have had a long time ago, because we certainly have seen for the last four or five years the train coming down the tracks. I've been raising in this House, along with my leader, Howard Hampton,

and others, what's been happening, first of all, in the forestry sector. That was the first big alarm bell, when you saw the forestry sector not being able to export the amount of wood that we normally do and mills shutting down all across northern Ontario. That was the first bell that was rung that there was a problem in the American housing market, followed shortly by what was going on with the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector. So I want to say first of all that this is a debate that we should have started some years ago, and the debate should have been about what we can do as a province in order to assist our manufacturing and resource sectors to weather the storm.

I know government members will get up and say, "We did. Look at the great job we did," and the Premier talked about that yesterday, but I say what Ronald Reagan said years ago: Are we any better off four or five years down the road with the McGuinty government than we would have been otherwise? I say no. The government has tinkered at the edges, has had all kinds of great speeches, has made all kinds of commitments to do things, but at the end of the day, the effect that it has had on helping us weather the storm of what's going to happen to our economy, quite frankly, I think is somewhat minimal, and I'll get into that a little bit later.

The Premier calls on us to have this debate, and we're here today and we were here yesterday and we'll be here in future days to have this emergency debate, to talk about what Ontario should be. I sat in this Legislature yesterday, along with my colleagues here in the opposition, both the New Democrats and the Conservatives, and we listened to what the Premier had to say. The speech essentially was, "Look at the great job we've done." There was really no discussion about the vision of what we need to do, and do immediately, in order to deal with this particular situation. I want to say that the opposition was very quiet. We were listening intently to what the Premier was saying, followed by a speech by the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, and followed by a speech by Mr. Prue, who's our finance critic. Was the government listening? Well, I thought it was very interesting yesterday: The telling sign was that halfway through the speech of Mr. Runciman, the Premier decided to leave. He's the man who said that he wanted to listen to what we had to say, that he wanted to listen to what everybody in this Legislature had to say, no matter what side of the aisle, and as my good colleague Andrea Horwath says—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So much for that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —so much for that.

Then, when Mr. Prue took the floor and he started talking about what should be done on the part of interventions in the economy, the finance minister left. So I'm saying, to what degree is the government even taking its own emergency debate seriously if the two key people, who are supposedly calling for this emergency debate to listen to us, are really not paying any attention to what we have to say?

So what's this exercise about? It's about a communications exercise. This is what this is all about. The

government predetermined what the outcome of this debate was by the way that they put forward their motion. They said, "Here's what we want at the end, and we want you, the opposition party, to endorse what the Liberals have done for the last four or five years." I'm sorry, we're not going to play that game.

Now, I'm not going to say here that the government hasn't done anything good in five years. Of course, they've done some good.

Mr. John O'Toole: Name one.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He says, "Name one."

But the problem is that if you take a look at the initiatives the government talked about in that emergency motion yesterday, it did very little to really help the problems we've been having for the last four or five years.

I'll give you a very quick example. In northern Ontario, when the forestry sector was starting to go through the downturn that we've gone through, and mill after mill after mill was shut down, Howard Hampton was the first to stand and say: "We need to deal with electricity rates. For pulp and paper mills, 25% to 30% of their cost of operation is electricity. Electricity rates have more than doubled, and it's putting those companies at risk." Did the government, over the last four or five years, address that issue?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. Here's what they did: They tinkered. They had a really great announcement that they had a type of hydro rate for the pulp and paper industry that might save them some money. What they did was probably save them about 15% to 20% of what the overall increase was, and the increase was more than double.

My leader, Howard Hampton, stood in this House, along with other New Democrats, four or five years ago and said: "We, first of all, have to reverse what the Tories have started with the deregulation and the privatization of hydro. We need to accept that hydro was set up as a basic infrastructure for the economy of Ontario. If we have paper mills in Ontario and we have a strong manufacturing sector, one of the reasons is that we decided many years ago that electricity would be produced and sold at cost to the industry as an economic development tool."

So the government announced a type of program to help, but at the end of the day what did it do? Smooth Rock Falls, Tembec—the mill is shut down. Opasatika, Tembec—the mill is shut down. Cochrane—the mill is indefinitely closed. Timmins—the mill is—I can read this off for the next 20 minutes. My point is that the government, in its motion, said, "Here are the wonderful things that we have done," and what they are, quite frankly, are one-third measures. They have not done what needs to be done. So let's understand what the debate is all about. It's about a government trying to deflect the attention that they're getting and the criticism that they're getting vis-à-vis their inactions and their half-hearted attempts at responding to this issue.

Now let's talk about the economic climate that we're in. We are now in a situation where globally, our economic system is really at risk. We have banks that have overextended themselves by basically taking on some pretty bad credit. We have the stock market, which has basically seen a lot of profit-taking and a lot of speculation that has resulted in stocks increasing in value above the actual company values.

So now what you've got is a correction going on in the marketplace overall. You have people who have defaulted on their loans because of the teaser rates and the sub-prime fiasco of the United States, and it is having a trickling effect, because what happened is that all those mortgages that were held by the banks were basically sold as sort of blocks on Wall Street in order to speculate about how much money they were going to make when the teaser rates ended. People are losing their homes by the millions, because of those teaser rates and the sub-prime rate, in the United States, and it's happening somewhat in other countries as well, because those practices, even though we have a regulated system, are happening in Ontario to a degree—not to the same degree as the United States—and the stock market basically speculated on those. So now, what have we got? People defaulting on their loans, banks saying, "Oh, my God, I can't cover the liability," and the marketplace that bought all of these mortgages saying, "God, we're in trouble."

1030

Here's the fun part. I'm really quite amused, to a degree, at the reaction that the right wing has had on this issue. We've got Mr. Sarkozy—do you remember him? He's the President of France; he's the beacon of the right wing of France. Mr. Sarkozy stood in his house, he stood in front of his residence, and said, "By God, we've got a problem, and we on the right have a solution. We are going to regulate capitalism." My God, the right-wingers all of a sudden are talking about regulating capitalism. If I stood and said that, as a social democrat, they'd say, "He's nuts. He doesn't know what he's talking about." We've been saying this for years, that capitalism is good, capitalism is absolutely wonderful and the marketplace is great, but you've got to have rules about how the market operates.

It's a little bit like having a freeway. Do you allow people on freeways and roads across this province to drive at any speed they want and not have any laws about how they navigate their way down these highways? No. We understand as a province that you have to have laws that set out speed limits, how you can pass cars and what you're allowed to do as a driver to be responsible, hence a safer highway system. It's the same thing with capitalism. You have to have some rules about what banks can do, to what degree they can basically open themselves up to exposure, how you secure pension funds so that workers aren't left in the dry when banks have made really bad decisions and the market's made bad decisions and how we're allowed to trade stock on the stock market—you need to regulate some of that.

So here we've got the beacon of the right wing in France, Mr. Sarkozy, saying that he wants to regulate

capitalism. Well, George Bush can't be outdone by Mr. Sarkozy, because we know he don't like French fries no more, right? So Mr. Bush says, "I've got an answer. I'm the beacon of the right wing of the free world and I'm going to do—what? I'm going to nationalize my financial institutions." My God, the right wing has gone nuts. They now want to regulate the banks. They've been the ones who have been saying for years, "Let 'er rip. Open it up." Mr. Mulroney, Mr. Harris, Mr. Reagan and Madam Thatcher were the vanguards of the right wing, and they said, "The answer to our economic woes and the answer to building a great economy is deregulate her and let 'er rip." Here they are now, the beacons of the right wing, saying, "Whoops, we kind of messed up. We opened 'er up, we let 'er rip, and look what's going on. She's falling apart." So all of a sudden, George Bush has accepted the NDP manifesto and he has now moved over to the left. Mr. Bush is saying, "We need to have rules about how our banks operate, we need to regulate the banking sector and we need to nationalize the banking sector." My God, there's hope for us on the left. We New Democrats are surging in the polls. Finally, they're beginning to understand, on the right wing, that you can't let capitalism rip. You have to have capitalism, but it's got to have rules, as we have rules on the road.

Then you've got Mr. McCain. He's trying to make it to the White House—and he's quite a nice man. Actually, I was at Hanoi and sat on the bed where he was in prison. So I can say I have a special connection to Mr. McCain.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I can't believe it—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I went to the prison. I was in Hanoi, I saw the prison, I sat on the bed, I looked at his cell—and I can understand that the man has had a very tough life, and I honour him for the service he gave to his country. But you've got to remember he's been a Senator in the United States, and I want Democrats and I want undecided voters in the United States who I know are tuned in to our Legislature—because what we're saying here is so serious that everybody in the United States and Canada is tuned in—you've got Mr. McCain. For years he's been out there, he's been fighting and saying, "I'm the deregulator. You've got to get out of the way of business. You've got to let the corporate sector just do what it's got to do, because when government's on your back, you're just held down and you just can't move." Mr. McCain, the beacon of the right wing, has seen the light. He talked to George Bush and he said, "Let me see that manifesto they wrote in Regina some years ago for the CCF." So Mr. McCain opened up the manifesto and he said, "By George, there are answers here. I know what I'm going to do. I'm the beacon of the right wing. I think you've got to regulate Wall Street." My God, there's hope for us on the left. The social democrats are surging, I must say. Even Mr. McCain understands that unregulated capitalism, an unregulated Wall Street, can lead to great difficulty.

So I just want to say I am very warmed—what's the word?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Heartened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Heartened. I'm very heartened by the move of the right wing to finally open their eyes and to all of a sudden recognize that social democrats have had it right from the beginning. It was people like Coldwell, people like the Lewises and others, who sat down back then during the time of the Regina Manifesto, along with social democrats around the world, who have said that we need to have a free market system where entrepreneurs can make money and they can prosper and they can dream of the dream that can happen should they make it rich—but you need to have some rules about how workers are treated, about how their pensions are secured, so they're not put out on the street. As my good friend Madame Horwath saw, we talked to a worker in Pembroke last week: 32 years working in a mining company in southern Ontario; his pension is basically defunct. So we need to have rules so that capitalism and entrepreneurship are regulated so that we protect those people who are affected when bad decisions happen, we make sure that there are rules in the stock market so that there isn't the kind of profit-taking that we see, that there are rules within our banking sector—and thank God, in Canada we've got some rules that have protected us, to a degree, from what's going on.

So the right wing has finally seen the light, and I have to say I'm very heart-warmed—what's the word again?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Heartened.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Heartened. Certain words just don't come naturally sometimes. I'm really heartened that the right wing has moved over to the social democratic view. I'm selling party memberships. I'm running for leader. Go to my website and sign up: gillesbissonforleader.com. I'll take you all in. I really appreciate the support. I know that Mr. George Bush can't vote for me. I'll just be talking about my own leadership at this point. I'm just saying that I want to warn Mr. George Bush that he won't be able to vote for me because he's not a citizen of Ontario.

Let me say this to where we're at when it comes to the response of the right wing—and this is really, I find, quite interesting: They are basically now saying that we're going to lend \$800 billion—the American treasury—to the banks in order to secure their debt. The theory is, if you secure that debt and you take over all of the bad debt in the United States, the banks will then have the liquidity necessary to go out and lend more money to people so that they can go out and make purchases and businesses can do whatever. Isn't part of the problem that we've overextended ourselves? Isn't that the base problem? The base problem is that there's been high speculation on the market because of deregulation. People have been profit-taking. We've seen the stories of what's been happening on the part of the corporate elite across North America, who have been basically milking those investors by all kinds of great big salaries and bonuses.

The point is that the governments of the United States and other countries are now saying—and I heard Mr. Flaherty this morning basically say the same thing:

“We're going to lend money to our banks and that's going to fix the problem, because once we lend money to the banks, they will then be able to lend money to others.” Well, I guess to a degree that's true. But isn't the base problem that people overextended themselves, number one? It's a very consumer-driven economy that we have, which is quite good, but people are over-extended. Number two, people have had to default on loans because of interest rates. When the teaser rates came off, they lost their houses. So shouldn't the approach be to do something a little bit different and say, “What we need to do is change the rules around how much interest people have to pay on those loans in order to assist people to make those payments so that monies, yes, can go back to the banks so they can become more liquid to lend money to people where they can afford it”?

I'm a social democrat saying that. I know that you right wingers have finally seen the light. I'm just saying that the base problem that we have is not being dealt with. I fear the response of what the United States has done, and the response of what other countries have done, are not going to have the effect that they think it will. If you look at the market, they made the announcement last week and the market still went crashing down over 1,000 points. What is it going to do for the future? Is it going to fix the problem? I don't think so. I think all it does is put a band-aid on the problem so that at the end, you end up basically not fixing what is the core of the problem. And there is the problem.

So what can we do in Ontario? There are a number of things that we can do in order to be able to assist. The first thing is, we need to take a look at our regulatory authority when it comes to those things that we're able to control. For example, in the stock market, we really need to take a look at what rules we can enact that are not completely out of step with the world and are basically able to protect people's investments. I did it this morning. Every morning now I get up and go on to my Standard Life—I think we're with—and look at my RRSP investments. Then I turn that off; I don't want to look anymore.

1040

People are really worried. Their life savings, when it comes to what's invested in the market, are taking a real kicking these days. We, as a Legislature, need to say, “What can we do to try to fix that so that people feel more secure?” We should move in the direction of reforming our pension system in Ontario, so that pensions, first of all, are secured, those that are there, and make it easier for workers and employers to go into defined benefit programs when it comes to their pensions and not be locked into the market. That would do a great bit, I think, to give people some security.

What can we do to assist our manufacturing sector? Let me tell you a little secret that the government hasn't figured out. All those corporations out there that are now paying corporate income tax are paying it on what the profits were last year. So when they are paying their quarterly instalments this year, they're paying based on

what their profits were last year. How much profit are they going to have this year? Not a heck of a lot. So once they start to pay their corporate income tax next year based on this year, they're going to be getting credits. They're going to be getting rebates from the federal and provincial governments, which means our revenue projections are completely off the map.

If you're going to do something, you've got to deal with the way that we collect corporate income tax in this country, so that businesses pay their fair share of corporate income tax. But we've got to change the way that we collect it so that it's based on what's actually going on at the moment within their industry. What you do by having them pay, at this downturn, heavy taxes based on last year's income—they don't have the cash flow to help make their payroll and to make the investments they need to make in order to go forward.

I say to the government, you want to have this debate? It's not a bad thing to have a debate. But is this government listening? I don't think so. I started out this morning by talking about how the Premier and the finance minister haven't been here to hear what we have to say. So I'm somewhat fearful; I'm pretty darn convinced that at the end of the day, the government is not going to accept the amendments from either the opposition or the New Democratic Party that talk about concrete proposals about what we can do as we move forward.

I say to members on the government side, you should heed what we're trying to tell you. Don't be so smug—that may be a bit of a strong word—to think that you have all the answers. This is about a collectivity. We, in society, have to work together to face the challenges that we have every day. But in these tough economic times, we really need to roll up our sleeves and understand that if you're a New Democrat, or you're a Conservative, or you're a Liberal, or whoever you might be—because we do have an independent now by the name of Mr. Murdoch—we need to be listening to each other in order to make sure that we do what's right by way of Ontarians.

I really fear that where we're going with this debate is a communication exercise on the part of this government that, at the end of the day, is not going to fix the problem and certainly will not assure the stability of the markets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. We'll now just take a pause for a couple of minutes while we gather for question period.

Debate deemed adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We'll have introduction of guests at this time.

Guests of Sophia Aggelonitis, Hamilton Mountain: They are the grade 10 students from St. Jean de Brebeuf school. Where are you?

Tim Holman, father of Sarah Holman, the page from Eglinton–Lawrence, and grandparents Bill and Myrna

Holman are with us. They're guests of Mike Colle, member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Guests of Laura Albanese, York South–Weston: George Harvey Collegiate. Welcome.

The guest of MPP Peter Tabuns, Toronto–Danforth, is Manjit Kundal. Welcome.

Guests also of MPP Laura Albanese from York South–Weston, in the east public gallery, are from the Somali Immigrant Aid Organization. Welcome.

Guests of MPP Paul Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: Erlene Weaver, co-founder of ROCK, Raising Our Children's Kids, and with her are Diane Chiarelli and Beverley McIntosh. They are located in the members' west gallery.

Also today, guests of page Paige Weller are grandmother Vivien Clarke and sister Hailey Weller, and they are in the west public gallery.

The guest of page Lauren Chan is John Chan, and he will be in the public gallery this afternoon.

Guests of Sarah Holman are grandparents Myrna and Bill Holman, whom I've already introduced.

Those are our guests for today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We were advised the Minister of Finance would be here, and he is entering the building as we speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Could we reset the clock, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, Speaker. My question is to the minister. Minister, as you know—we saw it in the media this morning and last night—there's a great deal of skepticism surrounding the real motives for your so-called emergency debate motion on the economy. I think most people understand that it is a partisan motion. There's also a suspicion that you're using this to set the table for some bitter pills and more broken Liberal promises. Minister, will you stand in your place today and assure Ontarians that there will be no tax, user fee or levy increases in your upcoming economic statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On October 22, I will be introducing the fall statement, bringing it forward, and there will be no tax increases, fees or levy increases in that document.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, I guess that means a deficit—that's the bottom line—and probably a significant one.

Members are being asked to participate in a debate for the next four days without information. We've asked the minister, and the Premier as well, and I'm going to go back to him again: To help members on all sides of the House to participate in a meaningful way in this debate,

will you, at the very least, give us your latest update on the status of the \$800-million reserve fund and the \$1-billion commitment you made to find efficiencies and savings in order to balance the budget this year? We're seven months into the fiscal year. Surely you know what's happening with those files.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On October 22, we will release the fall statement. I remind the member that last week we published the economic data for the second quarter, the most up-to-date numbers. We have published the first-quarter data, as per FTAA. We have taken a number of steps, sir, to encourage a public discussion about the important issues of the day here in the Legislature and across the province.

I would submit to the member and the Leader of the Opposition that we are still gathering information that's pertinent to the fall statement. We will have it on the 22nd. I'll look forward to his response and the response of the opposition parties in general as we move forward through very, very challenging times in the world economy.

1050

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Of course, the reality is we're in a vulnerable situation in this province because this government has been on an unprecedented spending spree, beyond what David Peterson put this province through. They've had phenomenal revenue increases; they've spent every plug nickel and more, running up the debt in the process. They've left no cushion for tough times and, believe it or not, they even reduced their rainy day fund this year.

Minister, we have four days left in the debate on this motion, and if this so-called emergency debate isn't the sham that most people think it is, you have to be much more forthcoming to make this debate and discussion meaningful. How can we know where we're going if we don't know where we're starting?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, on June 4, John Tory said, "I think we need to have an emergency debate on the economy so we can hear from all the MPPs everywhere," and we heard it from the New Democrats, so that's what we're doing. But let me tell you what we won't do. We won't sacrifice public education on the altar of tax cuts for large corporations. That's not something this government will do.

Yesterday in your speech you endorsed Mr. Drummond's recommendations, which I presume means you want to harmonize PST and GST. That means, in fact, he wants to tax home heating oil. We need you to be clear, and that's why we're having the debate.

We have laid out a five-point plan. This government has delivered three successive balanced budgets. We eliminated the \$5.6-billion budget of that member's government and we will continue to manage the affairs of the province prudently and in a balanced and responsible—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday the Minister of Finance and the Premier said that the Premier's resolution in this debate that is ongoing in the Legislature is for the purpose of hearing from the opposition, from all members of the House, their recommendations and input into the current crisis Ontario faces. The minister will know that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition tabled a specific amendment that incorporates positive recommendations that we believe should be incorporated into an economic action plan.

