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Monday 20 October 2008

Lundi 20 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 octobre 2008

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic Prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature my sister, who is visiting from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and works for the justice department there: Sarah Gravelle MacKenzie. Sarah, Welcome.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Bacon, who are from my constituency, who came to enjoy House proceedings today.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to introduce Paul and Joni Moffatt from Hamilton, who are going to enjoy a day in the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, with great fanfare, over three and a half years ago, the McGuinty government announced the advanced manufacturing investment strategy, AMIS, as a cure-all remedy to stop the bleeding of the over 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario. Minister, can you tell the House how much of that \$500 million has been distributed these past three-plus years?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm very happy to talk about the investments that the government has made over the past few years.

This is a strategy, as the member knows, that sees this jurisdiction make investments in business capital and human capital to try and help make the auto manufacturing sector even more competitive. That is our approach, to make those investments, to make those loans.

I understand the Conservative approach is a different one. It is not to make those investments; it is not to make those loans; it is to engage in deep tax cuts and engage in deep spending cuts. The problem with that approach is that it would not in fact see the retention of those plants, the retention of those jobs, the retention of that auto

manufacturing industry, and it certainly wouldn't see it grow.

So we will continue with that strategy, and I'll be happy to share with the member all of the success stories that have arisen from it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the minister is new to this portfolio, and congratulations to him on this new portfolio.

The minister, if he doesn't know, should know that of the \$500 million that you allocated over three and a half years ago, less than 20%, less than \$1 out of \$5, has actually been allocated into the spending program. So what we have instead is Dalton McGuinty choosing to raise taxes on all businesses to among the highest in all of North America on new business investment, to increase red tape with each cabinet meeting, to increase energy rates to among the least competitive with our competing jurisdictions. And then you choose a small amount of money to give back to individual firms: less than 19% subscribed. This may attract large crowds at Liberal fundraisers and may get you a good photo op before an election campaign, but what it's done is chase 200,000-plus well-paying manufacturing jobs from our province. Is 19% over three and a half years considered a success story from the McGuinty government?

Hon. Michael Bryant: This program thus far has involved \$90 million of investments, generating \$884 million in new investments. It's partnerships. The member suggests that it is in fact taxpayer dollars poorly spent; in fact, it's the opposite. By leveraging the \$90 million, we see in fact the retention or creation of 4,000 jobs. These are jobs that would not have stayed, would not have grown, would in fact have gone elsewhere to another jurisdiction that would have made those investments. So with the protection or creation of 4,000 new jobs this government has advanced its strategy of making, yes, direct investments in partnerships with the auto manufacturing sector in order to keep that heart of the manufacturing centre here in Ontario going and to keep those jobs here in Ontario and to—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the minister is new and he wants to distance himself from the failures of the last three and a half years, but surely to goodness, Minister, when you heralded \$500 million in spending that was going to be the cure-all to all that ails manufacturing in the province of Ontario—and only \$1 in \$5 of those

dollars has been allocated over three and a half years. Look also, for example, at your two forest programs, the guarantee program and the granting program: less than 18% of the \$500 million in that sector was ever sent out. So your policies of higher taxes, of runaway spending, of higher hydro rates, and then your grant programs that can't even get money out the door—hasn't the McGuinty government policy been an abysmal failure when it comes to creating jobs for hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. Michael Bryant: No. In fact, this government has not taken the advice of the previous Conservative government, which left us with a massive debt and deficit. Instead, the government tackled the fiscal challenge at the same time as undertaking an approach that is fundamentally different from the Conservative approach. It is an approach that invests in people, skills, infrastructure, education, health care, and yes, directly partnering with companies, with labour in order to retain and create jobs. That approach would not have seen any of that revenue come into the cupboards of the province of Ontario. Because of the deep tax cuts, it would have meant deep spending cuts, and if that party, if that approach had been taken by this government we would right now in Ontario be—

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Economic Development. Let me tell you one more time that you increased taxes on working families and seniors, you increased taxes on small businesses, you took \$1 billion of taxpayers' money for these investment accounts, and only about 18% or 19% of that money has actually found a home over three and a half years. Even in Dalton McGuinty's watered-down educational standards, that's still a failure to help out companies and working families in the province of Ontario.

I'll ask you, Minister, now: Your newest wave, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund—you said 200 days ago that this would be a program to help create jobs in Ontario. Why is it that only one announcement has been made on this very important fund?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I appreciate the member's thoughts on the communications strategy. The point here is the investments that have been made. The purpose of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund is similar to the approach of the advanced manufacturing loan program. In fact, this sees direct grants that are made with companies. That means jobs. If we do not make these direct grants, if we do not make these direct investments, you will not see the advances in innovation and advances in technology and you will see jobs go elsewhere. The member's approach is to chase those jobs out of the province of Ontario. That is not our approach. Our approach is to invest in those workers and jobs in Ontario, and we will continue to take that approach.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What appears to be the McGuinty government's approach on creating small business—their advice seems to be to buy a large business and watch it shrink, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's failed economic policies.

Minister, you've made one sole announcement on this so-called Next Generation of Jobs Fund. The programs from three years ago—barely \$1 out of \$5 has flowed. That's an abysmal failure. I think you should just recognize that.

You were going to clean things up; that's what you said when you became a minister. So please tell us today how you're going to do that.

When it comes to your retraining program, your much-heralded Second Career strategy, out there for six months, you were going to help 230,000 people who have lost jobs in the province of Ontario—230,000 lost manufacturing jobs. Minister, why is it that only 600 people are enrolled in that program?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The question was about the Next Generation of Jobs fund, and I'm happy to talk about that. I'm happy as well to talk about the investment in skills and training.

But let's be clear: This government's investments in partnering in business that creates jobs, the investments in human capital and business capital that creates jobs—that party refers to it as corporate welfare. That party in fact denigrates the approach, denigrates those jobs, denigrates those skills, denigrates those industries.

What does he think would happen to those companies and jobs if we took that approach, if we saw these investments and partnerships as corporate welfare, as he refers to them? They would go away. In fact, you would see a situation where infrastructure was not invested in; education would not be where it is today; the health care system would not be where it is today, attracting jobs; and he would have chased all that capital out of the province of Ontario. That is his approach. That is not our approach. Our approach is to make investments in the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You wonder what planet this minister calls home. Where are the jobs going? Under Dalton McGuinty, they're leaving the province in droves. Some 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have left Welland, Goderich and the Hamilton area, thanks to your failed economic policies.

We as Progressive Conservatives have faith in the small-business sector in the province of Ontario. We have faith in the great entrepreneurs of our province. The problem is that your high taxes, your increasing red tape and your hydro policies are throttling the creativity and the innovation of the province of Ontario. So now Ontario, once the leader in all of Canada, is dead last when it comes to growth and job creation in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Minister, will we see in this week's economic statement, finally, a reduction in the tax and red tape barriers, to help our small businesses succeed? This is Small Business Week, Minister. Will you help them succeed and create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Bryant: In fact, the approach of the Conservatives is very much to throttle the creativity, innovation, skills and infrastructure of the province of Ontario. They would have had none of that revenue to make investments in those companies. Why? Because of their approach, which would have meant the spending cuts, and they would have throttled innovation.

What this government has done is make investments in innovation. It has made investments in productivity. This government has made direct investments into the manufacturing sector. And so, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund sees \$8 million invested in 6N Silicon to support a \$50-million expansion, creating 84 new jobs and retaining 16 in the development of silicon for the solar industry. That is this government's approach. That party would have chased 6N Silicon right out of this country—

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

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Acting Premier: The evidence grows every day that the McGuinty government has no idea how to address Ontario's growing jobs crisis. We saw, not many months ago, the McGuinty government dole \$235 million out to General Motors, and then General Motors closes its truck plant in Oshawa, laying off thousands of workers. One would have thought that the government would have learned from that, but lo and behold, last Friday, we find that the McGuinty government boasts it is contributing a few million to Abitibi-Bowater in Thunder Bay at the same time that Abitibi-Bowater announces they are laying off some workers and shortening the work time of others.

When is the McGuinty government going to learn that if you're going to provide money to corporations, you should at least get some job guarantees?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the opposition leader. We were there to help Abitibi with their kraft pulp paper mill. The idea was that we were giving them \$1.6 million towards a grant; they were investing \$10 million into that mill. The idea here again is to be able to sustain jobs.

There is no question that right across the far north, dealing with the forestry sector, there are extraordinary challenges when there isn't a market to sell the products that they are making. Abitibi was very clear when they made the reductions. They said they had a surplus in terms of what they were able to sell. It's a liquidity issue; there's no market for it. What we're doing is strategically looking at how we can help them reduce their costs.