Will the minister now confirm for us that those proposals will in fact be given serious consideration by the government? What is the process that he has in place to ensure that ideas such as that are in fact incorporated and dealt with in a proactive way, to ensure that they are included in an economic—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's why we're having the debate. We're going to have to vote on it. The Leader of the Opposition did present an amendment; we are looking at it carefully to see what he's recommending. I can tell the members opposite that the five-point plan we've laid out is a better plan than they've laid out, because they really haven't laid out a plan per se.

I would invite the member opposite: Instead of spending all this time on the process around what we're doing, let's start talking about the economy and what real people are feeling. Let's show some empathy to the people of Ontario. Let's not, like the federal finance minister did, trash the Ontario economy at precisely the time we should be discussing it and moving forward.

So, yes, we do have a process. We will respond through the course of the debate to your proposals and then we're going to have a vote. If you choose to vote against keeping funding for education and health care, if you choose to vote against assisting business, that is your position. We may differ.

What's important is that we have a plan moving forward and all members of this Legislature have the opportunity to participate in that discussion.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: We want to believe the Premier and the Minister of Finance when they tell us that this is not just about political rhetoric. What we want to do is ensure that in the course of the debate, as we and members from the third party and other members of this Legislature bring forward ideas, there is a process in place by which those ideas are being properly recorded, that those ideas will then be dealt with in an orderly way so that, in fact, beyond what the minister is saying—a vote at the end of this debate—those ideas will live on, that those ideas can be dealt with in an orderly way by this Legislature so that they can, in fact, be incorporated into an economic action plan that will address the very things

that the minister is saying. Will the minister confirm for us that there is in fact a process that he has implemented where people are recording specific recommendations that we can then deal with?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Hansard still operates in the House, and we're going to look at every recommendation.

Let me just go through the Conservative six-point plan, which is the third version of it since June, by the way. You suggest we provide an economic update. We are—October 22. We also provided you, last week, with the most recent economic data. Provide a financial update: We did, in June, with all the up-to-date information; it said exactly where the province's books were relative to the budget. Tax cuts and more spending on training: We have \$3 billion in targeted tax cuts for businesses that you, sir, by the way, voted against.

You want an additional \$5 billion in tax cuts. We don't support that. Let me be clear about that, because we think it's important to have a balanced plan. You may want to follow the lead of Mr. Tory, who said on CBC Radio on June 4, "I'd say well fine then, let the MPPs, there's 106 others besides him, you know, put their ideas on the record. I think at least a debate would allow other people to put some ideas on the record." That was good advice—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Here is what we would recommend to the Minister of Finance: We would recommend, in the same way that we do in standing committees, that specific recommendations be recorded and tabled with the Legislature following the debate. We also would recommend to the government that they form a select committee on the economy, that that select committee be struck following his economic statement, that that select committee then take into consideration the results of his statement and the results of the recommendations that come forward, and that then that economic select committee be charged with the responsibility to put together an economic action plan, an all-party consensus that we can then move forward with in this province.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government put together an economic action plan: It was called our budget. That budget has the five-point plan, which we have been doing for three years now. We are investing in infrastructure to create jobs and improve our productivity. That member and his party voted against it. We are providing select targeted tax cuts to businesses to get cash into their hands in a challenging economic time. That member and his party voted against it. Before the Legislature this week is a bill dealing with the elimination of tax, to stimulate research and investment in commercialization of new Canadian technologies. That member and his party, I think, are voting against it.

This government has laid out a five-point plan and provided specifics. We will update where we are relative to the global economic situation on October 22. Our response has been the right response. We'll adjust it as

need be, because we need to respond to the fears and concerns of the people of Ontario in a prudent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, the Premier said he called yesterday's debate on the economic resolution to engage us in a healthy collision of ideas. We sat here yesterday, the members of the official opposition and we New Democrats, and listened intently to what the Premier had to say. It was then the turn of the opposition: first the Leader of the Opposition and then our Mr. Prue, the critic for finance. He didn't stay to listen to what they had to say. If you're not present to hear what we have to say, does that not speak—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member there is not to be any reference made to absence.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you're not present to hear what we have to say, doesn't that speak volumes about how you are not taking your own debate seriously?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member of what Mr. Hampton said on August 8. He said, "The Legislature needs to get back to work to approve a plan to protect jobs." That's what this debate is about, and we are listening.

I would remind the member opposite that just yesterday his colleague from Beaches—East York raised a very important issue, and upon reflection, we're changing the law because of his good work. So we are listening.

I'll tell the member opposite we're listening to labour leaders. I met with the building tradespeople yesterday on the phone. We had a good conversation about where the economy is going. We have had meetings with bank economists, businesses, labour leaders. We're going to continue to do that. We take very seriously what the member and his party opposite have to say about the issues of the day and we will respond accordingly.

1100

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You've already responded accordingly because the motion you put forward basically says we have to stand in opposition and say Kumbaya to what you've done for the last four years, and it's not working.

Let me ask you this question. We New Democrats, through our critic, Mr. Prue, put forward a number of ideas and an amendment to the amendment to the motion. Are you prepared to accept those amendments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's only the beginning of the debate, and we'll analyze them. I can tell the member opposite we're not going to increase taxes on the lowest-paid Ontarians, if that's what he means. If the member suggests that we should run up a deficit in the billions of dollars—that is, to try to spend our way out of it the way

he and his colleagues did at one time in the past—what I'm going to say to him is no, we won't do that.

What I can say is that our five-point plan to invest in infrastructure, technology and targeted tax cuts and, by the way, coupled with the poverty strategy my colleague opposite is going to bring forward, is the right, balanced responsible approach in difficult and challenging times that understands the problems and predicaments that Ontario families are feeling right across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, I asked you a specific question and that question was, are you prepared to support the amendments put forward by the New Democratic caucus through our critic, Mr. Prue? What do you do? You basically engage in what John McCain does in the United States, which is to try to deflect all the attention away from you so that they're not looking at you being the cause of the problem.

Let me ask you this specifically. One of the things that we're calling for is an industrial hydro rate. Are you prepared to say today that yes, you admit hydro rates are a problem for the manufacturing sector and that you're prepared to accept at least that part of the amendment that would see an industrial hydro rate for the manufacturers of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is taking a balanced and complete approach to the challenges of the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

I'll remind the member opposite, when we provided assistance to get the next generation of jobs into this province, that member voted against it. When we eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers, the forestry sector and the agri-food sector and put cash in their pockets right at the time—and that money is flowing last month and this month—that member voted against it. That member voted against the advice of the CAW. He voted against the advice of the manufacturers' association.

This government has constructed a five-point plan that is the right approach to the economy. I would invite the member to look carefully at what we're doing.

Instead of just voting against everything we do, start to support the initiatives that are supported by the CAW, that are supported by many of our largest manufacturers. That's what we're—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question?

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, workers across this province wish that you were listening to what they and we have been saying for a long time. You didn't answer my question, and the question is, are you prepared to put in place the recommendation put forward by us on industrial hydro rates? Instead, you try to deflect and say that we don't support your initiatives. We didn't support them because they're not working. We've had over

200,000 workers put out of work in this province over the last four years, so your record is not stellar.

Let me ask you another one. Workers' pensions are at risk. We see all kinds of workers having their investments by way of the market at risk and people who have defined pension plans losing their hard-earned dollars as they approach retirement. Are you prepared to accept our recommendation to have pension reform in order to secure people's investments for retirement?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I assume that was to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The NDP are catching up. Last year we appointed Mr. Harry Arthurs to review pension laws, a dialogue that has involved all working men and women. Mr. Arthurs will be reporting back next month, and I'll look forward to the member's response and the NDP's response.

What I can tell him is this: We will support good ideas that are prudent and balanced and protect workers like this government has done. I ask the member opposite, why did you vote against our training initiatives, all of them, over \$1 billion? You, sir, voted against them. Why did you vote against money for the forestry sector that helps your riding and your constituents? Why did you vote against that? And most importantly, why did you vote against an increase in welfare rates this year? That's a shameful record.

This government has a balanced, full plan that is costed and responsible—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So far, the cat's out of the bag. The government is saying they're not going to move on industrial hydro rates, and they're trying to deflect the attention from what's happening to pensions by saying, "Stay tuned. A report will be coming real soon to a channel near you." People's pensions have been lost, and this government is sitting idly by, hardly doing anything.

Let me ask you this. The workers in Welland at John Deere, the workers at Abitibi, and others in the Welland area have lost their jobs. We proposed a jobs commissioner to sit down with labour, to sit down with municipalities and employers, to look at what can be done to secure those jobs that are currently here that we're losing. Will you accept our proposal to put in place a jobs commissioner in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario rejected that proposal last year in a general election. And if you think that's going to secure one job, you really don't get what's going on in the world economy, do you? We are in the midst of a financial crisis in the world today, and these guys throw out ideas that aren't based on fact, simply saying, "Do this, do this, do this," without thinking of the consequences or the outcomes.

We have laid out a prudent, responsible plan—investing in education, investing in infrastructure, targeted tax cuts, and building partnerships with local municipalities as well as with the federal government—that Ontarians respect and know is the right plan to get through the most

challenging circumstances this province, this country, indeed the world, has seen in many, many, many years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is true Liberalism, I must say. The finance minister stands up and basically says that they don't have to listen to what the opposition has to say. They're falling into the same trap that David Peterson did some years ago, which stamps you as a fairly arrogant government, quite frankly.

I say to you, we have made some real proposals that would help to safeguard the jobs that we have and help build our economy.

I'm asking you again. We have put forward a series of amendments and proposals in order to deal with this crisis. If you're not prepared to accept our amendments or the Conservative amendments, doesn't that mean you've already decided you're going to do nothing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can tell the member, he proposes, with an industrial hydro rate, to shift the cost of electricity to small individuals as opposed to workers. I can tell the member opposite that his jobs commissioner was rejected by the people of Ontario last year.

The people of Ontario are very wise. They understand the challenges before us today, they understand the situation in world financial markets, and they understand the need for a balanced, prudent approach, moving forward.

We will continue to focus investments on infrastructure. In two weeks, municipalities across Ontario will see \$1.1 billion that will immediately create jobs and investment and get cash into communities' hands to help get us through this circumstance.

Today is the time for serious response to world-challenging issues. We are listening carefully to many, many people, and we look forward to this ongoing debate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question. The member for—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: That should be worth a few extra minutes in the question, Speaker.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Finance: His performance today and performances like that, I believe, are largely responsible for the cynicism on the part of the public about politicians and the political process. On the one hand, the minister and the Premier have invited input from the opposition on a very serious public policy issue, and when asked, on the other hand, if he would commit to an orderly process and strike a select committee to deal with that important information that's being brought forward by members of this Legislature, he declines and boasts that they have all the answers.

I want to ask him one more time: Why will the minister and his government not agree to strike a select committee to deal with the information that's being brought

forward here, so that together we could form an economic—

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

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have a Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Every budget bill goes there; every decision of this Legislature goes there. In fact, unlike your government, when we send legislation there, we actually have a chance to debate it in committee.

That committee has been ongoing, doing good work. They report to me on a regular basis. We had them meeting throughout the spring on various items. We look forward to moving forward with legislation coming out of this House. Likely, there will be a fall budget bill, as there always is. That will go to committee for full debate.

What creates cynicism is when Mr. Tory calls for an emergency debate in June, the Premier gives him one, and then you say, "You shouldn't have done it." That's what creates cynicism.

We look forward to all of the advice you have to offer, and we look forward to it making its way to the standing committee. That committee, we believe, does good work.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The cynicism mounts. The minister is fully aware of what happens in our standing committees in this place. There isn't an idea or an amendment that is brought forward by the opposition that is ever accepted.

I'm asking, in the spirit in which the Premier brought this proposal forward, that this government strike a select committee that can take seriously the recommendations brought forward here and that can work together on a non-partisan basis to develop an economic plan for this province that can be incorporated into the upcoming budget.

I ask the Minister of Finance one more time, for the benefit of the members of the public watching this debate, why will you not do that on behalf of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, we believe that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs is the proper forum. It's been working for years. There are members from all parties on it. It affords us the opportunity to debate all government initiatives in that committee. We will continue to seek advice through that committee on an ongoing basis.

The challenges in the world economy today demand an emergency debate in the Legislature. It allows us to give expression to the fears and concerns of the people of our province and to tell them what we are doing. They are listening carefully to what the opposition is saying in terms of what they should do.

I have great confidence in the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. The government will continue to refer its initiatives to that committee. I'm glad we are taking four days of our time here to debate

the challenges in the economy. It makes good sense, it's the right thing to do, and it is the right forum in which to do that.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, grandparents raising their children's kids are often living on a fixed retirement income. They are trying to help their children through difficult times and raise their grandchildren: a difficult job. They want to keep their families together, Minister.

Will this minister explain why she has failed these grandparents by issuing a new directive which ensures that temporary care assistance to raise their grandkids is cut off?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I know that this member always comes back with the same question. Let me explain why there is this benefit that is offered to grandparents, this temporary care assistance.

First of all, I want to thank the grandparents who believe that they have a responsibility towards their grandchildren. I applaud them.

These benefits are to provide assistance for children in financial need while in the temporary care of an adult who does not have a legal obligation to support the child. This benefit is not income-tested. I will say to the member opposite, yes, he brought a good point to me the last time, because there was inequity in the way grandparents were treated across the province, and we have corrected that. We've sent a notice all across—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: Minister, take a look in the west gallery. There are three grandparents from Hamilton that you've cut off: Diane Chiarelli, Beverley McIntosh, and Erlene Weaver—75 years old, on a fixed income. Well done. These three grandparents are here today to implore the minister to reconsider her decision about temporary care assistance for grandparents.

Will this minister do the right thing? The Minister of Finance talked about empathy for the people of Ontario. Show some empathy. Will you guarantee that all grandparents across this province will be eligible for temporary care assistance, effective immediately?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will guarantee that all grandparents who are entitled under temporary care assistance to receive this benefit will receive it; I guarantee that. But then I will also ask the member on the other side to stand up and say to the grandparents who are in receipt of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order. Minister?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will ask the member from Hamilton to answer this question: Why, when we proposed an increase to the grandparents, did this mem-

ber vote against it? It's all very nice to stand up today and say that you're in support of grandparents. Every time we moved forward with an increase, you voted against it. Shame on you.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a question for the Minister of Labour in regard to the gouging of Ontario workers by the federal government when it comes to unemployment insurance. Many of my constituents have repeatedly brought this to my attention. They are just hard-working Ontarians who sometimes fall on hard times and need some help when they lose their jobs. Some of my constituents have expressed thanks to the Premier for making such a great effort on their behalf to making sure that the Stephen Harper government recognizes the inequity when it comes to unemployment insurance.

I would like to ask why workers in Ontario receive \$4,600 less when they lose their jobs than other workers in the rest of the country. Why is it that Ontario workers pay into unemployment insurance, yet it's almost impossible for an unemployed worker in my riding to get unemployment insurance in Ontario? How come this gouging of workers takes place in Canada today?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this very important concern that's affecting all of our constituencies. It's very disheartening when anybody we know or someone from our community loses their job. There's quite an impact on the individual, on the individual's family and on that community.

One thing that we have always upheld here in the province of Ontario is fairness. It's a value that we cherish, it's something that we live by, and we've given fairness to this magnificent country: fairness to Atlantic Canada, to Quebec, to the west, to the north. Well, here in Ontario, some of our best-trained and hard-working Ontarians, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. They deserve fairness. They deserve that \$4,600 that they are being shortchanged by the federal government—

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

Mr. Mike Colle: What the unemployed workers are asking in my constituency office is, why do they have to work more weeks to be eligible for unemployment insurance in Ontario? Why are they getting off unemployment insurance faster than people in other parts of the country? Why is it that they can't even get the training programs in Ontario because they're not EI-eligible?

So the question again is, why should the workers of Ontario listen to the Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, saying that this issue is none of his concern? How can we stand by and let Stephen Harper ignore the workers of Ontario when it comes to this gouging of Ontario workers who pay unemployment insurance like everybody else does in Canada? Why should this gouging be allowed to continue?

1120

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I concur with the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. He’s quite right: The federal government has not stood up to the plate. They have not come forward with fairness. I know that my predecessor, Brad Duguid, wrote to the Minister of Labour federally and put forward our concerns, our case for fairness for the \$4,600 that our workers are being short changed. This is blatantly unfair. Everybody in this House should write to their federal member, write to the Prime Minister, and make sure that he understands that Ontarians deserve their fair share. Every year we send \$20 billion to Ottawa. The TD report has said that we are being discriminated against by \$11.8 billion here in this province. It would mean a difference to those workers, to their families, to our communities. Stand up for Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Finance: The minister, in his response to me, reconfirmed that Ontario’s economic situation merits a special and emergency debate of the Legislature, but he disagrees that there should be a special select committee struck to deal with the issue. What he did say is that he expressed confidence in the finance committee. I would ask the minister now: Given his confidence in the finance committee of this place, will he today agree to refer the results of this debate and the amendments made by the opposition parties to the finance committee for full deliberation in the context of the finance committee so that we can in fact ensure a proper economic plan for this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I just got the terms of reference for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. They’re very instructive, I think, to the House. This is as per standing order 107(e), and I refer the member to that: “The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs ... is empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the fiscal and economic policies of the province and to which all related documents shall be deemed to have been referred immediately when the said documents are tabled.”

The process is in place. Over the years I’ve had a number of outstanding reports—and, I may add, with dissenting opinions in those reports—that have helped inform public opinion. I’m glad we have that process. We will continue in this House to have this debate on the economy. We think it’s important for all members to debate the economy. We welcome the initiative that Mr. Tory suggested, and we’re glad we’re able to accommodate what he asked for.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Quite bizarre, coming from the Minister of Finance. We’re fully aware of what the

mandate of the finance committee is. One of those is to conduct public hearings. I’m simply asking him now, on behalf of every member of the Legislature: Will he agree to refer this important business to that finance committee with the request for public hearings so that we can have a fulsome discussion of this important issue? If he won’t do that, will he explain to this House and to the public why not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every piece of government legislation that I have done, including budget bills, will go to committee. I would say to the member opposite, though, Ontarians want to know what their leaders are doing right now. Ontarians want to hear from us as well, and they’re not hearing from you today. They are hearing about process. They are hearing about calling witnesses. They’re hearing this, that and the other thing. What they’ve heard from this government is that we need a balanced approach to the challenging world economic circumstances. We need to invest in infrastructure—something you voted against. We need to invest in skills training to help the unemployed get through these challenging times and find new careers. You, sir, voted against that. They need a federal government that at least shows some empathy to what is going on in Ontario instead of trashing the people of Ontario by saying that it’s the last place to invest.

We will continue to implement our balanced five-point plan—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. I’m sure the minister agrees that it’s precisely in times of economic crisis that respect for our province’s labour laws and collective agreements must be maintained. That is why it was disturbing for me to read quotes in the Sault Star, attributed to the member from Sault Ste. Marie, that seemed to suggest that the province’s financial support for a proposed pipe mill in his riding may be tied to concessions related to already negotiated successor rights. Will this minister pledge to this House that the province will not use the hammer of provincial financial assistance to undermine the collective agreements in Sault Ste. Marie or anywhere else in this province?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I say to the member is thank you very much for the question. It gives me the opportunity to speak to the labour relations that we have brought to the province of Ontario, the best labour relations in the last 30 years, with labour, employees and employers working together and understanding that the collective agreement is the best way to move forward. It’s not a social contract that that party brought forward when they were in government.

What I can say is that we have been able to bring fairness and balance and stability to the workplace. We have done this by working together with all our partners.