Overall, it's the entire company we're trying to help, where possible, to make that transition as to when the times will change.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm sure people in Thunder Bay will be interested to learn from the McGuinty Minister of Natural Resources that they now live in the far north.

The issue is this: On the one hand, you have a community where people are hard-pressed. Thousands have been laid off from their manufacturing jobs, part of it because the McGuinty government insists on driving industrial hydro rates through the roof, part of it because the McGuinty government seems to have no understanding of the forest sector. Then the McGuinty government comes out and boasts, "Oh, we're giving some money to Bowater," and the same day Bowater announces, "We're laying off workers, and other workers are going to work less time." How is that a successful job-sustaining policy when you give money to corporations and the same day they announce they are laying off workers? How is that a successful job-sustaining policy by the McGuinty government?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: In fact, this government has given Thunder Bay alone some \$17.5 million to help them through a variety of initiatives. We are, under way, looking at a research and development centre. We're putting in additional resources because we know that when a company like AbitibiBowater is dealing with their overall strategic planning, part of their responsibility is to look at the entirety. We also put \$20 million into Fort Frances and Rainy River to help them with a new cogeneration plant.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Is he in favour of that?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Oh, I doubt it.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague was asking whether or not the opposition leader was in favour, but unfortunately I don't think he's in favour of much of anything in the north.

Having said that, the opportunity here is that we can work strategically through the prosperity fund and through our loan fund, and we can support those companies, where possible, to help them as they deal with a very difficult time in transition as we—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want the McGuinty government to know what I'm not in favour of. I'm not in favour of the thousands of workers in Thunder Bay who used to work in the forest sector who've been laid off under the McGuinty government. I'm not in favour of the workers in Red Rock who've have been laid off and the workers in Chapleau who've been laid off and in Longlac who've been laid off, in Ignace, Atikokan, Dryden, and Sioux Lookout and Kenora. I'm not in favour of that, and I refuse to accept a government that then goes out and boasts about doling out more money to a corporation, and in the meantime, in the same community, workers are being laid off by that corporation.

When is the McGuinty government going to get it? If you're going to dole out money to corporations, at least have the common decency to get a jobs guarantee before you dole out the money. When is the McGuinty government going to do that?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I wonder if the member from Kenora–Rainy River had the same conversation when he closed 14 mills between 1990 and 1995. It seems that he indeed has a lapse of memory when it comes to these initiatives.

Hon. David Caplan: He got hit by a puck in the head.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Health, withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. David Caplan: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The fact of the matter is, we have made extraordinary investments in the north. We will continue to make those investments where strategically possible to do so. We will continue to invite and encourage more forest-added products to come into the north. We just had a very successful conference, where we had over 200 people participate, to look at how we can add additional manufacturing into the north. This government isn't sitting down—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'd be happy to put my record of sustaining jobs in the forest sector in northern Ontario against the McGuinty government's record any day.

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MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Acting Premier: As Ontario is losing hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, the Premier is planning yet another junket to China. The McGuinty government says this is going to add new jobs. Well, as I add it up, it seems that the Premier and his ministers have made about four junkets to China in the last year, while Ontario has lost literally tens of thousands of jobs. Can the McGuinty government tell us what green technologies you are going to market in China that are going to sustain jobs when you've lost jobs with virtually every trip you've made to China in the last year?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that at the heart of it, the people of the province of Ontario understand that as an export-oriented jurisdiction, it's absolutely necessary as a core element and function of the provincial government that we continue to look for opportunities to broaden markets all around the world. Obviously, when people look to broadening in emerging markets, most people have China on their list. I'm not really sure of the mentality of the honourable member with respect to being a trade-oriented jurisdiction and the responsibilities of the government, but we do think it's very, very important that the Premier of the province represent the province in seeking to develop new markets alongside a

wide variety of Ontario businesses, and we will continue to take this opportunity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The reason I ask this question is because there are some possible jobs in green technology. For example, Quebec has attracted a Norwegian solar panel company, Renewable Energy Corp., to build a solar panel plant, a silicon materials plant, that will create 300 jobs in Quebec. Not only that, a wind turbine manufacturer is setting up shop in Quebec, creating hundreds of good high-technology jobs. Here in Ontario, though, the government routinely announces, for example, wind power projects, renewable energy technology, and then they're cancelled because the government can't get its act together to make them happen.

Why would you go to China to sell green technology when you can't even get it off the ground in Ontario after you've made the announcement?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member's statement that we haven't got wind power off the ground in Ontario is a sad reflection of the fact that he obviously doesn't travel; that he hasn't been north of Shelburne, Ontario, to Melancthon, where soon we'll open the second part of a very, very big wind project. He hasn't been to Canada's largest wind farm, located in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. He hasn't been to the shore of the Great Lakes along Lake Huron and Lake Erie, where more wind resource has been brought to light.

Indeed, he speaks about a circumstance with EPCOR. We're disappointed that they haven't moved forward, but 16 out of 19 of those contracts which have been made available to companies in response to our renewables program have gone forward, and we're working very carefully with the Ontario Power Authority at the moment to make sure that Ontario continues to find investment in renewable forms of energy.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I know the McGuinty government wants to skip over this, but last week a \$300-million wind farm contract in Goderich was cancelled. Why? Despite the government announcing it and re-announcing it and re-announcing it, they can't get it off the ground. This is not the first; this is the second such contract. We've got others that are able to produce electricity, but they can't get it to market because they lack transmission.

But it all ignores the real issue. Quebec is actually building wind power turbines now. Quebec is actually building solar equipment. They're creating the green technologies. Here, the McGuinty government is failing to create these green technologies. Why do you need to go to China? Quebec is already showing you how to do it right here. Why not go to Quebec and see what they're doing and duplicate some of that so you can create real green technology jobs here in Canada?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's really good to have another question from the member, who demonstrates today that he's prepared to stand up in the Legislature

and talk about these things, but he hasn't been prepared to vote in favour of these things. As an example, he speaks about transmission capability. That's why we're in the midst of making a \$650-million investment, the kind that he wasn't responsible enough to make, to enhance our transmission capabilities from the shore of Lake Huron to the markets where the energy is required. This is yet a further example of the investments we're making and the opportunities that that unlocks with respect to more renewable energy production in the province of Ontario. On Wolfe Island, at Kingston—and the list continues to go on—we're seeing extraordinarily big investment because people understand that Ontario is a good place to invest in the development of further renewable energy. I encourage the honourable member to stand by and watch for the announcements and openings to occur.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Minister, for your information, this is Small Business Week in Canada. Is it true that you're going to penalize small business, forcing them to take on extra costs, by making workers' compensation mandatory for all construction workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What this proposed legislation, if passed, would do is actually level the playing field for business, employers and employees, and make sure that we can address the health and safety concerns that exist in the construction sector. What we're doing is making sure that we can address the underground economic activity that does take place in the construction sector; there are some that are not playing by the rules. This proposed legislation would make sure that everybody plays by the rules. That's helping small business, that's helping big business and that's helping our employers.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, there are a lot of things in this world that you and your government do not control, but this new policy is something you do control. We're in uncertain economic times at this moment, yet you and your government have selected this moment to penalize small businesses in the construction sector and further jeopardize some 90,000 construction workers' jobs.

Judith Andrew, director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, says this: "This is a very anti-small business agenda." She goes on to say, "I cannot begin to say how disturbed we are to have (Labour) Minister (Peter) Fonseca put forward this crazy policy."

With jobs and workers leaving for other provinces and the uncertainty in the economy, why are you hurting small businesses now?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I will say to the member is that we will work with all stakeholders on this legislation. If passed, it would come into full implementation in 2012. I will meet with Judith and with others to make

sure that this addresses what it's being put in place to address, and that is the underground economic activity that takes place by some bad actors in construction, to make sure there is an even, level playing field for all those in construction, and primarily to address the health and safety of all those workers who go on to those construction sites every day. I would hope the member would be on the side of all those hard-working Ontarians to make sure that we can keep them healthy and safe, and that he would support this legislation.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, I asked the minister to reinstate the temporary care assistance funding to grandparents raising their at-risk grandchildren. Instead, she changed the rules and callously said that these grandparents could apply for welfare. Then she denied the rule change. But if she doesn't believe me, I have the changes right here, and I'll be glad to send them over to you.

Will this minister reverse the changes so that all grandparents raising their children's kids qualify for temporary care assistance?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from the third party for his question. First of all, let me say on behalf of all Ontarians that we thank the grandparents who believe they have a responsibility towards their grandchildren when they are in difficulty; we thank them for doing so. Our government supports the grandparents through this temporary care assistance when the grandparents and children are in need in the short term, and through a host of other supports in the long term.