The Ministry of Labour has wonderful individuals who work towards collective agreements. We have terrific mediators who are out there in the field working with our businesses and working with employees. We've got a record that is stellar, and I continue to build on that.

Mr. Paul Miller: With 230,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this province, Ontario's manufacturing communities are desperate for any kind of investment in new jobs. But I repeat: It is precisely during this time of extreme economic uncertainty that the collective agreements that provide job security for millions of Ontarians must be respected. Will the minister commit to this House that the provincial financial assistance for new investments will never, ever be tied to weakening job security in collective agreements?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can agree with the member on is that we are all saddened and empathetic when anybody loses their job. Yes, some individuals have lost their jobs. That's why we work so hard on our five-point plan to be able to have skills-to-jobs training, so that we can get those unemployed workers re-employed.

I just received a question from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, and it talked of fairness for our unemployed workers. It talked to employment insurance. It talked to a blatant wrong that is happening from the federal government. I would hope that that member over there would stand up for our unemployed workers who are being shortchanged, ripped off \$4,600. I don't see that member lending a voice to our fairness campaign. I would hope that he would do so for—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We know that our province is facing some tough economic times. We are seeing some sectors struggle in the face of the high price of oil, the slowing US economy and the other challenges that economies around the world are trying to grapple with.

We also know that some sectors are seeing real growth and are demanding more skilled workers to fill high-value positions. Mining, information technology, energy and construction are a few examples of high-demand industries that will require skilled workers to move them forward. An aging workforce, coupled with low birth rates, is only exacerbating a potential skills shortage. I know that in Guelph, employers tell me that one of their key concerns is finding enough skilled workers. Minister, can you tell this House and my constituents what specific steps you and your ministry are taking to address a possible skills shortage here in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the honourable member for her question and for her advocacy on behalf of her community in terms of post-secondary education.

In the context of her question on training, I think all members are aware that, under the leadership of the

Premier, we announced a \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan in the recent budget, which is being implemented right now. Part of that is aimed specifically at skilled trades on the infrastructure front, in terms of providing the type of equipment that is needed and the type of facilities to make sure that we have an adequate supply of skilled workers for the future. Over the summer, the Premier and I were in a number of communities and announced \$190 million for our province's community colleges to build and expand their capacity to train more skilled workers.

1130

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

Hon. John Milloy: We also invested in union, union-employer and employer training centres as they play a pivotal role in skills training. This funding, as I mentioned, will allow training centres to purchase new equipment so—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, in your answer, you mentioned apprenticeships. When I speak to young people who are contemplating their future education plans, many students and their parents are still reluctant to choose a career in the skilled trades. We know that the future of our economy depends on a steady supply of skilled labour, but we hear accusations from members on the other side of the House that we're somehow restricting or preventing our apprentices from learning a trade. I know that we are working hard to ensure that students receive adequate and relevant training and that they complete that training. But I still get mixed messages from my constituents about the effectiveness of some apprenticeship training. Could you please clarify for us what you are doing to encourage more people to learn a trade and how you plan to improve the system to ensure that Ontario continues to move forward?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very proud of our government's record in terms of apprenticeships—we have 50,000 more apprentices in the province of Ontario right now than when we took office—but at the same time I recognize the concerns that are expressed by the member. All of us realize we need to continue to reform and enhance the apprenticeship system to make it more effective, to attract more people to the skilled trades and to make sure they are trained effectively.

Several weeks ago, I had the pleasure of making an announcement in Hamilton, Ontario, that our government would be moving forward with a plan, first suggested to us by Mr. Tim Armstrong, to create a college of trades. This college will help promote the skilled trades as a career and ensure that students are receiving the training they need to succeed and contribute to Ontario's economy. The college will put those in the skilled trades on a similar footing as teachers, nurses and doctors, all of whom have their own governing bodies. I look forward to working with all members on all sides of the House as we put together a proposal for this exciting new college.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, in your government's last budget, you set up the Second Career program to provide financial help to laid-off workers and to help get them into new careers. This program represents a huge and central plank of that budget. In an attempt to discover some details of how this program is working, your training minister's office was contacted to find out how many people have either received or are waiting to receive money from the program, along with the number of people who have applied. The minister's assistant Emily Durst responded that a costly freedom-of-information request would be required to get that information. This is a \$300-million program, the bragging rights of your last budget. Why are you hiding this information?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'd like to refer to the question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I think members on all sides of the House are concerned with the layoffs that are happening in this province, and I'm very proud that through Employment Ontario we're able to help 900,000 Ontarians annually. Through the rapid re-employment training service, our action centres that we've set up across the province, we've been able to help 53,000 people in one year alone; these are people who have been specifically laid off.

The honourable member references the Second Career strategy, and I know he would not want to leave the impression that that's the only program we offer. It in fact is a new program which adds on to existing programs. But I'm pleased to report to him, and these numbers are changing, obviously, as more people are attracted to the program, that this summer we've seen an additional 3,000—

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

Hon. John Milloy: —people come forward for training, 1,100 specifically for Second Career. As I say, we continue to work with providers to improve the program, to publicize the program, and those—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: If you're so proud of this program, why wouldn't your assistant simply tell us that information? Eleven hundred people, though, is abysmal when there are 300,000 people who have lost their jobs in this province. You were supposed to, in this year alone, have 20,000 people apply for that program and then spend the \$300 million over the next three years. That's what you said in your budget. That's what the Premier, you and many of your colleagues have been bragging about.

I think the program is a failure. I think you are not helping people, and if you are giving them financial assistance, you're unwilling to tell us how much financial assistance they are getting, who is getting help in what parts of the province, how many people. It's our job to

figure out whether this program is effective, and so far you you're failing that test.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I know the member would never want to leave the impression that Second Career is the only program offered. There is a series of programs, as I pointed out. Last year, our action centres helped 53,000 people.

How dare that member stand up and call this program a failure? Does he want to hear about some of the personal stories and tell them they are failures? Does he want to tell Robert, who is 45 years old and was laid off from his job as a general labourer at a small powder painting company in London? Robert has been accepted to complete his training as a certified welder. Robert is not a failure.

John, 46 years old, was laid off from the local paper mill after working there for 13 years. John is enrolled in the power engineering technology program at St. Clair College. John is not a failure.

Bonnie, a 33-year-old mother of two, was laid off from an automotive production line. Through Second Career, Bonnie will receive \$28,000 to take a medical—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. New question.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Deputy Premier: Just this morning, we've learned of a serious outbreak of invasive group A streptococcal disease in the Thunder Bay area. At least 10 people are dead, with at least 75 cases confirmed. The first case occurred in August 2007, yet the public is only now being made aware. Given the C. difficile outbreak, the public's confidence in our public health system is already shaken. When did the government know about this outbreak and what did it do about it?

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I would like to join the honourable member and all members of the House in expressing our condolences for any circumstance where individuals have been impacted. I think it is well known that in the current environments in which we operate, the risk of spread of infectious disease and the like really does call upon all of us for a heightened level of vigilance.

Here is what I've been informed about the matter that the honourable member raises: I can confirm what he said, that Thunder Bay public health indicates 75 cases. They first made information available in May. At that time, the ministry responded to a request to enhance the epidemiological support that was required. At the very same time, when the minister became aware, they advised the health unit to alert local physicians, which was done, and the health unit sent out an alert to all of those local communities and initiated practices designed to focus on those communities most at risk of contracting this. A substantive—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, you know that many public health units across Ontario don't have a permanent medical officer of health. You know that we have privatization creeping into the system. The public health system is being put at risk, and we need answers from you and a plan from this government to alleviate the public's concern that dangerous outbreaks are being dealt with in a timely manner and that the public is being kept fully informed.

Hon. George Smitherman: It's a little bit unfortunate that the honourable member has been spending so much time out on the campaign trail that he is bringing that language in here. There's no evidence of this privatization with respect to public health. If we look at public health, what we see evidence of is having doubled the funding for public health units in Ontario. Because the province of Ontario is providing 75% of the resources for all public health units, they have had the capacity to respond in a timely and effective way to these sorts of challenges.

I could confirm for the honourable member, as I said earlier, that as notice was made available, a response in the form of additional epidemiological support was initiated; initiation of awareness to physicians in local communities and alerting public health units across the country of what was going on were all part and parcel of the response, and we—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

1140

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Education, and I'm asking it on behalf of Ron and Cathy Milne and John and Cynthia Crowley, who represent many dairy farmers in the riding of Peterborough.

Minister, on September 24, students in my riding of Peterborough celebrated World School Milk Day. They joined students from some 40 countries who participated in this event. This initiative is sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and locally by the dairy farmers association of Ontario. They are here today and they will be hosting a reception later this afternoon.

We know the importance this government places on children and healthy schools. Would the minister please outline the steps we're taking to promote healthy schools, not only in the riding of Peterborough, but throughout Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Peterborough for his question. Indeed, the health and well-being of all our students, in Peterborough and across the province, is very important to this government. We know that the well-being of our kids depends on a healthy, active lifestyle, so we've put initiatives in place to increase daily physical activity in our elementary

schools—that DPA that our kids are involved in, 20 minutes of activity a day. We've also introduced legislation to drop unhealthy trans fats from food and beverages sold in schools. I'm happy that the dairy farmers are here today, because they were instrumental in endorsing and working with us on Bill 8. Thank you for being here.

Our Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —ensures that there are healthier foods in our cafeterias, and of course milk is one of those healthier foods. Naturally occurring trans fats are not a problem—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: We also have in our legislative gallery today representatives here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation; I know they're also supportive of this government's great leadership in efforts to ensure healthier schools are made available to our students across Ontario. But I also know that the government's commitment to healthy schools goes beyond just healthy food. Would the minister outline some of our other successes and the leadership we're showing on this file?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member from Peterborough is exactly right. The Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act builds on a comprehensive strategy which includes releasing a framework for healthy schools, daily physical activity, as I said, legislation on anaphylaxis and investing in defibrillators. Just last month, I had the pleasure of announcing a \$1.4-million investment from the province that will help the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation to train teachers how to use defibrillators and perform CPR. I had the privilege of working with some students who have had this training from their teachers, and they are much more prepared than the previous generation of students was to be able to take action if there is a sudden coronary incident. The teachers will pass this knowledge on to all of those students, and it is a valuable learning activity. Our partnership with ACT—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —complements the government's other strategies on creating healthy and safe environments for students.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, your government promised in 2006, prior to the 2007 election, that you would review the provincial-municipal service review. Again, that review was due some time ago. It was promised earlier in the year; it was promised again in the summer. In fact, many people felt it would be announced this year at the AMO conference, and yet again you failed to deliver.

Given the current economic uncertainty, could you bring this House and the people of Ontario up to speed and up to date on when your government intends to introduce this review?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I've had the privilege of working with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, along with our counterparts, both AMO and the city of Toronto, on this very challenging unwinding of the previous government's policies with respect to municipalities. I am pleased with the way discussions have unfolded, and we've worked hard and taken more time than any of us had originally hoped in order to come up with what we hope will be a solution to a number of the challenges faced by our municipal partners. I anticipate that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, along with representatives from AMO and the city of Toronto, will have more to say about this matter very shortly.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Quite honestly, your response shows a lack of credibility. Understanding the issue has been around—there's been three different reviews on this since 1985. Currently, we're hearing from the city of Toronto that they are going to increase taxes; Ottawa and London this morning are talking about it. It really is unnerving that municipalities are now preparing their budgets and you are not prepared to make a disclosure to them and to help them out. In fact, if you would look at the assessment notices that are now arriving at people's houses—people are concerned that you aren't going to give them the information because of this economic uncertainty.

Please be honest with the people of Ontario and tell them when you will review—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: —to allow municipalities to balance their budgets with the right information that you have but won't release.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague from St. Catharines uses the expression, "more nerve than a canal horse." That was the government that downloaded everything from social services to public health care onto municipalities, and he has the nerve to stand up in this House and talk about this. You know what? We are at the table with AMO and Toronto working in a collaborative fashion to build on what this government's done: a new Municipal Act, which you voted against; \$1.1 billion in infrastructure money that will flow to our municipal partners in about two weeks, and you voted against that; \$900 million in our past fall economic statement for municipal infrastructure, and you voted against that. We have uploaded ODSP and the Ontario drug benefit, saving property taxpayers \$900 million; you voted against that. We are implementing a property tax credit for senior citizens that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Canadian Association of Food Banks released an open letter yesterday calling for action to address rising hunger across the country that is resulting from the economic downturn. More and more people are being forced to go to food banks: in Cornwall, the numbers are up 37%; in Toronto, the supply is hundreds of thousands of pounds short. Particularly vulnerable people are seniors and those part-time employees who are losing their jobs. Yesterday, in debate, the Premier did not mention seniors, contingent workers or that forbidden P word, "poverty."

My question is, what is this government going to do now and on October 22 to address this ongoing concern?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me applaud the member opposite for his ongoing commitment to reduce poverty in this province. Poverty reduction is not a partisan issue. I don't think there is one person in this Legislature who thinks that current levels of poverty are acceptable. So I want to say thank you to the member opposite for your concern, for your advocacy. Once again, I say our poverty reduction strategy is on course to be released by the end of the year, and I look forward to that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The time allotted for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Balbir Dhatt, mother of Manjit Kundhal, died in Versa-Care Centre, a Rexdale long-term-care home, on June 10, 2008, and her body was left on her bed for 14 hours in the sweltering heat because a doctor was unavailable to issue a death certificate;

"Whereas the hot temperature that day left Dhatt's body in a condition which meant last religious rites could not be performed in accordance with Sikh tradition—a great insult to the departed soul;

"Whereas this incident has left Dhatt's family in a state of shock and mental agony and unable to reconcile with the fact that this shameful act occurred in a province like Ontario;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province where the Ombudsman does not have the jurisdiction to investigate hospitals and long-term-care homes;

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

"That Ontario's Ombudsman be given the power to investigate hospitals and long-term-care homes."

I agree with this petition and I am signing it.

1150

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to wish everybody a Happy Thanksgiving, and think of those who are without this weekend in their thanksgiving celebrations.

I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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;

“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.”

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker, especially for the commercial. It's Streetsville's 150th anniversary year.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that's been provided to me by many patients who have visited some of the local doctors in the area. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre

located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and ask page Tamika to carry it for me.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“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, 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 present this to the Legislature through Imaan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here of hundreds of names from the good people of the Lawrence Veterinary Clinic my riding near Bathurst and Lawrence. What they did is, they got names on this petition for me. It's in support of the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, Bill 50.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act has not been updated since 1919;

“Whereas Bill 50 would require all veterinarians to report suspected abuse and neglect, protecting veterinarians from liability;

“Whereas it would allow the OSPCA to inspect and investigate places where animals are kept;

“Whereas the bill would prohibit the training of animals to fight;

“Whereas Bill 50 would allow the OSPCA to inspect roadside zoos;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 50, entitled the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, 2008, to protect our animal friends.”

I fully support the good people at the Lawrence Veterinary Clinic and all those who support animal welfare protection. I've put my name to it.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition. It's actually a busy time of year for petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

"Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

"Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatments, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

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

"That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve patient care for Ontarians."

I'm pleased to present this petition to page Paige.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to join with my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora and present this petition to the Parliament of Ontario, which has been signed by quite a few people here from my home city of Mississauga. On their behalf I'll read it. It says:

"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 during 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 An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and support this petition and to ask page Lauren to carry it for me.

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. John O'Toole: With this new timetable in the Legislature, it's often we get more petitions in because there's nobody here. I have a petition that reads as follows:

"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, 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 and present it to Maylee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind members that petitions is the time when we read petitions and not get into any debate on them, and that you can even edit them so they're shorter and you can get more in.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: At least some members really honour the opportunity to read petitions. We think—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I just talked about editorializing.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's in support of Bill 56, the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act.

"Whereas innocent people are being victimized by the growing number of unlawful firearms in our communities; and

"Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

"Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and found in motor vehicles; and

"Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms in motor vehicles would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can

reduce the number of crimes involving firearms in our communities.”

I fully support this petition and I give it to page Tamika.

SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’ll be as brief as this petition allows me. It does read as follows:

“Whereas the previous Progressive Conservative government determined sex change operations were not a medical spending priority and instead chose to invest in essential health care services; and

“Whereas Premier McGuinty said in 2004 that funding for sex change operations was not a priority of his government; and

“Whereas the current Liberal government has eliminated and reduced OHIP coverage for chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services; and

“Whereas the present shortage of doctors and nurses, troubling waiting times for emergency services and other treatment, operational challenges at many hospitals, as well as a crisis in our long-term-care homes signify the current government has not met their health care commitments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario does not fund sex change operations under OHIP and instead concentrates its priorities and resources on essential health services and directs our health care resources to improve overall patient care for Ontarians.”

I’m pleased to sign this and present it to Maylee, wishing to—

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

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’ll just read the petition. This is a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is signed by people who are mostly from Richmond Hill. It’s entitled “Fairness for Families in the 905 Belt” and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the population of the greater Toronto region will increase by an estimated four million more people in the next generation, with the bulk of that growth coming in the 905 belt of fast-growing cities located north, east and west of Metro Toronto; and

“Whereas these cities are already large and dynamic population units, with big-city issues and big-city needs, requiring big-city resources to implement big-city solutions to social issues and human services needs;

“Whereas the 2007-08 Ontario budget proposes aggressive and badly needed increases in operating funding to build and strengthen capacity in developmental and social services agencies and to invest in helping the young, the weak, the needy and the vulnerable; and

“Whereas the social and human services sectors in the 905 belt have historically received per capita funding far below that of other regions despite facing far greater growth in the populations they serve, and this per capita funding gap has increased in the last four years;

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

“That the ... Ontario budget implementing measures to strengthen Ontario’s families be passed without delay, and that the first priority for the allocation of new funding in meeting the government of Ontario’s commitment to fairness for families flow to the social services agencies serving cities within the 905 belt, and that funding for programs to serve the 905 belt be allocated to established or growing agencies located within the 905 belt.”

I couldn’t have said it any better myself. I’m pleased to sign and support the petition, and to give it to page Timothy to carry.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired. This House is adjourned until 1 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1204 to 1300.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: The McGuinty government is spending a lot of time talking about fairness in funding to Ontario. Maybe they should start thinking about fairness in funding within Ontario.

Areas of high population growth, such as my riding, are constantly underfunded by this Liberal government. The health and social service needs of my constituents are not being met.

Here are just a few examples from the Central LHIN. For every dollar spent on health care in Ontario, residents in most of my riding get less than 76 cents; CCAC funding, \$1 for Ontario and 93 cents for my residents; community mental health funding, \$1 for Ontario and 80 cents for my riding. Addiction funding is only 20 cents on the dollar.

This government needs to put in place a funding model based on need. It must understand that high-growth areas deserve equal support. I don’t think the health needs of my constituents are worth less than those of other Ontarians. It’s time for the government to start providing equal funding for the health needs of every family in Ontario.

CONFEDERATION PARKWAY BRIDGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I was honoured to attend the recent opening of the new Confederation Parkway Bridge, half of which is in my riding of Mississauga—

Brampton South. This new bridge links Mississauga City Centre to neighbourhoods north of Highway 403. It's a people-friendly bridge that features walking and bike lanes, allowing many of my constituents access to the city centre and Square One shopping centre without having to use their cars.

More importantly, the opening this bridge shows what can be accomplished if different levels of government work together for a better community. This bridge could not have been built without the joint efforts of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, the transportation and works commissioner, Mayor McCallion and the city of Mississauga, and everyone at GO Transit.

Again, the Confederation Parkway Bridge has become a reality because all levels of government formed key partnerships and worked together for the good of the community. I'm very proud of my community for this accomplishment.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. John O'Toole: It was with great fanfare that the McGuinty government came to the 2008 conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and announced \$1.1 billion in additional funding for Ontario municipalities. Media reports at that time quoted the Premier as saying, "The economic challenges we are facing this year means I can safely predict that I will not make this same announcement 12 months from now."

It appears that this government knew about the looming economic crisis and had cause to hold up an emergency debate—has been withheld by the Premier.

From Premier McGuinty's own statement, we have some idea of what the provincial finances for 2009 will look like. He's already said that he won't have the money.

For municipalities, it means they can't count on the \$1-billion bailout next August. What are municipal councils to do in the plight when forming their budgets?

It's time for the McGuinty government to tell the whole story on Ontario's finances. Unfortunately, even the emergency debate taking place in the House yesterday and today is more like a political stunt than an effective way of communicating to Ontarians who are losing their jobs and pensions or who are unable to keep their homes afloat.

This is what happens when Ontario governs by photo ops. We deserve better than that in Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today we are joined by Ms. Manjit Kundhal in the west gallery. Today I presented her petition calling for Ontario's Ombudsman to have more power to investigate hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

Over 1,800 people signed that petition. She was moved to carry out this work, to get those signatures,

because of the terrible experience she and her family had in a long-term-care facility this past summer.

Her mother died and was left in bed for 14 hours without a death certificate. There was no doctor to sign that death certificate. In the high heat, the body decomposed to the point where it could not receive the proper Sikh religious rites for burial. Ms. Kundhal and her whole family were devastated.

Everyone in this chamber knows the pain of losing someone in your household, but even worse is if you can't give them proper funeral arrangements, proper funeral treatment. This family knows that kind of pain.

Ms. Kundhal and our NDP health critic, France Gélinas, have called for expanded powers of the Ombudsman in order that incidents like these—and this is a glaring example—can be opened up by someone who is responsive to the public, and that pressure can be applied so that we will have change in this province so that people do not have to go through what Ms. Kundhal's family went through.

RIDING OF ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: As you will appreciate, the Ontario conversation is revolving, quite justifiably, around the economy and income security, with reference to pensions. The McGuinty government has anticipated this, and has attempted to deal strategically with a number of investments, initiatives and programs over our entire mandate, not merely as a response to this particular fiasco or crisis that's washing through the global markets.

In particular, for example, with reference to the economy, some programs have benefited my community in Etobicoke North: the \$1.5 billion for the skills-to-jobs action plan; and the \$1.15 billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund. These have led to institutions such as Micro-Skills, for example, within my riding, which a number of my residents have benefited from in terms of skills training and upgrading to make them more marketable and saleable in the workplace.

I'll make reference as well to Move Ontario 2020, which, as you will know, is a multi-year, \$17.5-billion plan, and this will be part of the transportation which will go into the Woodbine Live! Entertainment, which is basically the creation of a mini-Disneyland right in Woodbine. It is a \$1.5-billion expansion, with hotels and conference centres: an extraordinary economic boost to my community.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise this afternoon to talk about the serious concerns Ontarians have about the economic storm under the McGuinty Liberals.

Yesterday we witnessed the Liberal version of dealing with the crisis: that is, put forward a last-minute, partisan debate where the Premier and the Minister of Finance "promise to listen." We know what McGuinty promises

mean, so I'm quite certain there's not much listening going on over there.

In dealing with the economic storm facing Ontario, the Premier recited such musings as, "There's no better place to find shelter in the storm than right here in Ontario." Well, the storm is here, and despite the Premier's own words about Ontario being the place to find shelter, he's off to Mexico. Just last week, the Premier felt that the Minister of Health Promotion was qualified enough to attend the launch of the Pan-Am games bid, but suddenly, while an economic crisis looms, and the Premier himself has called a so-called open debate in the Legislature where he promised to listen, his Minister of Health Promotion has suddenly become unqualified. His Minister of Trade is in the Middle East—apparently, she's up to the job—yet the Premier doesn't feel his own Minister of Health Promotion, whom he appointed to the position of being responsible for matters of this nature, is up to the job.

When it comes to dealing with the economic crisis, the Premier stated just yesterday, "I want to assure the people of Ontario that we are in your corner"—except when any excuse to get out of Ontario during a crisis becomes available. It's clear the Premier's apparent get-up-and-go just got up and went.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Mississauga South.

1310

JONATHAN HOWARD

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to recognize the efforts of an extraordinary young man from my riding of Mississauga South. Jonathan Howard has undertaken the monumental challenge of running across Canada to raise awareness of children's autism and to generate \$2.5 million for the cause. His 8,500-kilometre journey, called "Run the Dream," began on March 25 in St. John's, Newfoundland, and is scheduled to end in Victoria, British Columbia, on December 31, in time for some well-deserved champagne.

Jonathan's long and difficult journey is made possible by an outstanding team of volunteers and sponsors to whom I would like to express my thanks.

Autism affects an estimated one in 165 people in Canada and is a lifelong condition. The funds Jonathan is raising will go towards research and supporting families affected by autism.

Jonathan was joined by his good friend Terry Robinson for the Ottawa-to-Winnipeg leg of the journey. Himself a former Paralympian, Terry is no stranger to this kind of challenge.

On July 25, Run the Dream passed through Jonathan's hometown of Mississauga, and I had the pleasure of being there to welcome him and his team home. While speaking with him, I was struck by his passion, dedication and selflessness. On behalf of the many who support Jonathan in this journey, we celebrate his

remarkable achievement. We congratulate him and wish him continued success in this most worthy cause. Thank you, Jonathan.

HUBERT SABOURIN

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Je désire aujourd'hui rendre hommage à un de mes commettants, M. Hubert Sabourin, propriétaire de Sanilit ltée d'Alexandria. En effet, jeudi dernier, le 2 octobre, M. Sabourin a été nommé Citoyen de l'année au tout premier Gala de Glengarry Nord. J'ai eu l'honneur d'accompagner l'honorable John Gerretsen, qui lui a remis le certificat de mérite du premier ministre, l'honorable Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Sabourin, a businessman of North Glengarry, was proclaimed Citizen of the Year for his generous contribution to the Glengarry Memorial Hospital, to which he donated \$150,000 for the purchase of an ultrasound machine. Mr. Sabourin also invented a dust filter that can eliminate particle emissions from some of the world's worst polluting industries.

Eight more awards were presented to the following for their contributions to the community: the Glengarry Highland Games Committee; Lanthier Bakery; Tom and Luke Murray; Kelsey MacDonald; Donat Wissell; the Kippen family farm; Bob Linney; and Jacqueline Fraser.

Félicitations à tous les récipiendaires et organisateurs de cette belle soirée.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in this House today to speak about fairness for Ontario. Last Friday in London, myself, Minister Bentley and Minister Matthews were joined by Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best, as well as London city councillors, at the press conference we held regarding the Fairness for Ontario campaign.

We held the press conference in order to reach out to Ontarians as to what we are asking Ottawa for. We are asking Ottawa to allow Ontario to keep a bit more of what we send to them. We know that Ontario gives to the federal government more than \$20 billion per year for distribution to the rest of the country. When broken down, each Ontarian sends \$1,850 that is being given to other parts of the country for things such as social programs, education, health care, infrastructure, employment insurance, and much more. I believe it's time that Ontario gets its fair share so that all Canadians can have access to the same quality of health care, education, employment insurance, infrastructure and social programs.

We got support from the city councillors and the mayor, and I guess this campaign is going further to reach out to all Ontarians to educate them about fairness for Ontario. I hope all the people across the province hear us and come out and support us, because it's fair game in order to get our share from the federal government.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUDITOR GENERAL AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE VÉRIFICATEUR GÉNÉRAL

Mrs. Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Auditor General Act /
Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le vérificateur
général.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the
pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the
member wish to make a short statement?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Yes. This bill amends the Auditor
General Act to provide for the Auditor General to report,
in his or her annual report to the Legislative Assembly,
on circumstances where money was expended for the
provision of programs or services without due regard to
the equitable provision of those services or programs in
all geographic areas in Ontario.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Brad Duguid: On behalf of the House leader, I
move the following motion: That, starting Wednesday
October 15, 2008, the Standing Committee on Estimates
be authorized to take the remaining unconsidered
estimates referred to in the following order: Ministry of
Agriculture and Food; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of
Training, Colleges and Universities; Ministry of Energy;
Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal; Ministry of
Municipal Affairs and Housing; and that the committee
be authorized to present its report, pursuant to standing
order 63(a), no later than Thursday, November 27, 2008.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think
we're going to back up just a bit in process. That was a
motion without notice, so you have to ask unanimous
consent to introduce it. Would you ask that now?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would so ask.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It has
been requested. Agreed? Agreed. Now, motion again?

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Dispense. We've heard the motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MILK IN SCHOOLS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I move that, in the opinion of this
House, the government of Ontario, specifically the

Ministry of Education, should collaborate with the Dairy
Farmers of Ontario to expand the elementary school milk
program across Ontario's publicly funded schools, so
more of Ontario's students can enjoy the benefits of
healthy, local milk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr.
Dhillon has moved private members' notice of motion
50. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Dhillon, you have
up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It is my honour to stand before this
House and graciously ask for the support of this
resolution. The elementary school milk program, known
as the ESMP, is an important step to ensure that our chil-
dren continue on the road to healthy living. This program
has the capacity to impact the life of every child in
Ontario. The ESMP was launched in 1987 to provide
nutritious, fresh, and easy-to-access milk to elementary
school students on a daily basis. The Dairy Farmers of
Ontario and our local processors are making sure that
milk is affordable and they are providing it to schools at
greatly reduced prices when compared to retail pricing.

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This is a very ambitious project. However, as with any
ambitious project, it can only be successful with the
support and partnerships we create. I am proud of the
efforts of our local processors. I am proud of the efforts
made by the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I am proud of the
work that the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of
Health Promotion and this House are doing in encour-
aging our youth to be more healthy and active.

I wish to acknowledge some members who are here
today to listen to this very important debate. These
people have spearheaded the ESMP program and, more
importantly, have played an active role in encouraging
our youth to eat healthy and be more active. I wish to
acknowledge the representatives from the Heart and
Stroke Foundation of Ontario. Their good work can never
be overlooked. Year after year, the Heart and Stroke
Foundation of Ontario continues to be an important
advocate of children, and I thank them very much for
their efforts.

I also wish to acknowledge and welcome the Dairy
Farmers of Ontario. I thank them for their continued
support. The DFO have not just supported children
drinking milk with mere words; their actions speak much
louder. On September 24, in honour of World School
Milk Day, all participating Ontario elementary schools
received complimentary milk. This represents over
800,000 servings of milk. What a great endeavour. This
shows us that it is possible to deliver milk to all
participating schools, while encouraging our young
children to drink healthy local milk.

Currently, the ESMP covers approximately 70% of
our elementary schools in Ontario. However, only 25%
of students in those schools participate in the program.
This has definitely got to change. It can't be done without
the hard work and support of the citizens of Ontario.
There needs to be a better understanding of the import-
ance that milk has in a healthy and well-balanced diet.

It is our responsibility to teach the next generation good and healthy living habits. There is a growing epidemic of obesity among our youth. Our children have stopped being as active as previous generations. Our government has been taking active steps to stop this trend. This is why I believe that it is so important to start our young on the right path from day one. That means that children should be active, children should eat fruits and vegetables, children should drink healthy milk. It is time for us to wean our children off their dependency on junk food, which is what this government has done and continues to encourage. Our children are our most precious resource. They should not be burdened with diseases such as diabetes that in many cases can be prevented at their age with a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

We, as members of this Legislature and leaders of this province, need to go back to our constituencies with a united and common message that our children come first. We need to encourage local school boards, individual schools, educators and, most importantly, parents to continue our commitment to nutrition in school and at home. However, this cannot be accomplished only by encouraging our young to drink milk. There need to be continued efforts made by educators and parents to drive this message of being healthy, active and eating well to our children. I believe that we're getting there.

Good nutrition is vital to a child's growth, development and well-being. Research studies time and time again tell us that children are able to concentrate better and learn more effectively when they are well nourished. According to the Dietitians of Canada, roughly one third of a child's daily food intake occurs during school hours. When children arrive at school hungry or exposed to unhealthy food choices, they are less ready and able to learn and are at risk of developing chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes later in life. The ESMP program will help students perform better in school and develop better eating habits that contribute to their long-term health.

I am a very strong supporter of this resolution and I encourage all my colleagues, members, to adopt this resolution.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased today to rise to speak to the resolution introduced by the member from Brampton West, which states that the government of Ontario "should collaborate with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to expand the elementary school milk program"—and I couldn't agree more. This program has made it easier for parents to ensure their children are getting the nutrition they need and is teaching our kids good, healthy eating habits at a very young age. Already the milk program is a big success, and I think that we should work to ensure that more Ontario students can enjoy and benefit from milk.

A few weeks ago, on September 24, we celebrated World School Milk Day. Although this day was only created in 2000, there are already 40 countries partici-

pating and giving students nutritious milk at school that day. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario, with the assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, offered complimentary milk to students at every school in Ontario. I know some of the schools in Oxford participated, like Algonquin Public School, and they were very grateful to the dairy farmers. Across Ontario, there were close to one million students who received free milk that day. I think it's great to introduce students and parents to the benefits of the elementary school milk program and to teach students about good nutrition and the benefits of milk.

In the 30 years since the elementary school milk program was created, it has expanded to include approximately 2,800 schools across the province, and that's an incredible achievement. It means that about 70% of the schools in Ontario offer students easy access to fresh milk. I want to congratulate the Dairy Farmers of Ontario on that accomplishment and commend them for all the work that they have done to ensure the program's success.

I know that there are a number of dairy farmers in the gallery today, and I want to welcome them all to the Legislature and thank them for coming out and supporting this bill. I especially want to thank John Palmer, who happens to be a milk producer in the great riding of Oxford county and represents the dairy producers in Oxford county very well on the Dairy Farmers of Ontario board of directors. As you know, Oxford county is the dairy capital of Ontario. We no longer have the most cows, but we still produce the most milk of any county in the province. Obviously, we don't have much, but we produce better than anyone else.

I want to dwell on a few other things. Today, we are in the middle of the 10th annual Agriculture Week. I want to take a minute to recognize the contributions of our dairy farmers and all farmers in this province. In Ontario, we are lucky to have so much fresh, locally grown food available. I think many people take that for granted and forget the hard work that our farmers do to provide us with that food. Dairy farmers are a perfect example. The rest of us may be looking forward to the long weekend for Thanksgiving, but the cows will still need to be milked and fed, and on Tuesday morning, when we get up to put cream in our coffee or students want milk for lunchtime, thanks to the dairy farmers it will be there. I know that in order to be here today, many of these farmers will have been up at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning to do chores before leaving for Toronto to be here in time for this gathering.

However, I think it's important to recognize that farmers in Ontario are facing serious challenges. Input costs are increasing, farmers are dealing with too much red tape, and the average age of farmers is disturbingly high. I do want to comment that I am happy that farmers are getting to be old. The alternative to not getting old is not a very attractive alternative.

Earlier this week, a group of young farmers came to the Legislature to mark the beginning of Agriculture Week. They were here to deliver a message to the min-

ister that they need more support to ensure that agriculture in Ontario has a future. One of the people who was here is a 16-year-old named Travis Murray. He wants to be a farmer, but his father is trying to talk him out of it because he knows how hard it is for farmers to survive in Ontario. We need to ensure that the agriculture industry is one that is attracting young people and that we are providing the support and the strong future that will help them not only enter the industry but succeed and become the next generation of farmers.

As we move forward, one of the keys to success in agriculture will continue to be innovation. I know that there are some dairy farmers in Oxford who are already great examples of successful innovation: people like Steven Veldman of Velrob Farms in Embro, who developed a system that helped change the flow characteristics of cold water and milk to ensure optimum cooling before the milk enters the bulk tank—that change improved the plate cooler efficiency by 50%; and innovators like Dave Older of Viewland Farms in Thamesford, who adopted an innovative bedding system from Minnesota which has improved animal health, created an excellent compost material and decreased labour costs.

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The elementary school milk program is another great example of innovation from the agricultural community. By providing detailed practical information for schools on how to set up this program—and even helping to provide refrigerators—the dairy farmers have found an easy and low-cost way to ensure that our students are getting the health benefits of drinking fresh milk every day. They have made it much easier for parents to provide a healthy option at lunch, and they are benefiting our schools by contributing to nutrition to help every child learn. So I want to again congratulate the Dairy Farmers of Ontario on creating and building this successful program. I'm pleased to support the goal of expanding the program and ensuring that all Ontarian schoolchildren will have access to fresh milk every day.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm pleased to speak to this resolution, pleased to support it in some ways and want to raise some concerns, which I'm hoping the member has thought about—and other government members and, indeed, all the members of this Legislature. Because there are some concerns.

The positives are that it's a motion that broadens the program to provide schools with access to reasonably priced milk. It encourages children to drink more milk, and we know that attending school on a full belly is fundamental to being able to learn. Revenues for dairy farmers are increased in this particular case, which would help the struggling rural economy in Ontario, and I say in this regard that we recognize that the dairy industry is, and will continue to be, an important part of our province's economy. So the promotion of milk in our elementary schools is a reasonable request to be making, but I'm hoping that we see that as a part of a large-scale

overall nutrition initiative, because simply selling milk in the schools does not even begin to address the nutrition problems that many of our students are facing.

We know, based on the Toronto Star dated October 7, that when seven principals from the northwest part of Toronto were asked what they wanted most to have in the schools to improve student learning, what they needed most was food. Giving access to nutritional foods was what they said was critical in their schools. They suggested that a lot of kids go to school without eating because they can't afford it or because they're rushed to school, and for whatever reason, if they're not eating, it's going to affect their learning.

We know it's an important issue, and yes, milk is a part of it, but it isn't the whole picture, so we need to address it in a much more wholesome way. There's a range of products needed in order to meet the needs of our diverse population. The other question is, should we be selling milk, however reasonable, versus should we be making it available for free so that the majority of kids who can't afford it have access to it, rather than those who can pay for it? We should be asking those questions, and we should be answering them, because "reasonably priced" is a reasonable request to be making, but if you can't afford it, is that not a problem for those students who do not have access to food and therefore are not learning as best they can?

So the issue of "free" becomes a question that the government member might want to speak to, and indeed the Minister of Education, who is here. The member from Brampton West mentioned the government student nutrition program, but I remind him and others that it depends on the fine work of many volunteers around the province, and that this program is simply inadequately supported. The government support of this student nutrition program is about 15% to 20% of the cost. The rest comes from private sector initiatives and, as I said, from the many volunteers who make it work. So as valuable as this program is, it is underfunded by the government, and we should be speaking about whether or not we should, as a government, be increasing our portion in order to be able to give access to young people who need it. Yes, milk can and should be a part of it. But I do remind the member, and I'm sure he knows, that some students are lactose intolerant. I say "some" because I don't know the figure. But I'm told there are a lot of young people, middle-aged people and seniors who are lactose intolerant. That includes particularly people of First Nations, Asian, African and Jewish backgrounds. So for that community, for those students, milk is not their product. It is not nutritious for them. In fact, it's dangerous to them. Many of the students have allergic reactions to milk. So, as good as it can be for some, it may not be for others. That's why I argue you've got to make it part of an overall initiative. In this regard, we have to worry about the positives of this resolution and some of the negatives.

I ask the member from Brampton West—and the Minister of Education is here—when we put pressure on

the Minister of Education with a resolution of this kind, what other industry is going to be following on its heels to say, "We've got something to offer, too. We want to come and talk to the minister because we believe we offer a nutritious diet or nutritious product. We want to encourage you, Minister of Education, to make sure that we are getting our products into the system as well"? The Minister of Education—I don't know, but she is here, and maybe she will comment on what I'm saying, because it seems that she's puzzled by my remarks.