Temporary care assistance can provide up to \$5,000 a year for grandparents with two children. Our government is providing \$12.8 million this year through this initiative, up 14% since last year.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, that's a wonderful statement, but apparently many of these grandparents don't even qualify for welfare. Governments are supposed to help people, not hurt them. Ontarians across this province are outraged. They're saying this is a McGuinty government that doesn't care: "What is this lady thinking?" "Shame on McGuinty." "I would like to see Madame Meilleur live on welfare."

Grandparents are losing their homes, their retirement savings and going to food banks. Why won't this minister do the right thing and reverse the changes to the temporary care assistance directives to include coverage for these struggling grandparents and their grandchildren? Why won't you do it?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say that the rules were not changed. There rules were always applicable when this party was in power.

The grandparents are also entitled to Ontario child benefits, where we're helping 1.3 million children. They're also entitled to the national child benefit supplement, and they are entitled to the assistance for children with severe disabilities. On top of that, this year we gave a 2% increase to TCA, those who are receiving it, and this party voted against it. Shame on you.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In talking to a number of our partners in the health care sector, wait times still remain both the top priority and concern across the board, particularly with surgeons, who want more operating time and want to reduce their wait times. Our government has made significant strides when it comes to reducing wait times in our hospitals.

What is your ministry doing to keep Ontario from losing surgeons to Alberta and the US because they don't have enough operating time, and can you please share with this House what our plan is to keep reducing wait times in the province of Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for the question.

Just this past Friday, I was in the great riding of Ottawa West-Nepean at Queensway Carleton Hospital where I had the privilege to announce that this government is expanding the wait time strategy to include additional funding for general surgery.

In an effort to continue to improve our health care system, to deliver the care to Ontarians in a timely way and provide our hospitals with the resources they need to meet these goals, we have established and asked a general surgery expert panel to identify the types of general surgeries that would receive additional funding. The panel identified anorectal, gallbladder, groin hernia repair, ventral hernia repair and intestinal surgery as five priority areas based on the fact that these were the most common types of general surgeries in the province of Ontario between 2004 and 2006. The \$11.6-million investment will allow all surgical patients to have access to wait time information and have an understanding—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have, on an ongoing basis, heard from my constituents on issues related to health care. Specifically, they have commented on wait times and how they are going down in my community. It is clear that one of the top issues in my riding is wait times. In fact, recently, I attended the annual Day in Arthroplasty hosted in Hamilton, where the discussion about wait times was very positive.

Could the minister remind the members of this House and my riding of Hamilton Mountain exactly how this announcement and our overall wait times strategy will benefit and continue to benefit patients and the system in general?

Hon. David Caplan: That is a great question because the expansion of the wait times strategy and the website

will help ensure that Ontarians receive timely and appropriate access to those expanded services. Both patients and physicians will have the ability to identify which areas of the province have the shortest wait times and what is considered to be the appropriate waiting time for these procedures. By making this information public via the website, patients, in consultation with their physicians, will be able to make more informed decisions regarding where they receive treatment.

When it comes to delivering health care, our approach has been, and will continue to be, about building a partnership between those who deliver care and those who receive it, so that together we ensure that we are meeting the health care needs of Ontario. We have undertaken enormous work and lowered wait times right across the board. I look forward to even greater results in the days, weeks and months ahead.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Energy: I want to follow up on a question that the leader of the third party put to the minister regarding the abandonment of a \$300-million investment in the province of Ontario for clean energy. The minister brushes this off as though it's not a big issue, but no company abandons a \$300-million investment for which they have already spent many hundreds of thousands of dollars for no reason at all, and I would hope the minister is taking note.

The approvals and planning process for these projects is cumbersome, it lacks timelines, and there is no coordination. I would ask the minister this: Given the cancellation of this project and given the costs that are being incurred by many others in the process, will the minister tell the House what specific steps he will take to fix what is now a costly and frustrating planning and approvals process in this—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: In answer to questions from the member from the third party, it was his characterization that there hasn't been any wind development in the province of Ontario that I took issue with, because I've travelled and I've seen it and I see the results of it working to power homes and businesses across Ontario every single day.

I do recognize very clearly that, with respect to the decision taken by EPCOR, there is, explicit and implicit, an opportunity for us to do a better job of coordinating the various approvals. But I want to reiterate to the honourable member that of the 19 large-scale renewable projects that have had a contract available for them, 16 of those 19 projects have come to light. It's a good record but we need to build upon it, and I look forward in supplementary to giving the honourable member some further information about how I'm intending to respond to the opportunities that we have to enhance the regulatory processes in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees: We've seen the minister's \$60-billion plan for energy supply for the province and we

encourage the components of clean energy in that plan. What we are concerned about—and I'm pleased to hear the minister's response. I look forward to hearing some specifics in terms of what he plans to do to ensure that future projects will have a process that is clearly delineated, that does not contain the duplications and the bureaucracy and the frustrations, so that we don't have a repeat of the EPCOR abandonment of a major multi-million-dollar project. So I look forward to hearing specifically from the minister what steps he is going to take to ensure that Ontario's planning and approvals process is streamlined so that these projects will not only be encouraged but will come to fruition.

Hon. George Smitherman: At the heart of the matter is a wide variety of regulatory approvals. That's well known. We've got a variety of agencies in the energy sector—the Independent Electricity System Operator, Hydro One and the Ontario Power Authority—we've got municipal approvals, and we've got environmental approvals. It is necessary to find mechanisms that will allow those complicated processes to be better aligned. In the time since I've become minister, I could tell the honourable member that I've taken many, many opportunities in working with those very same partners to enhance the process. I will look forward to opportunities relatively soon, in engagement with other government ministries and with those energy agencies, to move forward with mechanisms that streamline the current circumstances.

But I remind the honourable member that renewable energy was an option when his party was in power. They did not take advantage of it. When we came to office, there were 15 megawatts of renewable energy. We've substantially increased that, with much more in the pipeline, which we look forward—

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Last Thursday, at a meeting attended by the minister's director of the laboratory branch, I learned of his government's decision to terminate funding to Ontario hospitals for community lab services. For weeks, I've asked for clarification of the minister's role in the closure of these community lab services. When does the minister intend to confirm that those public, not-for-profit, hospital-based community lab services are being terminated?

Hon. David Caplan: The member should be aware that we are working with our partners in the health care sector to ensure that Ontario's health care system is and remains responsive and that it continues to meet patients' needs.

The case that the member refers to is in Muskoka, and it was a pilot project which began in 1997. It was evaluated independently and the review took place. An outside consulting firm was used to assess the service

delivery model as a part of the laboratory restructuring initiative. Upon consultation and review, the ministry and the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare hospital together determined that the best option to maintain local service was to accept the review's recommendation to adopt the same model of community laboratory services that are used in hospitals right across Ontario.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This is not what we get when we talk to those executive directors of the hospitals whose services are being cut. Ontarians want access to high-quality health services, but they want it to remain public and not-for-profit. Handing over half a billion dollars' worth of community lab services to large, private for-profit corporations goes against public not-for-profit health care.

This minister can assure Ontarians that his government supports public not-for-profit health care by providing adequate funding for community lab services provided by small hospitals across Ontario. My question is, why won't he do it?

Hon. David Caplan: The member, in her question, says that hospital services have been cut. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, \$11.1 billion in new investment—a 37% increase—in funding to our hospitals has occurred in the last five years as a result of efforts of this government.

The member opposite asks: Will we continue the way that hospitals have been organized under NDP governments and Conservative governments? The answer is yes. In fact, we will have the same arrangement which has provided the high-quality care that Ontarians have come to expect that has existed for decades within our hospital system. We are going to work closely with our partners at a local level to make sure that those services are appropriately in place.

The commitment that this government has to publicly delivered and supported health care is unmatched by any of the other—

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

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Each week, my office is contacted by parents who are seeking licensed child care for their young children. The need for child care is present not only in one particular area of York South-Weston, but across the various neighbourhoods of the community I represent. Quality licensed child care is a priority and a benefit for all families. However, the ability to receive a subsidy for a child care space is especially important to the families in my community who are struggling to meet the costs of quality licensed child care while working to provide for their families.

To the minister: What actions is the government taking to help create more child care spaces and more fee

subsidies to help parents pay for the cost of the child care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to thank the member from York South–Weston for her continuing advocacy for her constituents on the issue of child care, among others.

Our government has two goals when it comes to child care: improving the quality of child care and improving access to child care. Since coming to office, we've created more than 22,000 new licensed spaces. In total, 50,000 spaces have been created since we were elected in 2003. That means that 50,000 more kids have access to quality, regulated child care than when we were elected.