Hon. Brad Duguid: She's in favour of milk.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She's in favour of milk.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister is going to have an opportunity to speak to the concerns I've raised. I'm glad you're here, because, Minister, I know you were chatting with the other minister. I don't begrudge that; it's just that you may not have heard what I said.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I heard what you said. It made no sense.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Then the other minister will stand up to speak to the concerns that I have raised. I'm hoping to hear another point of view from two illustrious ministers in this House who are nodding in disagreement with what I'm saying. Please, stand up and take some of the time to address my concern, which is that many students are lactose intolerant and many students have allergic reactions to milk. Ministers, now that you've heard me repeat it, you might want to speak to that. That's why I said that milk is one component of a larger nutrition issue that we should be talking about. I think you should be speaking to it.

The other question to the two illustrious ministers who are here—one, the Minister of Education, the other a former trustee with the Toronto board—do you think that milk, if we're going to offer it as one component, should be free, versus selling it to those who can't afford it? You're here; perhaps you can comment on that.

You, Minister of Education, as I said to you earlier, contribute 15% to 20% of the school nutrition program. Do you think you should increase your amount, given your knowledge about how important it is for young people to have a meal, a nutritious breakfast, before they get into the school system? Your contribution is a very tiny one. You might want to speak to that. Should the milk be free? Can we encourage and should we be encouraging all of the industries to come and lobby you to have some other nutritious food be introduced in the school system? These are the questions I ask the Minister of Education, who's here, and the member from Brampton West, as we deliberate on this resolution. I think the resolution is an acceptable one to me. I'm only raising questions that I hope others can answer and make me feel at ease.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On a point of order, if I could: It is absolutely my pleasure to introduce to this House some of the dynamic students from St. Jean de Brébeuf in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): As you know, it's not a point of order, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

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Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to join with all of those who have welcomed the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here to the Legislature. For me, it's a very special welcome. In the five years that I've had the privilege and the responsibility of speaking on behalf of people in western Mississauga, they are one of many fine organizations that I'm also proud to call my constituents. So, gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park. It's really a pleasure to have you.

I also want to say a few words about not merely my seatmate, not merely my colleague, but my friend, the member for Brampton West. This is just one of many initiatives that the member for Brampton West has brought before this House on matters that concern people in his community. These are substantive matters. He has spoken on behalf of the Knights Table, which is, again, another initiative about nutrition; he has introduced legislation regarding the regulation of temp agencies; he has worked hard on the Heart and Stroke Foundation in his community; and he has worked with his son on a battery recycling program.

This is a man who has stood up on behalf of people in his community and talked about many of the things that truly do matter. In fact, in his work with the Knights Table, there were, in fact, babies who needed milk as clients of the Knights Table, and I'm sure that this is part of the reason that has led to the presentation of this resolution.

We cannot understate the role that milk plays in the diet of children. There are any number of good reasons for being healthy, for eating well and for being active, and milk is a part of all of that. All of the major dairy producers support this particular resolution, as do I. I would only note that drinking milk, for a child, comes at a time when growth occurs in spurts. A good, balanced diet, of which milk is a big part, helps combat obesity, helps build strong bones, helps underline the importance of a healthy diet and gets you into the habit of doing the right things at a time when doing the right things will just become a habit; it will be almost unnatural not to do them.

Before I finish my remarks today, I am reminded in this, the 150th anniversary year of the village of Streetsville, where we've been talking about what life was like 150 years ago. My colleague the member for Oxford said, "I'm glad that farmers are getting old." A visit to some of our heritage cemeteries confirms many of the things he said, where people who would normally be the age that many of us are in this chamber simply didn't make it; that was about the end of your natural life. Today, with all of the advances in modern science and modern medicine, we can still come back to the basics: a healthy lifestyle, eating right and drinking milk when you're young.

This is a fine resolution, and I'm pleased to support it.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise and speak on the motion that's brought forward today by the member from Brampton West: that, basically, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ministry of Education should collaborate to expand this benefit to Ontario students for healthy local milk. I'd like to recognize, as we all have done who have spoken today, the many members of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario who are in the gallery and who joined us today, and the people from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario. I'm sure that many of my colleagues in the Legislature were down for the very nutritious, dairy-based lunch that was provided for us before we came into the Legislature. I'm very pleased to recognize the generosity and the hard work of the dairy farmers in the province of Ontario. They offer, every day, thousands and thousands of school kids a healthy serving of fresh milk.

I also want to point out that September 24 was World School Milk Day. I know that the members on this side of the House certainly recognized the contribution of Ontario dairy farmers on that day. The members of the government were just catching up on that today to recognize World School Milk Day. But it is very important when we say "World School Milk Day" because, as you can see from many of the advertisements on TV—I have the milk producers' magazine in front of me, Functional Foods—people are becoming more aware of the health benefits from dairy products. I certainly know that my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock depends on its agriculture industry and the products that our farmers and producers provide. The farmers and agriculture professionals in the riding are one of the chief sources of incomes, jobs and economic dependents that are in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know Farmers Feed Cities is still prevalent on many T-shirts and signs throughout my riding. Ontario farmers do provide world class, healthy products to Ontarians young and old.

I have a role as an opposition critic for health promotion also and many of you know that I'm also a registered nurse. I certainly agree with my colleagues in promoting healthy choices and healthy diets for kids that have a positive impact on their lives now, but which also prevent illness and health issues later on. That goes hand in hand with encouraging more physical activity and proper education about health and physical activities. The Dairy Farmers of Ontario have been working hard in providing great leadership for this school milk program currently in the province.

But they go much further. They provide educational programs for our young people in school. I know many of the dairy farmers go into the classrooms in my schools and educate the young people who, less and less, are coming from farms, certainly, with the number of farmers that we're losing in the province. Dairy Farmers of Ontario, the DFO: Their current contribution to the

milk program and other nutritional education programs is some \$2.4 million, which is not a small amount of money on their part. They're very committed to doing much more, if the provincial government is willing to join them. The DFO deserves much recognition in making it their priority to work with the province and the students of our province on this worthy goal.

I've had the opportunity to speak to many dairy farmers in my riding—I'm sure the most famous being Lloyd Wicks, and many of the members in the gallery will know Lloyd—on the various ways we can think outside the box on introducing more dairy products that are made with milk from cows that are fed a diet with DHA omega-3. They want to expand that milk program to include milk from cows that are fed a diet with DHA omega-3, which is instrumental—we've heard said today—in the development of brain, eyes and nerves in the critical years of youth and physical development. There's lots of science-based proof for this and the good works that it does, if we can get to the children at critical ages and provide them with a diet with DHA omega-3 in their dairy products.

You see functional foods out there with the attention on this growing market of people wanting to eat healthier. Lloyd had a roundtable in my riding on his farm—Grasshill Farm—to which many of my colleagues came. We heard from a great presenter, John Kelly, who is part of the research group, which is just up the way at MaRS Landing, and who's a strong advocate for DHA omega-3, and the dairy products that contain that. It's not just milk. They're becoming more available in cheese strings, yogurt and he even passed some forms of candy that contain that. That's educating us as legislators to the benefits that are out there.

We need to move this forward. The dairy farmers have been leading the charge for healthy nutrition in the province of Ontario. They're asking the provincial government to certainly take a stronger role. They've been providing fresh milk, and hopefully other dairy products in the near future, as I put that plug in again, as well as nutritional education at an early age. They're helping our Ontario kids be healthy, eat healthy and make healthy lifestyle choices starting so early that they'll affect their kids and our future in the province with making healthy choices, healthy lifestyles, and educating ourselves with what can be brought forward. So I appreciate what the member has brought forward in this motion and to add some comments to this. I'm going to be watching this very closely: how this moves forward through the Legislature. We want this to not just be a time in our 50 minutes today in which we are discussing it, but to get into real action to help the Dairy Farmers of Ontario achieve their goal—and even move beyond that—and make the province of Ontario partners.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We will be supporting this motion, but we have questions that we think the mover needs to address when he gets his opportunity at the end

of this debate. I grew up in a school where milk was available. It was one of the treats of the day. And I understand that it makes a lot of sense to make sure that children have access to milk, and beyond that, not just milk, but regularly to nutritious food so that they can learn and so that they can develop their academic skills. Now, as my colleague had said, and it's something that needs to be noted in what goes forward out of this Legislature, there are many children who are lactose intolerant. So any program has to recognize that their nutritional needs have to be met as well. I would hope that the mover, and anyone in government who carries this forward, keeps that in mind. That's not to say that milk shouldn't be available, but those who can't drink milk have to be provided with an equivalent nutritious portion of soy milk—whatever.

Mr. John O'Toole: Coke.

1350

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's interesting that I hear comments in the background. I think about milk being part of our heritage. When you look in the Bible, the Promised Land was described as a place of milk and honey, not of pop and chips, and that's what we need for our schools: nutrition.

When you look back at the recent historical record, "Margaret Thatcher, milk snatcher" was a slogan that was used heavily in Britain to describe the anti-child policies of that far-right government. It's something that resonates deeply, emotionally with people. I, like my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, ask the Minister of Education and any other minister who feels free to take up the cause, whether or not the government will be assisting school boards in making sure that children have access to nutritious foods; in fact, beyond that, to making sure that school boards have the resources to ensure that every child is properly fed, every child has that opportunity from early in the morning to actually learn.

I've talked to teachers who have taught in schools where the introduction of school breakfast programs made a huge difference, in terms of academic performance, and frankly just a huge difference in terms of the mood of classrooms. Children who had been disruptive, who had been angry and acting out, were very different when they were fed, when they had had something to eat that actually nourished them, that actually filled their stomachs.

So, my thanks to the member who introduced this. My hope is that he will address some of the questions that have been raised in the course of this debate, and that the Ministry of Education will take on this question of nutrition for children overall and make sure that every child in this province gets an equal start with every other child by making sure they're not hungry when they get to school, and that they're well nourished.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: We were talking about the old days here. I remember that three doors down from my house at St. Clair and Bathurst, they used to have a dairy. That

was before the big conglomerates got together. It was Maple Dale Dairy, I think, just a little micro-dairy. It brought back a bit of memories.

I want to congratulate the member from Brampton West for taking leadership. A lot of people talk about supporting dairy farmers, and a lot of people talk about supporting farmers, but he has put this forward. He has come to the Legislature and put his name on this resolution, and I think that's something to be remembered and certainly appreciated. I think the dairy farmers appreciate that.

It's very important—we have these wonderful young students here from Hamilton. This is about you. In this society today, many of us, including young people, are addicted to all those sweet drinks—all the juices. They drink juice by the gallon. In many cases, it's not even juice; it's just water and sweeteners. The cost of that so-called juice—fruit drinks—is exorbitant. And where does that juice drink come from? It doesn't come from Ontario farmers. Where do the oranges come from? The good thing about milk is that it's local. So it's also good for the environment, because it's grown locally, and it doesn't have all that sugar in it.

One of the real problems we have in Ontario, one of the fastest-growing drivers of our health costs, is diabetes. Type 2 diabetes is going to affect almost 40% of the population. One of the reasons why diabetes is so prevalent is because there is an addiction to all those soda pops and colas, which are advertised non-stop, and all those sugared juices that are also continually promoted. Sometimes, as parents and grandparents, we forget that we've got this incredible treasure in Ontario and Canada called milk. We sometimes fail to appreciate—look at what's happened in China, where they haven't taken care with their milk products—that we have excellent supervision and quality control of our dairy products; the scientific methodology here in Ontario is second to none. So when you're buying milk, you can rest assured that it's safe, it's clean, it's healthy, it's good for you, and it doesn't cause diabetes. Rather than reaching for that expensive, foreign American Coca-Cola or for some tropical fruit juice, reach for something local—milk.

As many have said, it's the best thing for your teeth and bones. It can replace a meal, if you want. Milk is sometimes a forgotten treasure that we have in all parts of Ontario, and it's something we've got to pay a bit more attention to. That's why I'm so happy the member has brought this forward.

As I said earlier, this is an environmentally good product; as you know, we are now talking more and more about eating and shopping locally. When you sit down to Thanksgiving dinner on Sunday or Monday, make sure that those products you sit down to eat are local Ontario products. Make sure there's milk on the table, good Ontario carrots, good Ontario potatoes and good Ontario turkey. It's healthy, tasty and more affordable than all those exotic foreign things we put on our tables, and it's a great opportunity at Thanksgiving.

Ironically, this motion is before us just before Thanksgiving. We don't take time to thank our farmers enough.

We go to the store and take milk off the shelf and never stop to think about the blood, sweat, tears and sacrifice that made it possible. Everything is so automatic in our modern convenience stores that we don't stop and think that it took a lot of effort to put that milk on the store shelf, which we can bring home and feel secure that the milk our children are drinking is safe and good for them.

I know that the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned the lactose issue. I am somewhat lactose intolerant myself, but what I do is always purchase lactose-free milk, and I have no problem with it. It tastes the same, and I find it's very, very good for me. I still drink a lot of milk. I put it on my cereal; I have glasses of it all the time. In fact, the other speaker was saying we should have more milk available in public places because milk, as an affordability issue, is good value for your money.

If young people are hungry or children are hungry, milk helps fill the gap and doesn't have all the side effects of all that imported Coca-Cola or tropical juices which don't help the local economy, whereas if you drink milk, you're also helping the local economy and helping our local farmers, who, again, go to a great deal of trouble to produce this product that, as I said, we all take for granted.

In terms of our schools, I visited Flemington Public School in my riding. The children in that school come from challenged homes and their income levels are not high, but there is a milk program there. They have milk available for them at lunch. It's a program that makes sure that those children who come from poor families have something that is healthy. It's provided in co-operation with the dairy farmers and the Ministry of Education. Thousands of children across this province get the benefit of that school milk program.

What the member here is advocating is that we look at expanding that program to make it available to more children across our school system and beyond.

I think the member from Trinity–Spadina looked at this with blinders on. I think he's got to be more global in looking at this. What I think our member is trying to say—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, he's got a more global vision than you do on this issue. He's saying that milk is a good thing; let's try to make it more available.

The member from Trinity–Spadina is too tied up in bureaucracy. He's saying, "Well, what about the minister?" The member from Brampton is saying, "We've got this Ontario treasure that's natural. It's good for you. It's local. Let's make it more available."

The member from Peterborough is a great supporter of our dairy farmers. He goes out of his way to speak out on behalf of dairy farmers, and I'm going to leave 30 seconds for him to talk about Peterborough.

1400

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just had a meeting with Community Living Peterborough with Madam Meilleur. That's why I'm a bit late coming in.

Two things—strong support for supply management; and exactly 20 years ago, my wife, Karan, a teacher at St. Teresa's Elementary School in Peterborough, introduced a milk program to her students. Why did she do that? She was tired of seeing kids bringing pop to school. She brought in the milk program and it spread to every school in the separate school system in Peterborough. We're very proud of my wife's leadership in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mr. Dhillon, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'd like to start off by thanking the members from Mississauga–Streetsville, Eglinton–Lawrence, Peterborough, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Oxford, Trinity–Spadina and Toronto–Danforth for their input. I really appreciate and thank the opposition for their opinions and their concerns—some very valid ones from Mr. Tabuns. Absolutely, there needs to be a substitute for milk. Soy milk or goat milk is an incredible substitute. Having visited Agriculture 101, which was hosted by Minister Wilkinson, I learned a lot about goat milk and how similar the processes are and that it is a viable substitute for milk for people who are lactose intolerant.

I also want to say that it's a win-win situation, the issue of milk in our schools: It's good for the economy; it's good for our kids. We are putting them on the right path to becoming healthier individuals. The issue of milk and also of nutrition fits very well with our Premier's agenda of healthier kids and healthier living. So I encourage the House to adopt this resolution and I encourage all parties involved to work towards the ultimate goal of teaching our children to eat properly and to be active.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Before I call the next order, I'm just reminding the people who are watching at home and in the galleries here that we have two more private members' ballot items to be dealt with. This item will be voted on in approximately 100 minutes' time.

Orders of the day.

LEGISLATIVE CHANNEL

Mr. Bob Delaney: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should request of the government of Canada that an amendment be made to the terms of reference governing the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to ensure that a condition to the CRTC's granting, or renewal, of a licence to carry cable, wireless, wireless cable or any other type of television content by every distributor in any market is the requirement to broadcast, as part of every basic package of television services or channels, and using a minimum of one dedicated channel, the legislative proceedings of the province or territory in which the distributor of the television content proposes to offer service, as supplied to the distributor by the legislative broadcast service in that province or territory.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Delaney has moved private member's notice of motion number 44. Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Delaney, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would like to greet everyone who is watching. I'd like to begin today by paying tribute to the dedicated men and women who operate the Ontario Legislature's broadcast and recording services. Most of them have been here longer than most of us. Many of them will be here, serving Ontarians by broadcasting the proceedings of this Legislature and by recording the proceedings of our committees, long after many of the elected members here today are gone.

For you to be able to watch this, the Ontario Legislature's broadcast and recording services employs a staff of 22 regular and five contract employees. Their hard work and dedication, their effectiveness, brings to Ontarians the minute-by-minute proceedings of their government at work, through the deliberations of the elected representatives that you choose to serve you in every community across this province, and they've done this job for more than 22 years.

I can stand here at my desk and I can speak directly to you, wherever you are. Perhaps you're at home, curled up on your sofa, channel-surfing, and you're wondering what's going on at Queen's Park. Maybe you're sitting in your office. Maybe you're monitoring the activities here for how they may affect you, your industry, your employees and the people you do business with. Maybe this is being rebroadcast, or it has been recorded and played back, and you're saying to someone, "Let's look at this for a few minutes. I'm interested in this issue."

The point is, you can see what the people you elect are doing on your behalf. You can see what they're doing when they're in the legislative chamber, and you can see it unedited and in real time. You can see the Premier and the members of the cabinet on their feet, fielding questions each day that this Legislature sits. You can see the person you elected, speaking on the record for what concerns you, what concerns your family and what concerns your community.

The point is, you don't have to watch, but you can—at least, right now you can. But this might not necessarily be the case in the future. You might not be able to see your government and watch it do business on your behalf in the months and years to come.

This is not a commercial station. There's no host or moderator who is going to say, "We'll return with the lead-off questions from the Leader of the Opposition right after this," and then cut to a commercial break. There are no corporate logos on the walls of the Legislature behind me. The annual budget bill doesn't carry a reference to a car company or to a soft drink vendor. That's what prompted one satellite broadcast carrier to drop us. So, in a big part of Ontario, nobody can hear me say this. In those communities served by that vendor, Star Choice, nobody can watch their government in action. That's a tragedy, and that's what this motion calls upon the government of Canada to change.

This motion essentially says to the broadcast and cable industry that if you want to offer content to your subscribers and make some money using public bandwidth or public airwaves, one choice your customers must have is to watch their government in action.

It says that if you want to apply for a new licence to carry broadcast content or want to renew an existing one, you will carry the provincial legislative proceedings if they're offered in the province or territory you serve.

It says that you will dedicate a minimum of one channel to these broadcast proceedings and carry them live if they're offered live. If you won't do that, you can't have a licence to carry any content at all, because public airwaves and public bandwidth don't belong to you, if you're a broadcaster; they belong to all of us.

The consensus, and indeed the legitimacy, of what we do in this Ontario chamber of democracy is derived from what the US Declaration of Independence calls, very correctly, "the consent of the governed."

This resolution says that whatever is said or done here by the men and women who come together in this legislative chamber to serve the people who sent them, you can watch them do it. You may not have to; you may not want to; but you can.