We've also made child care more affordable. We've introduced a new subsidy eligibility system, which is fair and consistent, to replace the patchwork of different rules which municipalities across the province previously used. Through our investments, we've provided 20,000 more children with subsidies—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It's clear that the government is taking the issue of quality licensed child care seriously and is committed to further improving the system in Ontario. Residents in my riding were disappointed that the federal government cancelled the early learning and child care agreement in 2006. The cancellation of this agreement dramatically reduced Ontario's ability to invest in child care.

To the minister: What actions has the government of Ontario taken to raise the issue of child care and early learning with the government of Canada, and how is Ontario moving forward in the absence of this agreement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're working hard for Ontario families, even after the federal government cancelled our child care agreement, costing Ontario families \$1.1 billion in new funding over three years and thousands of new spaces. We continue to advocate for the federal government to invest in early learning and child care because we know it's a priority for Ontario families.

Not only have we invested an additional \$25 million this year, to provide 3,000 more subsidies on top of the 20,000 already created; we're also moving ahead with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. The Premier has appointed Dr. Charles Pascal as our early learning adviser. He will provide advice how best to implement the full-day learning to provide our kids with the best start in life.

We know there's more work to do, but we're proud of what we've accomplished. We look forward to working with the federal government to further strengthen child care in Ontario.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. I rise today to follow-up on a question previously asked by the leader of the official opposition regarding the deaths of two Toronto women who were murdered last week. Our leader is attending their funerals

today. Attorney General, as you know, the crown did not appeal an earlier decision to grant bail to the accused, who has proven in the past to be a threat to public safety. Attorney General, why was this decision not appealed?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know that the sympathies of all the members of the House and members of the community are with the family and friends of those who've been struck by this terrible tragedy on every day, and in particular today.

As my friend should know, in this case there's a limit to what I can say because there are publication bans in place and there is a legal proceeding under way. I know that the honourable member would not want us to do anything that would jeopardize a prosecution.

I will say, and I'll speak to it in more detail in my supplementary, that the crown's position in all cases, when it comes to the question of bail, is that public safety is paramount. That is our approach in all cases, and it was an approach that is particularly important in the serious—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Attorney General, the accused was out on bail at the time of these murders for previous charges of aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, and attempted choking. These are really serious charges. This accused had a history of non-compliance and breach of probation orders, yet despite that, bail was granted after the preliminary hearing. As a result, two innocent women died unnecessarily. It's decisions like these that encourage a huge loss of faith in Ontario's justice system. Attorney General, what can you say about this? How could this have happened?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: To repeat, the crown's position in all cases is that public safety is paramount, and in this case there are publication bans in existence, and I know nobody would want us to do anything to jeopardize a prosecution that is outstanding.

We do know, in this case, that there was an original bail hearing before a justice of the peace, there was then a preliminary hearing and a bail review before a judge, and an order was made by that judge. Publication bans in existence prevent me from speaking more, because we don't want to jeopardize the prosecution. But our public safety is paramount in all cases—this and every other.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you'll know that the Xstrata metallurgical site has now been on strike for some two or three weeks. Can you tell me and tell this House and, more importantly, the people on the picket line why you're allowing management of the Ontario Northland Railway to cross that picket line?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm not aware of the details of the situation, other than, of course, I understand they are on strike.

The ONTC, as the member knows, is an independent organization that does receive funding for various parts

of its function, which we are proud to support, but we are not in a position to direct the corporation. I'm not familiar with that actual piece of information, but I will certainly be looking forward to looking into it.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's a pretty scary thought, that the minister who's responsible for the ONTC and ultimately the ONR is not aware that you're using your managers to cross the picket line to train the management at Xstrata to run the rail system that runs ore from the mine to the metallurgical site.

I'll say again: Are you prepared to say in this House today that the Liberal government will stop scabbing the picket line at the Xstrata worksite?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Again, I am certainly prepared to look into the situation. I do not have the information that the member has, and I'm therefore not prepared to confirm it because I'm not able to do so. But I will certainly ask my officials and look into it myself to see what the situation is. Obviously, we're hoping that the situation can be resolved in a positive way.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Collisions with wild animals not only result in serious vehicle damage but also personal injury and even death. We are very aware of this, and Thunder Bay is one of five areas in Ontario with the highest numbers of collisions with wildlife. Too often we see stories in the news and hear from the public on this issue. Thunder Bay is fortunate enough to be surrounded by lakes, rivers and vast green spaces that are home to a variety of wildlife. However, with all this beauty comes the responsibility of being aware of your surroundings.

I'm hoping the Minister of Transportation can share with this House and with my constituents in the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan what drivers across Ontario can do to avoid the dangers posed by colliding with animals who have wandered onto the road.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to thank the member for an excellent question. The problem of wildlife collisions is not solely in northern Ontario, as people know. In fact, Ottawa, Simcoe county, Middlesex, Lanark county and Thunder Bay all have these challenges. Drivers can take precautions to reduce collisions, save lives and protect wild animals by being aware. They can scan the road ahead from shoulder to shoulder; if there's an animal beside the road, slow down and pass carefully. Watch for the yellow wildlife warning signs. These indicate areas of increased risk. If possible, use high beams at night and watch for the glowing eyes of animals. If you see a wild animal crossing the road, stop safely and remember that where one animal crosses, others may follow. Finally, never swerve suddenly. This could cause your vehicle to go out of control and result in a more serious collision.

The province has taken a number of other steps that I will anticipate may come in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Again, my question is for the Minister of Transportation, and I want to thank him for those recommendations.

However, the message does not seem to be getting out to all drivers. Research shows that on average there are 14,000 vehicle and wild animal collisions reported annually in Ontario. That works out to a collision every 37 minutes. These types of collisions just should not happen. They cause death, unnecessary property damage and serious injuries.

I understand that the ministry has various public education campaigns to raise awareness on this issue, including a Watch for Wildlife brochure, posters, tray liners and a media campaign throughout northern and eastern Ontario. Can the minister please share with this House what else he and the Ministry of Transportation have been doing to help keep animals from wandering onto the road?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Right now, October through December, is when the risk of collision is at its highest, as members would know. It's the fall mating and migration season and also the hunting season, a time when animals can sometimes be found on the roads more often. This government is always looking for new ways to minimize the danger, and that's why we've implemented a number of initiatives: posting warning signs in areas with a history of collisions; removing roadside brush to improve visibility for drivers; installing fencing along major highways; and installing highway lighting to improve visibility at night.

Also, the ministry has additional mitigation features: crossing opportunities for wildlife on highways, draining salty ponds adjacent to the highways, and implementing radio-activated wildlife detection systems. We'll continue to work on this because it's a serious—

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

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: To the Minister of Education: Minister, time and time again, you stand in your place and tell us that you're looking into issues that are raised here in the Legislature and that are important to all Ontarians. Well, the leaves have turned and—tick-tock, Minister—it's officially fall now and we are still left waiting for your delayed response on many issues that matter to Ontarians. How much later will we have to wait? How much later will the parents have to wait? How much later will the educators have to wait for your overdue report on safe schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The report on safe schools that is being delivered by the safe schools action team will be delivered on time this fall.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, it's delayed, and I think that file deserves an F because it's not on time and there are consequences.

Not only is this report overdue, Minister, but you have refused valuable input from many students and parents whose safety was jeopardized on your watch. Minister, you have clearly stacked the committee to get the answers you want to hear. We have been told by an official in your ministry that the consulting process has been concluded, so this input can no longer be considered.

Minister, where is this fall report, and are you trying to bury this report?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The report will be delivered this fall. I'm not sure exactly what the member opposite is getting at. My parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, has been working with the safe schools action team. Remember, this is a safe schools action team that delivered the recommendations on changing the safe schools legislation that was so flawed, which was put in place by the members opposite when they were in government.

I look forward to the report, which is going to be looking at gender violence, sexual assault, homophobia—issues that have not been tackled by governments in this province for a very long time. On top of that report, we've been investing in resources for schools. So \$43 million more has flowed to schools this year—to priority high schools, to hire more psychologists and social workers, the actual people who will keep our schools safe, the kinds of resources that schools need on—

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

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. This is the start of Local Government Week, when we celebrate, promote and support our cities and towns. The government has created a webpage with posters and leaflets—it's very beautiful, in fact—and it encourages young people to get involved with their municipalities.

All of the feel-good posters and promotional campaigns do not change the basic fact that local governments are being extremely shortchanged by this McGuinty government. Will the minister indicate very clearly today what level of new funding Ontario's municipalities can expect in Wednesday's economic statement? Will there be measures to finally fix the inequities of provincial downloading?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the member for recognizing the start of Local Government Week. I know it's on all members' calendars and to-do lists to celebrate the good work that our municipal partners do.

I'm very pleased that already the Minister of Finance has announced some excellent news for the municipal sector, including when the Premier was in Ottawa at the AMO conference and announced a record \$1.1 billion in infrastructure funding for the municipal sector. I'm particularly pleased with the work that we have been doing with respect to building the relationship that was

really quite tattered when we took office in 2003, including the uploading of ODP, which is 100% uploaded now, and ODSP, where the uploading begins on January 1 next year. That will save municipalities over—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister knows very well that a one-time capital influx is not going to help municipalities in a systemic way with the problems they have from downloading. The government's municipal finance report in fact is long, long overdue. Municipalities across Ontario have a mountain of unpaid provincial bills and they face a real cash crunch if the McGuinty government keeps delaying and delaying on their announcement about helping municipalities and municipalities keep paying and paying and paying provincial bills.

Will there be substantial relief, systemic relief, for Ontario's towns and cities announced in Wednesday's economic statement, or will the government call another big stall once again?

Hon. Jim Watson: I tend to side more with the mayor of Hamilton and his take on what the investing in Ontario fund was all about when he said, "We are both privileged and proud to be a partner with the McGuinty government, and we are committed to continue to work together in efforts to increase economic development, create well-paying employment opportunities and focus on building new infrastructure."

1130

Maybe it takes a New Democrat to criticize \$1.1 billion, but the good people of Hamilton have benefited to the tune of \$48 million in new funds for infrastructure in her community. When you take a look at where we began in 2003 with \$1.1 billion in funding, that figure is climbing to \$2.8 billion by 2011, and we will continue to do more to help our municipal partners because we respect—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, we all know the importance of eating locally produced food. It benefits our local economy in rural Ontario as well as our environment. This is especially true these days, when food from elsewhere has, at times, been proven not to be as safe as what Ontario consumers expect. Farmers' markets, however, are a very important part of this particular issue. There are numerous farmers' markets in the western GTA area that operate during the summer and fall.

Would the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to support local farmers' markets?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it is important that the people of Ontario understand what we're doing in partnership to support farmers' markets, so I thank the honourable member for the question.

On June 24 of this year, we actually had a farmers' market on the lawn of the Legislative Assembly. It was a

wonderful opportunity for people in this city to truly appreciate the range of products that are available. At that time I was also able to make an announcement of \$4 million over the next four years to expand the number of farmers' markets, on-farm markets and pick-your-own operations. This funding is going to be provided to Farmers' Markets Ontario and the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association and it's going to provide information to help farmers on how they can access farmers' markets with their produce, conduct consumer research, consumer awareness in marketing activities, expand the number of farmers selling directly to the public—

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the western GTA, shoppers choose farmers' markets for nature's best produce whenever they can, and they know full well that the food is fresh and it's high in quality. By helping farmers' markets and other venues that directly connect farmers and consumers, we all win, with a greater availability of local food, more focused promotions and more sales.

More and more residents are asking me about farmers' markets and what can be done to expand them, to support them. We are seeing farmers' markets become a principal destination for people in the western GTA to go to and purchase food because they provide an opportunity for shoppers to know exactly where their food comes from.

Minister, my question is: What kind of success are we seeing with this farmers' market strategy and what is the ministry's vision for the future of farmers' markets?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I was just speaking with my colleague from Sudbury, and he regularly goes to the farmers' markets in Sudbury. Again, this is a story that I hear from colleagues on all sides of the House. Everyone enjoys farmers' markets.

I want to say to the members of this assembly particularly that there's something very unique with respect to farmers' markets right here in Ontario. We have the only farmers' market in Canada located on a hospital site, and that's at Sick Kids Hospital right here in the city of Toronto, in downtown Toronto. I encourage all members of this Legislature and people of this city to go to Sick Kids Hospital to the farmers' market. The farmers there are from the greenbelt. They are there with their tents. This is what the greenbelt is all about. That is why we protected this land, so that we can have fresh farm products close to the people who need them, and that's right here in the city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. This House will stand recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to welcome some guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery, and there are others who are going to

be touring around the building today. We have representatives from two organizations in my riding: St. Thomas Elgin Public Arts Centre and Middlemarch Women's Institute. Welcome to my guests at Queen's Park today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Small Business Week is the perfect occasion to honour the females who are among Ontario's best employers, managers and workers.

Each year, I commemorate Small Business Week by celebrating the successful, hard-working and decent women in business who live, work and play in Nepean–Carleton. Over 100 women participate in the semi-annual Women in Business Breakfast, which I host but which is actually organized by women for women. They are contributing to Nepean–Carleton through their small, medium and home-based businesses. These women are the economic engine of Ottawa's southwest. Let me tell you: The old saying, "I am woman, hear me roar" is the best way to describe this economic engine.

The women who organize this event are Web developers like Avril Tsang, realtors like Betty Hillier, grocers like Kelly Ross, engineers like Nancy Davis, chiropractors like Salima Ismail and Vicky Clark, executive directors like Andrea Steenbakkers, or media executives like Diane Banks. I've also been grateful for the work of staff Wendy Noble, Helen Byers and Beth Graham.

On Friday, October 24, once again women in business in Nepean–Carleton are going to celebrate their collective contributions to small business in our community over breakfast with 100 of their colleagues, customers and friends. During Small Business Week, I encourage all members of this Ontario Legislature to thank a business owner and, as importantly, thank a businesswoman.

APOTEX INC.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to a great Ontario-based company and to recognize a great humanitarian effort that I was fortunate enough to be part of recently.

On September 24, I accompanied an Ontario-based company called Apotex Inc., the largest Canadian-owned pharmaceutical company, to Rwanda to deliver the first shipment of AIDS drugs to that country. Apotex delivered seven million tablets of Apo-TriAvir. That's going to help save the lives of 21,000 people in that country.

The amazing thing is that Apotex did this on a humanitarian, not-for-profit basis. The trip was approved under our country's access-to-medicines regime, which allows Canadian generic drug manufacturers to legally produce patented drugs for export to developing countries with populations that are desperately in need. This is the first time any manufacturer in any country in the

world has used such a licensing framework to get essential medicine to people in the developing world. No other Canadian company has tried to provide the medications, because the system is far too time-consuming and far too complex.

It is time that our federal government looked into and fixed this complex process and cleared the red tape so more successful missions may be able to take place.

I was extremely honoured to be a part of this, and I wish to congratulate Apotex, a great Ontario company, COO Jack Kay and vice-president Bruce Clark for the tremendous help they gave in providing help to thousands of people who need it desperately.

ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: October 19 to 25 is Ontario Public Library Week. I'm very pleased to give my thanks and congratulations to the librarians, staff and volunteers of Ontario's public libraries.

When I spoke on library week two years ago, I told this House what the Georgina Public Library told me: "Rapidly evolving technologies are changing the way people access information and communicate with each other. Libraries are challenged to maintain traditional services and embrace new services, formats and technologies with existing money."

Libraries across Ontario, like the ones in my riding, are meeting these challenges. Bradford West Gwillimbury was one of the first public libraries in our area to establish an e-resource system. Georgina Public Library is launching a new live chat reference service. This allows library users to ask questions live to their library by e-mail. East Gwillimbury Public Library offers wireless Internet, e-mail requests and the Books for Babies program. In Innisfil, I was very proud to help break the ground for the new branch in Cookstown. This new library will be a centre for the whole community. King Township library runs innovative programs like the father-son book club.

My libraries are just a representative sample of the excellent work done by libraries in communities large and small across Ontario.

JANA MILLER

Mr. Jim Brownell: Too often in today's society, we sacrifice healthy eating for more convenient meal choices. We tend to choose the simplest meals as opposed to ones that give us the most nutrition. Sometimes we need that little bit of help in making wise food choices for ourselves and our families. That is why it pleases me greatly to see the efforts of a young entrepreneur in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry who has taken it upon herself to ensure that the citizens of the riding get the healthy meals that they need.

Jana Miller, a former student of mine, started a business called Fresh Lunch Ideas as part of the Ontario

Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Summer Company program. After receiving her \$1,500 start-up grant for young business owners, she dedicated herself to making and delivering healthy meal options to individuals and groups all over the region. She based her idea on the fact that she could make and distribute her healthy meals, being made with locally grown ingredients and packaged in environmentally friendly and compostable materials. After serving salads and other light summer fare, she has decided to continue to pursue her healthy eating vision through to the fall and winter months, providing healthy, comfortable winter selections to her dedicated customers. She continues to run her business while attending the University of Ottawa.