This resolution says that we in Ontario seek the informed consent of the governed, not merely their passive awareness that they are in fact governed.

In fact, Speaker—and those of you watching this live or rebroadcast—it can be better-than-average reality TV. There are no multiple takes. There's no producer, director or screenwriter. On this channel, you can see 107 men and women, chosen by communities all across Ontario, speaking about the things they believe in, things they're trying to do in your community or your region, and speaking about the state of your province and the direction they believe it's going, for better or for worse.

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Debate can get passionate in here; in fact, it's supposed to be passionate in here. This is Ontario's kitchen table. This is where Ontario's issues get thrashed out. This is where we arrive at a decision, right or wrong, whether you agree with it or not. This is where we, who serve on your behalf, focus our resources in the here and now. This is where and how we Ontarians shape our future for the years and decades to come, and you're watching it live. There are characters to emulate on this channel, there are attributes to copy, there are drawbacks to avoid, and there are certainly personalities from one end of the spectrum to the other.

This channel is most commonly called Ont.Parl. The TV signal is fed via an uplink to the Anik satellite some 35,000 kilometres up in space, in geosynchronous orbit above the earth, which means that relative to a fixed point on the planet, it's pretty much always in the same place. We have a permanent window of opportunity, then, to transmit content up and to receive content down. The satellite relays the signal all over Canada, and the signal is received by cable companies, and it's distributed on cable systems throughout the province of Ontario, and

if you're watching this outside, throughout the province that you live in. The signal is available if you own a satellite receiver.

All legislative proceedings are carried live, and they're rebroadcast the same evening. When the House is not sitting, some committee hearings are broadcast live from a committee room here in the Ontario Legislative Building called the Amethyst Room, on the main floor. On Sundays, a program called Sunday Encore is broadcast. It's a compilation of the previous week's legislative proceedings.

Currently, Ont.Parl is available to almost 300 cable stations across Ontario. It is a part of Bell TV's new IPTV offering here in Ontario. But Ont.Parl has been dropped by Star Choice, which is now Shaw Broadcast Services. In May 2008, Shaw Broadcast Services advised the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that it had run out of capacity on its Ku band. Since the last week of July of this year, Shaw no longer offers its subscribers the Ont.Parl channel. That means that if you're a Shaw subscriber and you're watching this right now, chances are you're probably outside your own home.

Says the president of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission: "Broadcast coverage of the various provincial Legislatures is not required carriage, and is distributed at the discretion of the various television service providers."

Well, that's what we're here today to change. This resolution urges the government of Canada to get moving and to make mandatory the carrying of the proceedings of the provincial Legislature in each province in which a broadcast provider wishes to serve subscribers. That means that if you live in Ontario, at least one channel is going to be this channel; if you live in Alberta, at least one channel will carry the proceedings of the Alberta Legislative Assembly; and so on. It seeks to maintain the stipulation that if you're offering television content to your subscribers, the provincial proceedings must be part of a basic cable package.

The last thing that we want to do on either the government or the opposition side of this House is to further empower the power brokers in our democracy or to curse our political leaders by putting the proceedings of our provincial Legislature, in Ontario or any other province, out of sight and therefore out of mind. We want people in Ontario to be able to surf their channels, to be able to see a member on his or her feet speaking their mind and to be able to say something like, "There's my MPP, and that's exactly what I would say if I were standing there." Or the viewer could say, "What a strutting clown. I hope they get rid of you at the next election." Or you could say or think whatever it is that you want.

This resolution seeks to maintain your ability to see the best and the worst in the men and women who serve you within the government of Ontario, to see it live, to see it uncensored, to see it unfiltered, and to see it unedited. Informed consent of the governed demands nothing less. I urge passage of this motion.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to commend my colleague the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for bringing this motion forward. I'm pleased to commit my support to this motion.

This motion speaks to the very heart of democratic rights and responsibilities as expressed within our political culture. It also speaks to our civic values, which not only include a freely functioning Legislature, but also access to the proceedings of the Legislature by all members of the public, who are collectively represented by this Legislature.

Our democratic system of government presumes an informed and an engaged electorate. It is therefore essential that people have access to the proceedings of their Legislature and understand the issues of the day as they're debated in this place.

As we all know, the media is in fact an integral part of the parliamentary system today. In this regard, it has a vital role to play in strengthening not only the knowledge about what Parliament does, but also about what Parliament is and its role in our society. In today's world, we rely a great deal on the media to act as an interface between the institutions of democracy and the people they serve; done right, the media brings transparency to the activities of government and ensures that the public institutions function in a responsive and responsible manner.

It is precisely for these important civic purposes that the Ontario Parliamentary Network was established in 1986, to broadcast the parliamentary proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. However, when this network began to be distributed by cable and satellite providers, many individuals outside the GTA stopped having access to the broadcast proceedings of this Legislature, simply because cable companies chose not to include the channel as part of their commercial offerings. In fact, the community of Aurora, my hometown, in my riding of Newmarket–Aurora, does not have access to real-time parliamentary process. It is relegated to the late-night or early-morning rerun time slot.

There are some who would argue that the proceedings are adequately shown on regular TV channels already. In fact, only selective examples of the proceedings are highlighted within the narrow constraints of news reports, and more often than not, these are further constrained by what some have termed the dictatorship of the sound bite. In the process, the public might only garner a partial picture of our political system in general and of our parliamentary proceedings in particular.

The Ontario Parliamentary Network, however, provides a comprehensive overview of the work of this place. Unlike other media channels, the Ontario Parliamentary Network allows viewers to decide for themselves how to interpret the words of their elected representatives, rather than have that message edited by particular media outlets. Parliamentary networks, therefore, exercise an important educational role, in allowing

the public access to information about government and about opposition affairs, whose interface in the Legislature will impact their lives and those of their families. I would like to reiterate my support for this motion brought forward by my colleague for this very reason. I believe it's fundamental to the functioning of this place and to an effective democracy—by doing so, we will ensure that the very foundation of our democratic political culture is protected.

Once again, I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward. I trust that the CRTC, I trust that the Canadian government, will take to heart what I trust will be the unanimous support of this motion by this Legislature so that we can get on and have this important change implemented.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm rising to support this resolution introduced by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I think it's a good resolution. I was cheering on this side of the House. I noticed a lot of your colleagues weren't, and I don't get it, but I kind of like this resolution.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We like it too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, but I need to see you cheering for the member.

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's fine. I feel better.

This is a political channel. Every cable provider ought to be providing, in their basic package, this parliamentary channel so the people can see what we're doing. It could be that the people will be turned off by what we do in this place or by some of us, but on the whole I think people will like what we do and who we are and what we represent.

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I think people are entitled to witness the debates and to see their members, or indeed any of the members in this place, be they from Durham or Mississauga–Streetsville or wherever. I've got to tell you, there are a whole lot of people who wouldn't know who we are or what we do if they didn't see us debate in this Legislature. It is good from time to time, when you travel outside of your own riding, that people recognize you. Why? It's because of the parliamentary channel, because people are watching, because people want to see you and hear what you have to say. They're entitled, and cable providers should be providing it and they're not. At the moment, you've got to pay. We are way up there on Rogers. You've got to really get up there to see us on 105—not to attack Rogers; I'm just saying you've got to go right up there.

Now, some people will get to it. I suppose you can just click in 105 and you're done. But it's high up. Most people start at channel 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. At 11 or 12, they just stop. The problem is and the point is, it should be accessible to all. And quite right—the member said it himself, and others—what we say is not interpreted by the media or changed and/or manipulated by the media in any way; it's direct. They see what you have to say, and

if they like it, great; if they don't, they see that too, and they see it immediately.

We are losing support as politicians. We are not loved, and for a variety of reasons. I believe if people see this Legislature in action that people would have a sense of what we do. Would that encourage more and more people to get involved? Would it encourage them to get involved as active citizens? I don't know. But certainly to be informed is better than not to be informed.

Is it possible that some young people are watching this program? I don't think so. I don't think young people are watching this political channel except for those real young die-hard Conservative types, socialist types and some Liberals in the mushy middle. It's true: You'll find some of them, too, watching this political channel. Will it solve our diminishing population which has little interest in the political process? It won't, but it certainly will help. I actually believe—and I haven't talked to the Minister of Education about this, but at some point I may—we've got to solve our disinterest in the political process at the high school level, indeed, the elementary level. There was a time when we were younger where at the elementary panel in grade 6, they were teaching the role of government.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's grade 5 now.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, some of you think grade 5?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I spoke to a class yesterday of grade fives studying provincial government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, there was a time. There's a diminishing number of people taking an interest in politics because we do not teach it well and/or adequately. I think we teach it very inadequately. At the high school level, we've got two half courses teaching about politics—two half courses. They're not mandatory. How many students have a sense of what politics is all about, what politicians are all about or indeed what political parties are all about? Most young people have no sense of what political parties are and/or their differences. How can we expect them to vote if they have no clue who we are and what we represent?

It would be nice, I think, if students could learn what New Democrats stand for, what Liberals stand for and what Conservatives stand for, and I say this not in a partisan way, but in a neutral way—and there are other parties. To be fair, we have to talk about the other parties as well, and I have no complaints or disagreement with that. But if students knew, they would be engaged and indeed they would be voting.

It doesn't matter to me what they do once they have this knowledge as long as they get involved. Better that you're involved in a political party that I might disagree with than not to be involved. I really genuinely believe that when students are engaged, they make me accountable. Active citizenry makes politicians accountable and all political parties accountable. Sometimes I wonder whether political parties want to be accountable. If they did, why wouldn't we be teaching young people what we do, how we affect their lives and the lives of their

parents? Why aren't we teaching them what we do? It's an important question because I don't think we've ever had this kind of debate. Why shouldn't it be an active part of our elementary and secondary curriculum as a way of ensuring that young people know, and hopefully, with knowledge, become engaged?

I believe that's the direction we should be moving in. I say this because I'm not quite sure that having a parliamentary channel leads to what I'm talking about, but I did want to link it, because they are linked. It's about knowledge. It's about access to politics and politicians. It's about access to the political process. Whether it's in school or in this place, as they access through that television they both amount to the same thing—access to information. And they're entitled to it.

TVO used to do great things. They don't do the job they used to do at one point. Teachers used to use TVO in a very active way. They were actively involved in the political process. Yes, through *The Agenda* they are offering an incredible political debate and I support that. They used to do a lot more with our educational system and our educators, and they do less of it.

My friend from Streetsville, I support your motion; it's a good one. We need to make sure that we go forward with it. We need to make sure that our Premier moves forward with this resolution and we need to push it, because I believe it's a good resolution.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to rise to speak in support of the motion by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, a motion which would require that—with the co-operation of the federal government—when the CRTC grants a licence for cable or satellite, as a condition of that licence that cable or satellite would be required to carry the provincial parliamentary channel.

When I was first elected in 2003, two things surprised me. The first was the number of people who actually were watching the parliamentary channel. I would often be in the community at an event and somebody would say, "Oh, Liz, I heard you say this in the House or saw you doing that in the House." I was very pleasantly surprised to find that people out there really were paying attention to the legislative channel.

The other thing that surprised me when I was elected in 2003 was to find out that our local Rogers Cable company actually didn't carry all the parliamentary proceedings. I want to emphasize that this is not a negative comment about the Rogers community staff in Guelph. The people that do community programming in Guelph are great. This was a corporate decision somewhere higher up. Those of you who were here will remember that in 2003 and 2004 we spent a lot of time sitting in the evenings. We sat almost every evening until 9:30 and some evenings we sat until 11:30. What Rogers Cable was doing in Guelph was that at 8 o'clock, no matter what was going on in this Legislature, they cut people off mid-stream and showed a movie, with ads. They were using the legislative channel to generate revenue. A

number of people complained about this, and it went on and on. I don't remember the exact date when the situation was rectified, but I do remember that it was about a week after the member who was the leader of the official opposition first took his seat to represent Orangeville, and somehow the service magically came back to cover all the debates of House. That was my first cable story.

My second cable story has to do with how in 2003, like a number of other new members, I had to furnish an apartment here in Toronto. Having a basic sort of Scottish parsimonious streak to me, I went out and bought a small, affordable television for my apartment here in Toronto. I thought, "That's fine. I'm not going to watch it that much." Well, I was really quite surprised, I think about 2007, to find I could no longer get the legislative channel, so I went looking for the legislative channel. Where the legislative channel gone? It turned out it had moved up into the stratosphere, into the digital channels. If I wanted to be able to watch the legislative channel anymore, first of all I was going to have to upgrade my cable service and pay for digital cable service. Secondly, because I'd got this small, affordable TV, I was going to have to go out and get a digital converter.

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I suspect that I was not unlike a lot of other people—I'm thinking of seniors—who have small, affordable televisions. They just couldn't afford to get that legislative service anymore and, quite frankly, I think that's appalling. What people in Toronto share with people in rural Ontario is that people in rural Ontario who rely on satellite service often find out that the satellite service also does not carry the Ontario legislative channel, so I am totally supportive of the member's motion.

Citizens of Ontario have a right to see what their legislators are doing. They have sent us here to act on their behalf. They have a right to be able to monitor what we are doing. They cannot do that in selected 10-second sound bites; they have a right to have access to what goes on in this place. I fully support the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to stand today in support of the resolution from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. This resolution basically would ask the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, where a licence is issued to either a cable service or a satellite provider, that they're required to carry, in a basic package of television services—and I think that's important, in a basic package—the proceedings of the province or territory. I believe that's important.

I believe this resolution came out of the fact that Mr. Delaney sits on the Legislative Assembly committee and broadcast services report to the Legislative Assembly committee, and it had come to that committee that some services were no longer carrying the Queen's Park proceedings on their services. I would say that we spend a lot of money televising the services that go on here, so obviously, we must think it's of value. If we're going to

spend the millions of dollars that we spend to have broadcast services, then I think it's important that it be available for any resident of the province, and also, for the individual members, that the coverage be blanket coverage, not coverage that is spotty. I would say, from the perspective of the member, it is actually an advantage to have full coverage across your riding so that all the people within your constituency—that's assuming you're doing a good job in the Legislature—are able to see what you are up to here at Queen's Park. We do spend a lot of money on it, so I believe that we should have even coverage across the province and that every member should be able to watch the proceedings here.

That's particularly true in rural Ontario. In my case, I live half an hour from the nearest town and so the service we have for television is—in our case it's Bell ExpressVu, and they don't cover Queen's Park. As far as I know, Star Choice has dropped Queen's Park as well. That means that big pockets of rural Ontario, most of rural Ontario that relies on satellite service, do not have access to Queen's Park.

As the member from Guelph mentioned, I'm always amazed at how many people do follow the proceedings here, other than Jim Wilson's mother, Mr. Speaker of today. I was up at the McKellar Fall Fair in September. A few days before that fair, I'd been at the estimates committee for the day, for five hours of questioning of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I was quite surprised—I didn't realize McKellar had cable service—when John Moffat, the president of the agricultural society, said, "I really liked seeing the way you and the NDP member, Gilles Bisson, were going after the minister about those ONTC cuts." Obviously, it is important that he's aware of that issue and concerned about it and the effects it has on our area, and he was able to learn about it by watching the service here at Queen's Park.

In the little time I have left, I would just say that I believe that anyone in the province should be able to watch the proceedings here at Queen's Park. We have declining participation in elections. I think it's important that people see what's going on here. If you believe that what we do here is important, then you should support this resolution.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to echo some of the comments that were made by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

There are many people in Ontario who are not living in areas where cable television exists. So, you have the first problem, where some cable companies don't carry the parliamentary channel unless you get the extended package, and who can afford that? Some of us don't watch a lot of television. We're news junkies and tend to watch the news and the House of Commons and the Legislature, so you're frozen out. But for many people in my constituency, there are no cable services. So people who are living in remote areas are having to rely either

on Star Choice or on ExpressVu, and as I understand it, ExpressVu doesn't provide it, but Star Choice does.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that's right. I got it right.

I've had calls to my constituency for all the reasons that we were told about here today. It's unfair that they have to watch the BC legislative channel and they can't watch the Ontario legislative channel. God knows, my constituents certainly have too much of me, so maybe that's not a bad thing.

Anyway, I just say to you that we'll support this motion, and we strongly support the mandating of making sure that the signal is carried on basic cable for television, as well as making sure it's on our satellite networks.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and privileged to stand up in my place to support the motion brought by the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I think it's a very important motion and a very important issue.

I've been listening to all the members from both sides of the House speak about the importance of this issue, especially when we talk about the democratic process and how we allow the people outside this chamber to watch us and see how their members are behaving, how they're acting, and if they are advocating on behalf of them or not. I think it's very important.

Many members spoke about different issues, especially about how many cable companies don't carry this channel. I know that the media department in this place has paid a lot of money and has good staff. They do a good job, but their work is not being shown outside this place because many outlets are not carrying their channel.

Also, if you want to see this channel, you have to pay extra money; you have to be a certain cable owner to be able to watch it. As my colleague from Guelph mentioned a few minutes ago when she was speaking in support of this bill, ExpressVu does not carry this channel. Also, some modest-income families don't have digital TVs that are able to carry this channel, especially after they moved it. A couple of years ago they moved it from 76 to 105, and you have to have a special TV in order to get that channel.

Also, many members, especially the member from Trinity–Spadina, were talking about how it's important for democracy, and to send a message to the people outside this place and create interest among young people in the democratic process, and also change the image of the politicians out there. As you know, we have a bad image. It's been said that we do nothing when we come to Toronto, so it's very important to show them what we do on a daily basis, how the opposition and the government defend their positions, how the opposition holds the government responsible—all the parts of the democratic process.

The only way to spread democracy and inform the people outside this chamber is by supporting the motion

of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, because I think it would force the cable companies or satellite services to carry that channel.

Also, many members brought up a very important issue: This channel should be carried for free with basic TV, because many people have no extra dollars to pay in order to receive that channel.

In order to create democracy, in order to spread political ideas and in order that people in the province of Ontario can see what their members are doing on their behalf, I think it's very important to keep them informed through the channel. I want to congratulate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for this initiative. I think he brought a very important issue to this House, and I hope all the members will support it.

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I believe, from what I heard this afternoon, both sides of the House support it. Hopefully, the federal government will listen to us and force the CRTC to put as part of the package a condition that all the satellite and TV channels and cable carry this channel.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to speak on the motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and applaud him for the recognition of the importance of the broadcasting of our provincial legislative proceedings.

This is near and dear to me, as some members may know. I mentioned often, when my mother was able to watch the legislative channel, that she watched. She was a big fan of my colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski. But when the Legislature resumed, we turned the satellite dish on—because we're in rural Ontario, we don't have the luxury of cable; we have satellite dish providers. We've changed a couple. When we were first with Bell, they didn't carry it. We went to Star Choice so she could watch the legislative channel. So when she turned it on in September to find out it wasn't on, I certainly got a call, and I know Star Choice got a call to say, "What has happened?" There isn't even any opportunity to get a different package. It just isn't available.

We have, in rural Ontario, limited ability to get our message out as provincial legislators. I say that the provincial level of government touches people the most, and we're doing a disservice to the people of Ontario by not allowing them access—at least a choice to access. We all know it can be a little dry and boring in here some days, but at least they had the choice to flip through to the channel. If it wasn't to hear their member, it was at least to see what's going on, what we're discussing.

Bob Runciman, the member from Leeds–Grenville, has certainly been a great advocate to bring attention to the fact that media coverage is reduced of late. The number of reporters that we used to have in the gallery from regional newspapers and television stations has gone down over the last few years. TVO no longer has a dedicated provincial political show since the cancellation

of Fourth Reading, and they no longer have staff members covering the Legislature at Queen's Park coming directly over.

I understand the important role of the CRTC in terms of broadcasting availability in this country and where its responsibilities lie. But we do have a provincial tool at our disposal, that being TVO, which is within the purview of the government of Ontario. You know, the CEO of TVOntario was just in for some committee hearings. Its mandate: "TVO plays a valuable role as a smart alternative to commercial broadcasters; we are helping people of all ages become more engaged in our communities, our province and our world." That's what the CEO said when she came into committee. I would say by not covering the Ontario Legislature and the proceedings that go on there, we're denying our citizens the opportunity to be engaged in the process of running this great province that we live in.

So when we're asking the CRTC to become involved, I fully agree with that. We do have a tool in our toolbox, being TVO. You can get a question period rerun at 3 a.m., and I know some of us often don't sleep and we have a lot of things on our minds as MPPs, but it's a little bit of a stretch to say that people are watching question period at 3 in the morning on TVO.

Other provinces, if you go to Star Choice now, and I'm going to use that: They still have the Alberta legislative channel on there—I know it is an Alberta-based company—and they still have the BC legislative proceedings on there. And we don't have the Ontario legislative channel any longer there.

I could say that there is a positive to it: I don't get as much fashion advice as I used to, because fewer and fewer people are watching from the riding. But this is critical to keep people involved in provincial politics, and I'll support this motion.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's a saying, "Everything has been said, but not everyone has said it," so I will take my opportunity to extend my support for this motion. I think the member from Mississauga–Streetsville was entirely correct in bringing it forward.

We in Ontario, we in a democratic society, have a responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to information at the same time. Before television, before cable, before the Internet, people relied on the printed word, the spoken word, but the opportunity is there now for everyone in this society to access, for good and for ill, our words as they are spoken.

For the people out there watching this, I assume there are some who are probably working in law firms right now and monitoring what's going on in the Legislature. To those of you who are doing this, you have my condolences because I know there are days that it's rough. I have had constituents say to me, "I watch this channel to deal with insomnia." I have to confess that all of us, myself included, sometimes contribute to fighting insomnia in this province.

Setting that aside, in real terms, if you're going to have a democratic society, if you're going to have people with access to information so they can make decisions and hold politicians accountable, if you're going to make sure that throughout this province people have the full opportunity to weigh what we say and judge whether or not what we're saying is in their interest or not in their interest, then this motion should go forward.

The federal government should call on the CRTC to require cable companies, which are on the whole doing very well, to provide as a public service access to the legislative channel on basic service so that everyone who wants it—not just cable; satellite as well—can have that access.

I would say that, for us, who are proponents of democracy in all parties, it is incumbent on us to have this go forward, to make sure that our constituents and the citizens of this province are actually able to exercise their democratic power.

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

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to join in the debate. I first want to congratulate our colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville, who has brought forward an important issue for discussion on the floor of this Legislature. It seems critical that we're discussing from the floor of this Legislature the availability of access to this very debate around the province.

As all of us put our names on a ballot and seek to have the privilege to represent our community here in the Legislature, whether we agree or disagree on topics, we all do it in order to advocate for our community. It seems absolutely critical that that community that had the decision-making power of whether to send us here or not has the opportunity to see what we're talking about here, and to touchstone, at their leisure and when they choose to, whether or not we're continuing to reflect the important values that they thought we were bringing forward to the floor of this Legislature.

It's our privilege here in this House to talk about issues of importance to our communities, to engage in debate from all sides of the House that reflect the struggles, the challenges, the joys and the privileges we have as being citizens of this province. That is at the heart, as others have said, of what this debate is about today. It's about ensuring that we have an educated, informed public who knows what we're talking about, who has the opportunity to gain that insight.

I had a recent discussion with some of my constituents with respect to the fact that they did not feel they had very many opportunities to hear our political leaders in Canada reflect what their vision was for the country, for the province, for their community. It came as a result of so many of our constituents around the province, I'm sure, watching the speeches coming out of the United States with respect to the presidential debates. In those presidential speeches, run at prime time at all of those conventions, they have an opportunity or we all have an opportunity to hear first-hand what kind of country, what

kind of democracy, what kinds of values those political leaders have.

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In this day and age, where you have two, three, four or five seconds in a sound bite, in a media clip; or one line in a newspaper article; or an opportunity to talk about the issues that are important to you and your constituents in 30 seconds, this legislative channel is one of the few opportunities where Ontarians have the ability to listen unfiltered, to hear what drives us, why we are here, what kinds of people represent them in the Legislature, what our values are and what makes us want to put our names on a ballot and come and talk about those issues.

I can tell you that in those instances where all of us in this House, no matter how different our perspectives might be, have an opportunity to share a little bit about what is important to us and what has driven us to come here—those are important times for our constituents and for Ontarians, to hear the values of the people who have the privilege to represent them here at Queen's Park.

I think it's important across the province that Ontarians have the ability to hear, unfiltered, what we have to say. They might not like it; they might like it. But they will have better insight as to what is driving decisions here at Queen's Park than they will when they only have a few seconds of a sound bite.

It's an important debate, and I support my colleague's motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville, Mr. Delaney, has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank all of those who participated in this debate today.

I believe that people should not be fearful of their government, but by the same token I do believe that, as government, we should always be a little apprehensive about how we are thought of by those in whose name we govern.

I want to thank my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, who is an orator whose positions I may or may not always agree with, but whose consummate skill I have learned to respect over the last five years.

I want to thank my colleague from Trinity–Spadina, and I can assure him that everyone who watches this channel knows who he is. He is indeed the living embodiment of the passion I spoke of in my remarks.

I want to thank my colleague from Guelph, who echoes what we all know experientially about the sheer number of people who pay attention to us from day to day.

I would like to thank and acknowledge my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who comes from a very proud political family in rural Ontario. I happen to know that the member's constituents watch him, because I've had the experience of having them tell me so when I've met them. Many people, in fact, follow the proceedings here very closely, and they know many of us, even those who are not their members.

To my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, whose riding is larger than many countries, the success of this

motion is vital for rural Ontario to feel connected to its democracy; to my colleague from London–Fanshawe, who points out accurately that we must not let providers put up an economic barrier to seeing our democracy in action; to my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who points out that seniors vote and seniors care, seniors want to know who is here and who is doing what and seniors are Ontario’s fastest-growing demographic; and to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who said that everything has been said. But, to paraphrase him, has everyone been able to hear it?

Thank you very much. Indeed, if we have a debate on the floor of this Legislature and no one sees or hears it, does the result really matter?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Before I call orders of the day, for those at home who can watch us, and those in the gallery, the vote on that ballot item will take place in approximately 50 minutes, if all goes well.

SKILLS TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I have had an opportunity to review Bill 107, standing in the name of Mr. Marchese, in order to determine whether or not it is a money bill.

In this regard, standing order 57 states as follows: “Any bill, resolution, motion or address, the passage of which would impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public funds, shall not be passed by the House unless recommended by a message from the Lieutenant Governor, and shall be proposed only by a minister of the crown.”

Since the bill would bind the crown to spend at least 1% of its payroll on training or some combination of training and payment into the fund that would be established by the bill, I am of the opinion that the bill would specifically direct the allocation of public funds. I find therefore that the bill is out of order because it is a money bill, contrary to standing order 57, and that it should be removed from the orders and notices paper.

This prevents the member for Trinity–Spadina from moving Bill 107 as his ballot item this afternoon. However, notice having been waived on the member for Trinity–Spadina’s ballot item, I understand that he will instead move a resolution. The member has made copies of the resolution available at the Clerk’s office for all members to access. I call upon the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should establish a workforce skills development and training fund to promote and support workforce skills development and related measures and initiatives; and that the fund be administered by a committee composed of representatives of labour unions, employers and government; and that consideration be given to requiring that every employer with a payroll of \$1 million or greater contribute at least 1% of the payroll amount to workforce training, with any shortfall of that amount being directed to the fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Marchese moves a private members’ resolution, ballot item number 42. Mr. Marchese, pursuant to standing order 97, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: First of all, I want to thank the Clerk, Madam Deller, for her support and her skill in helping to sort this matter out. The bill that I would have spoken to was never intended to involve the government. It was such that we felt it would not be in contravention of any rules, and we found out just before 12 p.m. that it would be on the basis that somehow this would involve the government. As I say, it was intended to only affect corporations who have a payroll of \$1 million or more, and would therefore be obliged to spend 1% of their payroll for the training of their workforce. That’s what this motion does. That’s what the bill would have done. As I say, the government would not have been affected one way or the other, but this motion obviously serves to allow me to say what I would have otherwise said.

I think this motion comes at a critical time because, I have to tell you, that we need to be investing a lot more in the training of our workers. We are not, in my view, doing an adequate job in Canada. In the absence of a Canadian strategy on how we train our workers, we’re obliged, as a provincial government, to fill in the gaps. The problem with filling in the gaps is that if Ontario does one thing, and another province doesn’t, then it leads to problems from one province to the other. It’s sad that we sometimes have to do this as provinces where governments should lead in an area that is critical to our economy. Worker training has become a major issue in our society because it involves worker employability, because it speaks to the competitiveness between the various corporations in our own province and country and outside. It speaks to our country’s economic performance, and it speaks to the problems of globalization that we’ve been experiencing in the last 15 years or more.

We need to continually adapt the workforce to the technological and organizational change, and the transformation of our labour market. The problem is that there’s a huge gap between the discourse around the need to train our workers, and the reality—a huge gap in Canada, in this province, and indeed in all provinces. The question is, how do we help to deal with the problem of worker training? Now, every province will say, “We’re doing this and that, and we’re all doing great things,” and I’m convinced the government will stand up and talk about all the great stuff that they’re doing. I’m convinced of it. You have a speech ready, I’m assuming?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, after you’re finished.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. There’s a speech ready; I’m convinced of it.

The point is, this is yet another tool that I offer—that we, as New Democrats, offer—for training of the workforce in this province and how we push the federal government to have a national strategy. We need to have a strong role of the state in this matter. You can have all

the voluntary actions of the corporate sector, wherever they may be, but in my view it's inadequate. It doesn't work as well as having institutional governmental involvement in this matter.

What we have had through the voluntary mechanisms of the market is a disparate number of programs all over that create nothing but problems in the end. Yes, there are good programs here and elsewhere, but we need a broader strategy, and I believe my bill speaks to that.

What we are missing, in my view, is a training culture. We do not have a training culture in this province, not to speak of this country. What we do not have is a strong partnership approach between government, employers and unions. We do not have that. There are countries that have a better approach to this. Germany has an excellent approach, Ireland is working on this and France has done this.

Quebec, unique among provinces in this country, does what I bring forward to this Legislature. On the suggestion of the de Grandpré Advisory Council on Adjustment, which made a similar recommendation to what I'm proposing, Quebec instituted that in 1995, on his suggestion that Canada do this. Quebec was the only province that took up that suggestion. The federal government didn't want to do it; no other province took it up. Only Quebec did it. Quebec leads in so many areas.

We are so unwilling to go to Europe to look for better solutions—so unwilling—as if it's impossible for us to access information as to what other countries do. The only people Ontarians and Canadians seem to listen to are the States. Why, I'm not quite sure. Yes, they are our neighbours. But if there are other countries that deliver better programs, why are we so unwilling to look at better practices in other countries? France does this. Quebec draws on France's experience on this. The Advisory Council on Adjustment, headed by M. de Grandpré, obviously took something from the French experience.

What do the French do? They oblige every employer who has 10 employees to devote 1.5% of their payroll to training—not just 1%, but 1.5%. It obliges the corporate sector to provide training when they have 10 employees in their charge. This is good. Why can't we just learn from other people's experience?

I'm looking forward to the already prepared speeches by the Liberal members, just to see what they have to say. If France can do it, why can't we? Why can't Liberals, who often say, "We need government intervention," as M. Dion does at the national level—why can't he learn from the experience of others, and why does he say, "We need government intervention," and at the same time, "Oh, no. That's socialism"? He declares himself to be interventionist and then says, "Oh, but not socialism," as if to suggest government intervention is different when Liberals propose it, but when others propose it, it's socialism. So Liberal intervention is Liberal, but New Democratic interventions are socialism. Don't you find that comical? They crack me up so many times. I roar with laughter when some of the ministers

speak about this and that and M. Dion's comments on this and that. I roar with laughter. But that's the way it is. It's about having a good time, I suppose.

We are presenting a motion, which otherwise would have been a bill, that does not involve the government but rather obliges government to oblige the corporate sector, whose payroll is one million bucks, to invest 1% of their money in training. What could be wrong with that?

Why is it a good thing? It's a good thing because it gives us stability. It gives us permanence. It gives us predictability. It says that all corporations will invest and not some because they believe in it, versus others who don't.

It prevents poaching, my Liberal friends. What does "poaching" mean? It means that I as a corporation don't have to worry about spending money to train because if another corporation is doing it, I could just steal their workers and do it for free. Do you understand what I'm saying? I wonder whether the Liberal notes say that. So I'm looking forward to the Liberal speakers who are going to speak to this motion. It speaks to the problem of poaching.

This says, "We want to create a culture of training." It says, "We need to build partnerships." It says to the corporations, "You have a responsibility to pay into a training fund. You have that responsibility to pay your 1%." If you can't meet that obligation, you have to put an equivalent amount of money into a separate fund that is administered by a committee composed of representatives of labour unions, employees and government. That committee could use the money in the fund to promote and support workforce skills development and related measures and initiatives. This is good intervention by government. We cannot leave it to the voluntary sector.

I say to you, I borrowed this from Quebeckers. We don't even have to travel, like the new minister, Sandra Pupatello, who's going to travel all over the world. I am a supporter of people travelling to other countries to learn; I am. Unlike some of my colleagues, I'm one who supports people travelling to learn. But I'm telling you, the minister is going off at a time when the economy is crumbling across the world. She ain't going to get any jobs for anyone. They're all looking behind themselves saying, "Are we all falling down?" This is the wrong time. But God bless; she's going to go and learn a couple of things here and there. Hopefully she'll learn and bring some of that back.

This is a good motion, and I am hoping that the Liberals haven't a prescribed speech. I'm hoping they're going to throw away their speeches. I'm hoping you're going to throw away your speech because you need to be spontaneous. You need to feel it viscerally, here. Unless you feel it more or less here, that means you have been trained to give a message that isn't yours, but rather one written by those young people there behind the Speaker, the Liberal young people. I see so many Liberal young people; it's unbelievable. They write those speeches. Don't read them.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: From the heart.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speak from either the heart or a little bit lower; just a little bit lower.

I'm looking forward to hearing what the Liberal and indeed my Tory colleagues have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind members that props aren't allowed, whether you bring them with you or they're part of you.

Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise in this House to speak about Bill 107 from my mind rather than from my heart. This is an act to promote workforce training proposed by the honourable member from Trinity–Spadina.

As a member of this House and also as the former educator, trainer and business executive, by the way, I value the level of skill, training and education of a worker in general terms. It is the worker who produces the wealth; the machinery and equipment are just tools in the hands of our workers. The highly skilled workers are the ones who contribute to our economy. That's why our government pays lots of attention to education, training and bringing the skills of our workforce up to the current level.

The proposed bill by the honourable member from Trinity–Spadina basically proposes that every company or business with a payroll of above \$1 million allocate 1% of its payroll to training. On the surface, this looks fine. It looks fine for the workers; it looks fine for the public. But I'll just give you an example of its impact. A company with a \$1-million payroll is going to pay \$10,000 per year for training of its workers. It's going to cost a company with a \$10-million payroll \$100,000 per year. In total, this bill, if passed, is going to cost our businesses \$2 billion per year.

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This bill is nothing but an extra tax on our businesses. Now, when our economy is facing rather serious challenges from sources outside of this province, from sources not in our control, is not the time to impose extra taxes on our businesses. It's time to help our businesses, it's time to assist our economy, and that is the way we have gone with our five-point plan.

One of those items in that five-point plan is reducing taxes for our businesses: \$3 billion a year in taxes is going to be cut for certain businesses.

Another point in that five-point plan is training. The skills-to-jobs action plan, which is a three-year plan, is going to invest \$1.5 billion in training, the very point that the honourable member proposes in his bill. This \$1.5 billion is allocated from the government's money, not from the businesses' money, for training our workforce. And out of this fund, \$355 million is allocated to Second Career.

Yesterday, I was in Kitchener, attending the opening of an action centre there. I saw first-hand how recently laid-off workers come to this centre and work on their resumé's; they get instruction, they get help, mentoring, from the government employees to help them to find employment.

Another portion of that \$1.5-billion fund, in the amount of \$560 million, will be invested to support new skills.

There is \$75 million which is going to be invested in apprenticeship programs. Since we came to office in 2003 we have increased the number of apprenticeships by 25%, and we are going to increase it by another 25%; so that will be 50%. This is the way to help people to get education, to get training, to increase their skills, to become knowledgeable in the work they have been doing; not charging the businesses to pay for that at this particular time.

We are investing \$25 million for employee-based training in manufacturing, through, for example, the Yves Landry Foundation.

We are also investing \$1 billion through the Ontario employment program. Every year, close to one million employees, 900,000 people, use these services. This is a huge program.

We're also investing \$25 million in union-based training centres. Through this fund, for example, the Dofasco Learning and Development Centre in Hamilton received \$150,000. More than \$69,000 went to the Ironworkers Local 736 training centre. So we are helping union workers to train their fellow workers through that initiative.

And there are other initiatives, as I just mentioned. These are all going to help our workforce to get and receive better education, better training, to be able to contribute more and more to our economy, particularly at this very challenging time. They are our assets: our workers, our employees.

I cannot support this bill; I must emphasize that.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this resolution: training for workers. I do not think you will find anybody in this Legislature who disagrees with the need for training workers and training them in skilful ways; it's a really important thing to do. Training is an integral part of remaining competitive in a global marketplace, and it is very important that we do that.

What I do take issue with, and what I'm certain most of my colleagues will agree with, is that Ontario businesses do not need any more regulations that are accompanied by higher costs. They are swimming in regulations and in many cases closing up shop because of overregulation. Eighty per cent of small businesses were surveyed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. What they listed as the first key concern that they felt was an impediment to growth was overregulation. It is the small business community in Ontario that will once again bear the biggest brunt from yet another regulation. Businesses that employ between zero and four employees pay—I find this outrageous—an average of \$3,700 per employee in taxes and regulatory responsibilities. I ask you, how much more can they take?

It is the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario that has a proven track record in restoring economic prosperity to our communities. Even under a Bob Rae government, Ontario was not last on the list of its partners in Confederation in job creation and economic growth. The PC government turned the economy around in Ontario in 1995, and we are more than happy to help the McGuinty government save themselves and our communities from this government's wrong-headed approach to the economy.

It was a PC government that created the Red Tape Commission. The Red Tape Commission successfully repealed 33 laws and eliminated over 1,300 redundant or oppressive regulations. It is not a coincidence that our economy thrived under that initiative, creating thousands of jobs a week. No, these weren't only public sector jobs, the type Mr. McGuinty prefers to create. The jobs created were good-paying jobs that you could raise families on, make investments with, and let you look forward to a secure financial future.

Premier McGuinty has taken only five short years to pull the promise of that financial future right out from under us. Not only has this Premier only repealed 81 redundant regulations, but he has chosen to add 437 new regulations in a short five years. Businesses are going to have to hire someone full-time just to wade through the regulations required of them before they can focus on the important task of running their businesses.

The member from Trinity-Spadina, while well-meaning, would be aiding the Premier in this ill-conceived job creation plan. Government needs to create a positive economic environment. We need to reduce the costs, the taxes and the regulatory burden on our business community so that they can remain competitive. Companies are packing up. Where's the destination? It's anywhere outside Ontario, where they can make a living and focus on their businesses.