I am indeed proud to see this young woman maintain her entrepreneurial spirit while remaining responsible to the environment and to the health of the consumer. She embodies the type of outside-the-box vision and passion that are necessary to stay competitive and sustainable in today's economy. Congratulations, Jana. I wish you the best of success.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Norm Miller: This is Small Business Week in Canada, a week to recognize the very valuable contribution made by small business to our economy. But in Ontario, the McGuinty government has taken aim yet again at small business with a punishing new rule to make workers' compensation coverage mandatory for small contractors.

New rules are not new to this government. Regulations continue to multiply and bring ridiculous costs that bury small businesses in paperwork to keep bureaucrats in jobs. In fact, Mr. McGuinty has created twice as many government jobs as the private sector has lost. These government jobs are on the backs of businesses that are subject to heavy-handed fines and penalties for non-compliance with government regulations. Yet, with all these new government inspectors, businesses still can't speak to anyone in government who can explain the rules and help them to comply. This government's approach to small business is to fine, penalize and punish.

Every week I hear from businesses complaining about the heavy hand of the McGuinty government. This is backed up by a recent survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: Two out of three businesses surveyed say that the overall burden of provincial regulations has increased in the past three years. Is it any wonder, then, that a recent Toronto-Dominion survey shows that small business owners are losing sleep worrying about cash flows? Sadly, it's a trend that won't change anytime soon in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

LABOUR UNIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, all members in this House would have received this booklet entitled We Will Make a Difference: the Wal-Mart Canada Corporate

Social Responsibility Report. Dead centre in this expensive booklet is a page where Wal-Mart claims to support and respect workers' rights to join a union. That's a very contradictory statement, considering Wal-Mart's recent actions to close down stores rather than deal with its newly unionized workers. It's impossible to believe when Wal-Mart has no organized workplaces in Ontario and was engaged in nasty union-busting activities in Windsor in the late 1990s. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union, under the leadership of Wayne Hanley, has been waging a valiant and concerted fight across Canada to bring Wal-Mart workers under the union umbrella of fair wages, good benefits and improved working conditions. Without a union, workers must settle for low wages and no security.

The UFCW is taking Wal-Mart to the Supreme Court over the company's shutdown last week of its oil and lube centre in Gatineau, Quebec. This follows Wal-Mart's closure of a store in Jonquière two years ago after workers there unionized. Wal-Mart doesn't care about bettering the lot of its workers; Wal-Mart shareholders make a fortune on low-waged workers. I hope that retail shoppers will shop at places that truly respect and support their workers. Wal-Mart isn't one of them, despite its claims of "making a difference." It's the wrong kind of difference.

1310

As New Democrats, we support UFCW and all our labour organizations that fight to improve wages and working conditions for our workers here in Ontario. We stand up for workers and their right to good jobs, good union representation, good pensions and good benefits.

COLORECTAL CANCER

Mr. Mike Colle: I think more than a few of us here would be surprised to discover that colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in Ontario. Even more surprising is that just one in five Ontarians aged 50 and over is screened for this terrible disease. However, with regular screenings, there is a 90% chance of colorectal cancer being cured.

It is with this information in mind that the McGuinty government has launched ColonCancerCheck, a new public awareness campaign that will educate Ontarians about the importance of early screening and detection of colorectal cancer.

The campaign includes a television advertising campaign and a website, www.ColonCancerCheck.ca. And starting in April, Ontarians who are 50 and over will be able to get a take-home colorectal cancer screening kit called a fecal occult blood test, or FOBT for short, from their health care provider. People who have an increased risk of colorectal cancer because of their family history and have a positive home screening test will receive a colonoscopy.

Based on the facts that we know about colorectal cancer, I can't emphasize enough the importance of

Ontarians using the FOBT take-home tests, with regular screening, to make a difference between life and death.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise today to inform this House of exciting new developments in the McGuinty government's ongoing commitment to attracting top researchers and strengthening the province's competitiveness in the global innovation-driven economy.

The Minister of Research and Innovation recently announced \$7.6 million for basic research through the Ontario Research Fund. This funding will support 13 institutions, 46 projects and 342 scientists in developing innovative products that will define the 21st-century economy while pushing the boundaries of science in fields such as space robotics, quantum physics and nanotechnology.

Some of the promising projects receiving funding through this initiative include:

- developing the next generation of planetary explorers and satellites, led by Dr. Alex Ellery of Carleton University;

- applying photonics, the science of light, to create new devices with applications ranging from wireless communications to energy conservation to medicine, led by Dr. Karin Hinzer from the University of Ottawa; and

- assisting the efforts of Ontario's top particle physicists to create world-leading sensor and detector technologies, led by Dr. David Asner, Dr. Kevin Graham and Dr. Mark Boulay.

These innovative and exciting projects are a symbol of the McGuinty government's commitment to ensure the competitiveness of Ontario industries now and in the future.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I rise in the House today to mark Child Abuse Prevention Month. During the month of October, there is an important public awareness campaign taking place about the devastating effects of child abuse on our children, the importance of early intervention and, of course, our duty to report suspected cases of child abuse.

On October 1, I had the pleasure of helping to launch the beginning of Child Abuse Prevention Month by using my voice in partnership with the Children's Aid Society of Toronto; members of the media; the mayor of Toronto, David Miller; and citizens from across the city. This event was about standing up against child abuse and using our voices to inform, educate and take collective action. The challenge was simple: Use Your Voice to speak out against child abuse. Participants' voices were measured in decibels to determine who had the loudest voice. There was a great effort on behalf of everyone to get the message out, loud and clear, the message that we cannot afford to be bystanders when it comes to the safety of our children and that we all have a shared

responsibility when it comes to the protection of our children.

This month, I'm asking my constituents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore to join with groups in our community, such as the Gatehouse and others, who have worked to raise their voices against child abuse. All Ontarians should do their part to raise their voices in support of child abuse prevention and to protect Ontario's children.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PERSONS DAY

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to stand in the House today to commemorate Persons Day. Thanks to the relentless determination and courage of the Famous Five—Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung and Henrietta Muir Edwards—on October 18, 1929, Canadian women were formally recognized as persons and granted the right to be appointed to the Senate.

The history of this case is significant. Although women had the right to vote in most Canadian provinces in 1929, women were not legally recognized as “persons” under the British North America Act. This meant that women were not allowed to be appointed to the Senate of Canada, as senators had to be qualified persons under the law, a term that did not include women.

This was unacceptable to the Famous Five. They fought, challenging the definition of the term “person” all the way to the judicial committee of the Privy Council in Britain. It was this body on October 18, 1929, that broke from tradition and unanimously ruled that the word “persons” in the BNA Act does, indeed, include both men and women. The outcome of this historic case allowed women to be appointed to the Canadian Senate and paved the way for women in political life and beyond. As a society, we owe so much to the Famous Five.

But in addition to celebrating Persons Day, we owe it to them, as well as to our children, both daughters and sons, to continue the struggle and fight for gender equality. It was Emily Murphy who said, “We want women leaders today as never before. Leaders who are not afraid to be called names and who are willing to go out and fight....” Her words ring as true in 2008 as they did when she spoke them in 1931.

As Ontario's minister responsible for women's issues, I believe that the best way to honour the legacy of the Famous Five is to continue their impassioned pursuit for positive change. The determination of the Famous Five improved the lives of women by allowing them property rights, income assistance for widows and immigrants, and vocational training for impoverished working women.

But today, there are still obstacles to women's equality. Women's participation at all political levels is still

unacceptably low. We know that more women live in poverty in Ontario than do men, and some women are not safe in their own homes.

Our government is taking steps to make real progress in these areas—to foster leadership of women in their communities, to create women's economic independence and to prevent violence against women. We're making significant investments in these areas of need and the results are real. They're measured in human terms.

But, of course, there is still much more to do. Our government is committed to continuing to make progress for women in Ontario. As we celebrate Women's History Month, it's an occasion for all Ontarians to mark the extraordinary contributions that women have made in this province.

The enduring spirit of the Famous Five lives on. We'll continue in their honour and that of our daughters to work together to create lasting change.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

PERSONS DAY

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the PC caucus today to recognize Persons Day. Persons Day is a time for all of us at Queen's Park and across the province to celebrate the contributions women have made and are making in Ontario, in Canada and around the world.

It took eight years for the Famous Five—Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby and Henrietta Muir Edwards—to succeed in their quest to have women declared persons under the constitution. With their hard work, they achieved their goal, and we thank the minister for providing us with the details of that long, arduous quest.

But we sometimes forget how significantly our lives were changed on October 18, 1929. It is important that we have times like these—times like Women's History Month, times like Persons Day—that encourage us to be grateful, to be humbled and to be inspired.

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Today, women hold senior posts in every area of our lives. Whether we're looking at banking, medicine, science, entrepreneurial leadership—just in every possible area, we can find women holding senior posts. In fact, today in our universities, over 50% of the graduates are women, and it's worth noting that women graduates earn more. But I remember, and I want to say that this has not been a quick process; in fact, we can characterize it as a slow process. From the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, I can recall my mother and others of her generation talking about how they were unable to maintain their jobs if they were engaged to be married or, in fact, were married. It didn't matter whether you were a secretary or a teacher; that was the end of your career. So I think that we have to put this in that kind of a perspective. I remember when female flight attendants were called stewardesses; they were registered nurses; they had a mandatory retirement age. These are things, then,

that we should see in this scope of the changes that were all begun by the Famous Five.

I also remember—and I make the point of this not being in my mother's generation but in my generation—when I was at university and I went to the placement office, I was absolutely shocked at the number of pamphlets and information binders and things like that that were available for anyone, except right across the front it said, "For men only." That's incredible to think, that a relatively short time ago—and I appreciate that "relative" is always according to how old you are—it was okay to have a mandatory retirement age for a woman; it was okay to have jobs that were for men only. So I think that the challenge, obviously, that remains for us, in this society, is not only to increase the number of women in this House and in various professions, but to ensure that each woman can make the choices she wants in life.

I think it's important to note that I am especially proud to be sitting alongside a number of outstanding women who have entered public life. I would draw attention to those in my own caucus: Lisa MacLeod, Elizabeth Witmer, Laurie Scott, Christine Elliott, Joyce Savoline and Sylvia Jones, but we have women representing all parties in this House and taking on those leadership roles. Each of us, then, serves not only her province but also as a role model to all women.

So, in closing, I would say we've all benefited from the actions of the Famous Five in the persons case. Most importantly, all Canadian women have benefited, and we owe a debt of gratitude to those who have come before us and to the sacrifices they have made.

PERSONS DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is a pleasure and somewhat a sadness to rise to acknowledge Persons Day and to acknowledge the debt of gratitude we have to our foremothers, to the Famous Five. I usually start, when I speak to women, by saying I'm the first woman in my family who was born a person. Many of the women in this chamber were born to women who were considered property: property of their husbands, property of their fathers and certainly, the younger women were born to grandmothers who were property, property of their husbands, property of their fathers. So we have come a long way; there's no question about that. But certainly, it's a battle that has not yet been won.

We still fight for women's equality. You know, they call this place the Pink Palace. But it ain't pink enough. First and foremost, there are 27% women who sit in this chamber, and that is outrageous. There are about 21% of women who sit in the House of Commons; that is a worse record than Afghanistan, than Pakistan, than Rwanda. We are 51st in nations in terms of the number of women we elect to public office, and you know, there's a reason behind that. There is a reason that more women do not put themselves forward for public office and more women are not elected to public office. First and foremost among those reasons is the lack of child care in this

country and the lack of child care in this province, and it's not getting any better, certainly not in this province. When we look across the border to Quebec and see child care for \$7 a day, and look at our own sorry record, where only one in 10 children has a space for child care, we know why women don't run for office. We should have child care right here at Queen's Park. That would be a symbol to women across the province that women are actually welcomed into public office.

For our girl children who come through the so-called Pink Palace and go onto the public floors of this building, on the main floor and the second floor they see only two women portrayed. One of them is Agnes MacPhail—I make sure to rub her shoulder every time I walk past her—and the other is the Queen. Those are the only two women on the walls of the first two public floors. These girls walk past that, and what message does that send to them? It sends them the message that this is a place for men and men only, not for them. We should be ashamed of that record.

I know that we, as New Democrats, put forward a resolution. We asked the governing party to make sure that the next Speaker of the House was a woman. We have never had a Speaker of the House in Ontario who was a woman. No offence to the present Speaker, who is doing a wonderful job, but surely out of all the able women across the floor we could find one to be elected as Speaker next time around.

So in honour of the famous five, I'm putting forward five famous demands:

(1) We need to restore funding to the commission and tribunal for equity. It's the 20th anniversary of women's pay equity, and women still earn 71 cents to every dollar a man earns.

(2) We need to raise the minimum wage, because the minimum wage is a women's issue. Poverty is a women's issue. That minimum wage should now be \$10.25, and indexed to inflation.

(3) As I've said already, we need daycare for all women who want to and are able to work.

(4) On behalf of the Miss G_ Project, this incredible group of young women who want women's studies in high schools, we need mandatory women's studies in high school.

Finally, please, across the aisle, make sure that the next time that chair becomes available, there is a woman sitting in it, so that for the first time our schoolgirls can walk into this place and see a woman's portrait on the wall, not just men's.

PETITIONS

TUITION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am really pleased to present a petition that was presented to me on Friday, which was the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. It

was presented to me by Richard Paquette, president of student association Local 30 at Laurentian University.

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

“Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the last 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

“Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law or medicine pay as much tuition as \$20,000 per year; and

“Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

“Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college and university; and

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“Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government’s Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;”

Therefore, they petition the Legislative Assembly to introduce a framework that:

“(1) Reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students.

“(2) Converts a portion of every student loan into a grant.

“(3) Increases per student funding above the national average.”

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

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is about fairness for Ontario workers.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas over 60% of Ontario’s unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa’s unfair eligibility rules; and

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the

discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario’s unemployed workers.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree and I am delighted to send this to you.

LOGGING ROUTE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with logging through the village of Restoule, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Nipissing forest management plan proposes to use Hawthorne Drive in Restoule, which features a single-lane bridge and narrow and steep sections; and

“Whereas area residents have grave concerns about community safety, traffic speed, truck noise and general wear and tear of Hawthorne Drive and the bridge in the village of Restoule; and

“Whereas the proposed route travels past the Restoule Canadian Legion and two churches; and

“Whereas alternative routes are possible via Odorizzi Road and Block 09-056;

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

“That the government of Ontario put the safety and concerns of the people of Restoule ahead of logging interests and ensure an alternate route is selected for the Nipissing forest management plan.”

I support this petition.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding Ombudsman oversight of children’s aid societies.

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

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people’s complaints about children’s aid societies’ decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman’s office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province’s children’s aid societies (CAS).”

I support this. I will sign it and send it to the table via page Laura.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I am pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of grandparents across Ontario. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by” the member from Niagara Falls.

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign this in support and give this to the page to bring forward to the table.

INNISFIL EARLY YEARS CENTRE

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

“The Innisfil, Ontario, early years centre offers an essential service to the Innisfil and south Barrie preschoolers, their parents and caregivers;

“It is a vital resource centre that meets the needs of this growing community;

“Additionally, we fear that the Barrie early years centre will be unable to accommodate the increased traffic due to the addition of the Innisfil families to their centre;

“Therefore, we urge you to consider your decision to close our greatly used and much-needed Innisfil satellite.”

As I am in agreement, I have included my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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.”

This is brought to me by the good people at the Global Pet Foods store in my riding, and I support—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

EMERGENCY DISPATCH SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with 911 communication services in Muskoka.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is considering relocating emergency ambulance and fire dispatch services currently provided by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service to the city of Barrie; and

“Whereas up to 40% of all calls received are from cellphones from people unfamiliar with the area; and

“Whereas Parry Sound–Muskoka residents have grave concerns about the effect on emergency response times if dispatch services are provided by dispatchers who are not familiar with the area; and

“Whereas 16 Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care-funded jobs, held by qualified communication officers from local communities, may be lost as a result of the relocation of dispatch services to the city of Barrie,

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

“That the government of Ontario put the safety, health and economic concerns of the people of Parry Sound–Muskoka ahead of government efficiency interests and ensure that emergency dispatch services continue to be provided locally by Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service.”

I support this petition.

HOSPICES

Mr. Mike Colle: I have some petitions from the good people of the Hospice Association of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

“Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support

and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

“Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight to 10 bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

“Whereas hospice services are provided free of charge;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes.”

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

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with maintaining community lab services in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of the communities served by Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare (MAHC) wish to maintain current community lab services; and

“Whereas maintaining community lab services promotes physician retention and benefits family health teams; and

“Whereas the funding for community lab services is currently a strain on the operating budget of MAHC; and

1340 “Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas the operating budget for MAHC needs to reflect the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka-East Parry Sound;

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

“That the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health increase the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to permit continued operation of community lab services.”

I support this petition.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is about identity theft.