A wise man once told this Legislature that our companies have a new motto: Go west. That is exactly where they're going in search of greener pastures. In Ontario, we can restore our economic prosperity; we can have hope and a solid financial future once again. The Ontario PC caucus is more than willing to work with all members of the House to address these issues. We have the experience of turning the economy around, and we don't want to wait until 2011 to do it.

I can hear that collective groan from the small business community now at the thought of a mandated 1% additional cost for training. They can't afford it, they don't want it, and if we keep piling these on them, they will not be here long enough to go through it. I think it's an excellent opportunity to remind the taxpayers of Ontario about the single largest and also, at the time, well-meaning tax increase they are currently paying for, courtesy of the McGuinty government. It's that so-called health premium. This ill-conceived tax is driving business out of Ontario. If we, as legislators, were serious about helping our economy and keeping our businesses here investing in Ontario, we would be repealing this tax

immediately. Businesses cannot afford it, citizens can't afford it and certainly, most of all, our senior citizens can't afford it. Keeping this premium or tax is pure and simple greed on the part of Premier McGuinty and this government.

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Before he wastes any more of our hard-earned tax dollars on a fairness-to-Ontario election-style campaign, it would behoove him to try a little fairness of his own right here at home in Ontario. There are actions that can be taken right here, right now by the McGuinty government to help Ontarians, and adding new regulations and costs isn't one of them.

The PC caucus has a proven track record of getting the economy back on track. We did it after Bob Rae, and we will do it after Dalton McGuinty and his destructive reign. We would prefer to fix it now rather than later. Let's eliminate costs and regulatory burdens on our businesses and our citizens, not add new ones. Let's give them some space to do what they do best—that's create jobs. Let's stop shoving a form at them every time they turn around.

Ontario can be great again. I believe that, I know my caucus believes that, and now we need all members of this House to believe that.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like the Conservatives—and the Liberals to an extent—it's like their train has gone outside the station and they're still trying to go back to what was at the station. We're in the middle of this economic meltdown and it just astounds me that the right wing doesn't get it, that deregulation has led to the mess that we're in. We still have right-wing parties that are out there saying, "We need to deregulate and get out of business." The reality is that government has a role to play in all of this and that we, as governments at either the provincial or federal level, need to take our responsibilities to make sure that the things that need to be done in our society are done. One that's quite important is the issue of training.

I've had the opportunity to sit down, as all of us here in this Legislature have, with the building trade hiring halls, the trade unions that represent people who are in the trade sector and employers, and here's what the problem is. As I sit down with the employers in the constituency that I represent and other places as I travel around for this leadership contest, people are saying, "Listen, we want to do the training," and in some cases they are. But they're finding it increasingly difficult to do so because of where they find themselves in this economy.

The first problem is, there are some difficulties as far as what's coming in on the order book, and they're having some difficulties doing the training. This 1% is not that onerous. It would make sure that at least those who are not doing some training are getting into the training business and making sure that that's done within their employ.

But the big problem is that, as I sat down with industry in different parts of the province, they have tradespeople who are currently working for them and they don't have the tradespeople in the numbers they need. Part of the problem is that they've got apprentices who are registered, yes, but they can't afford to send them off to trade school—not because they can't pay, because they don't. Those apprentices when they go off to trade school are paid off unemployment insurance and have to take basically a leave of absence from work for the eight or 10 weeks they go on their apprenticeship training, and then the apprentice has to pay the registration fee in order to get into the community college to take the program.

So here's the problem: The apprentice himself or herself is already cash-strapped. They're working, they've got a regular job, they've got a mortgage, they've got a car payment, and they've probably got some credit card debt and loans they've got to pay, and they're basically struggling to make ends meet. All of a sudden, they're faced with having to go to trade school for 10 weeks, which is two months' worth of wages, and they lose basically 40% of their wage because they're in the apprenticeship program.

Now, some employers in the trade union environment make sure that there's a top-up for that apprentice not to lose any wages, but the majority of them are not unionized. What you've got are apprentices who can't afford to go to school, although they want to go, because of their financial situation. They can't afford to take the 40% hit, so here's the next part: The apprentice goes to the employer and says, "Listen, can you help me out and give me a top-up?" I've sat down with businesses that said, "We'd love to give them a top-up because we need these people trained to do the work that we need to do," but they're having some difficulty financially. So the government has not responded in any kind of real way to deal with the top-up issue that allows the apprentice to go to school.

The second part—when the Tories moved to charge tuition fees to apprentices, I think that was also a step in the right direction because yet again, the apprentices can't afford in some cases to pay that tuition fee. What's really galling is, the Liberals stand in this House and Dalton McGuinty says, "We're doing all this wonderful stuff for apprentices," but at the end of the day, have they taken away that registration fee? That's the least they could have done, and that has not been taken away.

Here's the last part of the problem: The employers themselves are so strapped when it comes to qualified journeypeople that if they have an apprentice in their employ who has at least done their basic and possibly their intermediate training in the electrical field, machining or whatever it might be, they're finding it really hard to schedule these people to get out of the plant. One of the complaints I'm getting is the apprentices are coming to me and saying, "I have decided that I need to do this. I have held it off for a year. I have been cooperative with my employer but I can't get the time off because my employer is saying, 'If you go, I have nobody to maintain

my equipment.'" They are really hard-pressed to find tradespeople because most of us tradespeople are at the point where we are basically into retirement.

I apprenticed as an electrician back in the 1970s and 1980s. I was probably one of the last of the large hiring of apprentices. All of the people that I went to trade school—I was a young guy back then. I didn't have any grey hair and my beard was black and I weighed a lot less than I do now. But the point is, most of the people I went to trade school with were older than me. They're now going into the process of winding down their careers and moving into retirement. So employers are saying, "We recognize there's a crisis when it comes to apprentices and tradespeople in our employ. We recognize it's a problem, but government is doing hardly nothing in order to respond to the need of our apprenticeship training in this province," because the real issue is, they can't afford to do the top-up. They can afford the 1% payroll. I've had companies that I've dealt with that thought this particular bill was a darn good idea because it at least levels the playing field. Some employers pay and a lot of employers don't. What happens is that employer A, who's paying for training because they are trying to do the right thing, is subsidizing the apprentice who eventually gets qualified and moves somewhere else, to the employer who didn't pay anything for training.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Poaching.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's a poaching issue.

One of the things that I'm told by employers is that at least that tries to address that issue somewhat. I know there's support within the business sector and within the industrial sector for this motion. I would ask for the government to support that particular amendment because I think it's a step in the right direction.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm honoured and I'm privileged to stand up and speak and comment on the speech by the member for Trinity-Spadina when he was talking about his motion to charge businesses 1% in order to retrain workers.

I don't see anyone across the province of Ontario who does not agree that workers have to be trained, have to be brought to a level in order to produce in a good way and a safe way. It is a very important issue, but I think—and many of my colleagues agree with me in terms of the responsibility, the training. Dalton McGuinty's government took full responsibility of retraining people in the province of Ontario. We invested almost \$1.5 billion in order to retrain people and send them in different directions in order to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario.

Many businesses come to this province for many different reasons. One of those reasons is because we have trained people. We have been working with our colleges and training centres across the province of Ontario to train people, especially—

Mr. Mike Colle: What's that college in London? Fanshawe College?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, London-Fanshawe, in conjunction with LIUNA Local 1059, has been working for

many years to create a good workforce in order to supply the companies and factories that want to open in the province of Ontario, especially in our area, London, and the region. It is very important when the government steps in and takes full responsibility to train people and make sure whatever company wants to open, they have the right and trained people to do the job for them.

I was an employer at one time of my life. My interest was to give my workers, or the people working for me, some kind of time to train, and I trained them properly at my own expense, because I believe strongly that if I train them very well, they can produce better, they can make less mistakes, and I think they can serve my customers very well. I took that responsibility and I believe the many different employers across the province of Ontario believe in the same concept. They train their own workers, their own employees, in order to produce for them better, produce extra money and also to protect their business.

I think the motion brought by the member for Trinity–Spadina does not have any valid point. It is not important because, as a government, we take full responsibility, and also the workers and the companies and the factories and the employers in the province of Ontario believe in this issue; it's very important to train their people in order to make sure their jobs are protected, their productivity is in place and they are able to make money and survive. That is why I am not supporting this motion.

1530

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond to the member from Trinity–Spadina. I know his record speaks for itself. He is always very strongly in favour of education. I can say he is the critic for the NDP, and so he comes at this resolution with some passion and some commitment.

My own background was in personnel for a few years, some of it in training. I realize that companies—not just General Motors, my own experience—spend a considerable amount on training. You look at the retraining and re-skilling of the workforce today, and even in the skilled trades area, I can tell you they have moved from purely electrical installations to robotic installations and programmable devices so that when you look at a digital economy versus the old kind of tooling etc.—tool and die makers, all the skilled trades—it all involves ongoing training.

The best way to describe this is, we're in a knowledge-based economy, and it's incumbent on any employer who wants to stay competitive and efficient to have an integral part of their program relate to ongoing training. Some of it could be as simple as McDonalds making sure that quality and customer service is part of their orientation in training. It's important. So employers, I believe, do it.

Some of that means that while they're having mentoring or other activities going on in companies, that is an expense to the employer. Now, even to the extent that the

Liberals' speaker to this, the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, said that this resolution of Mr. Marchese's would actually add about \$2 billion as a drag or a tax, if you will, on employers—so, for that reason, it's like father knows best.

A smart employer that wants to sustain and exist in today's economy has to invest in education; there's no question about it. How much becomes the issue, because our current economics is about transformation in the economy. It was all part of the discussion yesterday. In fact, I believe Mr. Runciman, our House leader, said it very clearly, and we've had comments from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and from the competitiveness group, who advise the Premier that they've got to invest more in education.

In the very limited time I'm going to have, there's Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management, whose advice was given to the Premier, and here is what he says: "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world." So we don't need this government-made solution to create a drag on the economy today. In fact, if you look at the transformation in the economy and some of the literature, we're just not competitive. A lot of that competitiveness is the socialization, if you will, of our society.

You look at McGuinty's solution here—and he's got a couple of them that he is working on. I believe it was you, Mr. Speaker, who had the bill—or the member from Simcoe North, maybe—on apprenticeship and ratios. They voted it down, but they didn't come up with any solutions. I think of mentoring. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is talking about having a college of skills. Well, I think we have to look at the knowledge-based economy challenge in respect to Mr. Marchese's comments here. But even more importantly, the Second Career thing for 20,000 jobs—and they're spending \$1.5 billion in their plan—isn't beginning to address the issue. There is no real plan here; there is \$1.5 billion.

One of my constituents was mentioned, Jeff Statham from Bowmanville—that he is being retrained from the auto industry, hopefully to work in policing. So that what's missing here—and it would be interesting to see, because the Liberals have spoken against this bill, which is about investing in education and training, which Mr. Marchese is very committed to—and the issue here in the real politics of it all is, what is Dalton going to do? He's got the five-point plan. We've got the highest taxes in the world, according to Mr. Martin, and our economy is going south. I am very concerned about the young people. And McGuinty has spent all this money. He has increased spending by about 40%, and it's worse than it has ever been in history. So we're being taxed the highest in the world, and we have a real drag in the economy, because 80% of our economy is with the United States. The future looks bad, and I don't see any plan from Dalton McGuinty whatsoever for the people of Ontario. It's tragic, actually.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I just want to take a little bit of time speaking to the member for Trinity–Spadina’s motion at this point, as opposed to a bill.

When I first arrived here some five years ago, I was working with the then Chair of Management Board, Gerry Phillips, and one of the first roles we undertook during that year was to establish a task force on doing business with the government of Ontario. These are small businesses, primarily, that wanted to do business with government there were lots of impediments to that occurring. The result of that task force has been some work to make it easier in areas like vendors of record and some insurance capacity and the like to allow small businesses to do business here. I say that, in the bit of time I have, for the context. In my view, our job should be to make it easier for business to function, not in a fashion that’s not regulatory, but not add additional complexities to their business environment unnecessarily. Frankly, the motion in front of us would do just that, and the bill in the form it was in would do just that—setting up an additional reporting structure for employers to identify how they are expending those dollars when in effect many employers—I would suggest, most employers—are already expending significant amounts on training, either directly or through mentorship programs in the company which may or may not be captured by this type of structure.

We all support the intent of additional training, but it’s not my view that we should be looking for a means to add a financial burden to business at this point. We’ve been working structurally to reduce that burden over the past four or five years. We’ve done things like the elimination of the capital tax for manufacturers in the forest sector. We made that retroactive because of the demands on business. We’ve increased the small business exemption for taxation by 25%. We’re working on reducing education business taxes for companies. So strategically we’re trying to decrease the financial burden, not add a financial burden and also add a further—I won’t say “a regulatory burden,” but a burden in the context of reporting, of having them try to find ways in which they can identify the work they are already doing on behalf of their employees. We’re working already to expend many millions and millions of dollars on training in Ontario.

Just recently, Durham College in Whitby received \$9 million to expand their skills training centre to develop the skills that young people and adults need, whether it’s directly in the workplace or part of that structure. So we’ve put a lot in place currently to support training. We are going to continue to do that, I would suggest, on an annual basis. We recognize that need. It’s a very high priority. At the same time, we want to ensure that business is as competitive as it can be, particularly in today’s marketplace, and we don’t want to put in place structures that will impede their capacity to want to do business and, frankly, to be able to train the workforce that they need within the workplace.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say that I am disappointed with the Liberals—not the Tories, because I expected them to do what they did, but with the Liberals.

I was saying to the members, “Don’t speak from a prepared speech. Speak from your heart and/or a region lower than the heart.” Then the member for Richmond Hill stands up and says, “I’m speaking from my head.” I call that intellectual rigidity, intellectual frigidity and intellectual fossilization of that brain and others.

Did I attack any of your initiatives when it comes to training? I didn’t attack your initiatives. What I proposed was yet another initiative. This does not replace what you are doing; this is to enhance what you are doing. How could you people—you and the Tories—talk about the need to train a workforce and then stand up and say, “Oh, but the business sector,” as if somehow there’s some magical fairy that you’re waiting for to come and do the work for you?

1540

How could the corporations say, “We need thousands of people to replace those who are aging and/or retiring and/or are not getting into our field for whatever reason,” and then say, “But we are doing such a fine job”? That’s all you three Liberal members did: refer to the programs you’ve got, as if to suggest that what you’re doing is adequate. Look, you are doing something, but it’s not answering the problems of our shortage of workplace training that is desperately needed, and you know that.

The corporate sector knows this as well. How can the corporate sector say, “We need trained workers,” and then not do anything about it? Who are they waiting for? The magic fairy isn’t coming. The government is obviously providing some support, but clearly it’s not enough, because we desperately need more and more trained workers. Yet you and the other two Liberal members stand up and say: “Well, it’s a nice idea. On the surface it looks fine. I’m a businessman, and this would impact me negatively.” How can it impact you negatively when you desperately need workers who are trained, and you’re saying, “But it’s not up to me; it’s up to the government”? I don’t get it.

The member from Burlington, whom I respect and like, stands up and says, “We need trained workers, but this is the wrong way, presumably, to do it.” Then she makes reference to Harris turning this economy around. Good God; that man, Monsieur Harris, cut so many of our corporate and individual taxes that he left us with a \$5-billion deficit, and then she says he turned that economy around and they want to cut more taxes. I just don’t get it.

They’re in a different world; I understand that. But you fine Liberals, where are you? Why can’t you free yourselves from the texts those young people have written up for you? Look, this is a motion that you could support. You’re not on the hook for your government. You’re not on the hook for your Premier. You can take an independent stand. Mike Colle, you can take an

independent stand. Use some of your intellect sometimes and your free spirit—would that you had some. If you do, use it up and say, “This is a reasonable motion.”

We need a workforce that’s trained. We need apprentices. We need to do it and do it fast. This is one proposal that will do it for you. This proposal does not take away anything you are doing; it supplements it. But it says to employers, “You have a responsibility as well to your own workforce and to all the people who need training.” It avoids poaching—I’ve argued that in my previous comments, and I will repeat it again. It avoids poaching. How does it do that? If you’re all obliged to provide training, no one can say, “I’m not opting in,” because you have to give an equivalent amount into a fund that will provide the training.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, what is that funny thing you’re doing? Come on. Be serious. You guys are not serious.

If you look at Quebec, the only province that’s done it—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of Transportation, listen up a little bit.

The most significant data on the success of the Quebec training levy can be found in a comparison of the surveys of adult education and training throughout Canada conducted by Stats Canada from 1997 to 2002. The largest growth was experienced in Quebec, where the participation rate for any kind of adult educational training increased to 57% from 20%, with significant increases in workplace training driving these changes. It works. Why can’t we do it together? We need partnerships between employers and unions and governments. We need a partnership. We need a training culture.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What are you doing? Just stop with your nonsense. You are doing very little.

This is one suggestion that you could be supporting, and it would create a better-trained workforce that would deal with the needs of employers across Ontario. Would that we had a national training fund, but we don’t. The least you can do is support this motion that builds on what Quebec has done, what France initiated and what Ireland has picked up as well. We’re looking to a lot of Liberals to use an independent approach on this issue. I didn’t attack what you are doing. This is yet one more strategy, one more tool we could use, to make sure our workforce is trained. I hope Liberals will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members’ public business has now expired.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just want to remind the member that you did have two minutes to reply if you would like two more minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate that, but I thought I had done the two minutes along with the other time. Isn’t it amazing how fast we run?

I’m looking to Mr. O’Toole, the member from Durham, to support this motion. I’m looking to other friends, who are not in their seats, to support this motion. I’m looking for all these smiling Liberals to do something different every now and then. Free yourself.

You remember Monsieur Dion, federally, said, “I favour a government role.” Do you remember? He just said it a couple of days ago in the debate, and beyond. He says that he believes in government intervention. Don’t you Liberals believe in government intervention, in an institutional role, to get involved, and to oblige the corporations to actually get involved in the training? Don’t you believe in that? If you do not believe in that, you’re not supporting your federal leader, who believes in the role of governments, presumably, to intervene when needed to solve certain issues.

Where are you, Liberals, when we need you, when people like me need you from time to time? I’m not looking for a lot, just a couple of you—those left-leaning Liberals; I’m sure there are a few. Not you, Minister of Transportation. I see you as a happy, jolly fellow, but not leaning to the left.

Minister of Education—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister of the Environment? Minister of Natural Resources—

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: See? You’re not on top.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But are you on top of this issue? That’s the better question. Because if you are, I’m appealing to you to support it.

Minister of Education, I’m appealing to you, because you’re a left-leaning type. You are a progressive person.

I’m looking forward to seeing some of you stand up and support me. We need five people to stand up here, and I’m going to see which one of you is going to stand up. We’ve got one—John. We’ve got you. Are you going to support this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

MILK IN SCHOOLS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Dhillon.

Mr. Dhillon has moved private members’ notice of motion number 50. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE CHANNEL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 41, standing in the name of Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Delaney has moved private members’ notice of motion number 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SKILLS TRAINING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese has moved a private members' resolution, ballot item number 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Oh, sorry. Call in the members, there'll be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1549 to 1554.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario

Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will rise and remain standing.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Broten, Laurel C.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie
Jaczek, Helena
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Moridi, Reza
O'Toole, John

Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 4; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House does now stand adjourned until Wednesday, October 15, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1556.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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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
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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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
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		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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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
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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	

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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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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	

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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

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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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**

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Carol Mitchell, David Oraziatti
Joyce Savoline
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Maria Van Bommel
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
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des comptes publics**

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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**

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la politique sociale**

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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

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