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the

following issues be included for consideration and debate:

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

“(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

“(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

“(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate.”

I agree with this petition 100% and I am delighted to sign it.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have some more petitions with regard to the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 support this petition, along with hundreds of other people, and I affix my name to it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Davenport.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me again; I appreciate that.

This petition is for fairness for Ontario workers. It reads as follows:

“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; and

“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; and

“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; and

“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; and

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 16, 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 Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to add my comments to Mr. McGuinty's motion that we are facing economic challenges.

Most Ontarians know by now that we are in the midst of an economic crisis, and if we are not careful to husband our resources fairly carefully, this whole economic mess might spiral out of control. Now, some economic variables we are able to control, and some, of course, we cannot control.

Let's look at those we cannot control for a minute. How do we compete with China, how do we compete with India, and even, for that matter, how do we compete with Mexico? The McGuinty government has done more than an incredible job to ensure that we are able to at least somewhat compete with those other jurisdictions, even though it may be difficult. How do we compete with a country that pays its workers 10 times less than our workers make in Ontario? How do we compete? How can we possibly control that variable in this economic mess? It's very hard to do.

The reason I've said that the McGuinty government has done an incredible job is because we saw the storm clouds on the horizon, and I give our Premier full credit in trying to ensure that some of the steps were taken to ensure that those storm clouds did not get out of control and that we are able to compete with other jurisdictions even when that is very, very difficult, and I've mentioned those countries previously.

What has the government done in the meantime to ensure that there is some competitiveness going on? One,

look at the Ontario budgets—the first budget, introduced in 2003, the second budget in 2004.

The Plan for Change, the 2004 budget, brought the province back to fiscal health. It eliminated the deficit and balanced the budget for the first mandate. It focused on increased investments and vital public services like health care, education, the environment, public safety, and it brought a new law to guarantee that no government could ever again hide a deficit. It made sure that the Auditor General signed off on the books before the election.

The 2005 budget, \$6.2 billion, the Reaching Higher plan for post-secondary education: to ensure that our children—our kids in schools—are able to compete with those from other jurisdictions. It's the largest multi-year investment in the system for 40 years. It has resulted in 100,000 more students in post-secondary education today in order for them again to compete and to have a future in this new economic structure that the world is moving to. It provided grants to 120,000 students and invested in skills and know-how today as an investment in jobs for tomorrow. It launched ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan.

The 2006 budget, Building Opportunity: Investing in roads and bridges and public transit infrastructure, it creates jobs in the short term and adds productivity in the long term. It created a new jobs and skills renewal strategy to expand training and employment services. There's the 2007 budget, Investing in People and Expanding Opportunity, and on and on it goes.

The McGuinty government, as I said earlier, has done more than an incredible job in trying to ensure that we have some basis with which our kids—and we, for that matter, today—are able to compete in a future world, which does not look so great for those people who are adding value to the resources. That may be one of our first problems, and that is, when we look at the history of our own country, how did the banks, in the first place, get established here? How did the banks make profit? Well, this is a vast country. Canada is a big country, Canada is, and when you think about the resources that we have at our disposal that the rest of the world does not, with 32 million people, you ask yourself, “Well, in what way can we get the banks to help us out now?” Because, historically speaking, this country has always been known as hewers of wood and the drawers of water, meaning that never in the past were we able to add value to the resources we took out of the ground, or the wheat we harvested, or the mines or forests. Imagine this: We shipped tonnes and tonnes of trees out to the United States and we imported back Kodak paper. We added nothing to the value of our resources that left this country.

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We all know that the international corporations have no loyalty. If they had loyalty, they would be here with us. Company after company: Where did they go to? They went to the places where the workers got very little. In fact, while we're talking today, they're still leaving. For that matter, I want to tell you something interesting. One

of my theses, when I was at university, was entitled “The Star-Spangled Beaver.” Why “Star-Spangled Beaver”? In the 1970s, we had already discovered a man called Mel Watkins. Mel Watkins, along with many, many other economists, came to one conclusion, and the conclusion was very simple: that American multinational corporations already owned, in the early 1970s, over 75% of our resource sectors. Imagine that. Now we’ve got NAFTA. What does NAFTA tell us? When our dollar is low, we invite more people to come up and not only buy our resources but buy our very companies that might add a little bit of these resources and add some value to the resources that are produced. Wow, a lot now.

There was a question from the audience across from here: “What are the Liberals doing about it?” Well, thanks to Mr. McGuinty, because we trusted his leadership; thanks to Mr. McGuinty, because, in every budget up to now, he has had the foresight to see the economic clouds on the horizon and to make us competitive—that’s what he did and that’s why we on this side are delighted for our Premier. This Premier ensured that the government was following, step by step, in the direction and with those variables that we are able to control.

You all know that there are some variables which we cannot control. I mentioned them before: How do you compete with China? How do you make our kids competitive? Think about that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do you have an answer?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Of course, we have an answer. We have some recommendations that I would want to make personally.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The five-point plan.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Yes, the five-point plan, which I’m delighted to see that the opposition agrees with. He agrees with the five-point plan; that’s wonderful. The Conservatives may come up with a six-point plan. Five points are good; maybe the sixth point is better. Let’s see what the sixth point is. It might be.

Look, we’re here. On this situation, the Premier said earlier to every one of us that we are non-partisan. We are non-partisan when it comes to this economic crisis, which all of us are into. We’ve got to come together, and that’s what this is all about.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Reach out.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: We are reaching out, we’re certainly reaching out, and you, sir, are part of the solution and the Conservative Party is part of the solution. In fact, we all have to ensure that we are going to be competitive in the future. I’ll be very, very sad if indeed we don’t come to a unanimous conclusion here in this House, and I’ll be sadder for our children in the future because they’re the ones we have to train in terms of skills to be able to compete. If we don’t want other countries to eat us for lunch—you know what that phrase “eating us for lunch” means. It means we’re not competitive in this country. We have to be committed. In the future we cannot simply be known as drawers of water and hewers of wood. If we don’t add value to our products, we’re going to be in sad shape. That’s my first

recommendation. We’ve got to make sure that the government looks at that, and the Premier, with his foresight, has already said that to us. If he hasn’t said it to you, he certainly said over and over again in caucus that we’ve got to add value to the products we produce. I’m sure you agree with that as well.

My second recommendation is also a good one: With the credit market still on a life-support system, we want to ensure that the banks, at least to some degree, are helping them out, even though the government is supporting the banks in terms of giving loans not just to interbanking systems, meaning from one bank to another—and of course, we know that one bank is afraid to lend money to another for fear it might go bankrupt.

I’ve just been given a note that I’ve got to stop quickly, so that means—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Who told you to stop?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like to go on. I have more than two hours, but I’ve got to adjust myself to the clock.

Consequently, we want to make sure that the government, at least to some degree, guarantees loans, not only interbank loans but loans to small business. It’s small business that produces most of the jobs in this country, and that has to be done.

Finally—and I don’t have much time—my third recommendation would simply be to ensure labour mobility—the Premier and other Premiers are addressing that point as we speak. I thank you very much for listening to my presentation.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thanks to my fans here.

It’s a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to the government motion regarding the economic challenges facing Ontario. It’s important that we have this debate, but I’m very disappointed in the motion we are debating here today. Now is the time for us all to work together on creating a stronger Ontario economy, and what we get from the government is a partisan motion that attempts to absolve them from any action they may or may not take in the future and to rubber-stamp their actions in the past. Instead of trying to work together in this Legislature with the opposition and the third party on a motion we could all support on an issue that is important to all of our constituents, the government simply asks us to rubber-stamp all the actions they have taken since 2003 and tell them what a great job they’re doing. Well, we on this side of the House just can’t do that.

I believe the government’s actions have contributed to many of the economic problems we face. The policies of the McGuinty government have done nothing to make Ontario’s economy stronger. This government has, in fact, engaged in 3-D economics: delaying, dithering and denial. Let’s review their record.

When they took office, they immediately introduced the largest tax hike in Ontario’s history. Government

spending has been completely out of control. Just to give you an idea, this government's spending is \$20 billion more today than when it took office. I know that's hard to comprehend, but that represents a 31% increase in government and program spending, according to Kevin Gaudet of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—not my numbers but the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's. We never could sustain these levels of spending, and now, because of the economic turmoil we're going through, we are going to pay the price for it.

Our party has been calling for a substantive debate on the economy for a long time—in fact, for months. But this motion is nothing but a publicity stunt from the Premier and the government. For over a year this government has repeatedly said that everything is fine with the economy: “Don't worry, be happy.” During the last election, they in fact told Ontarians that they had nothing to worry about. We on this side of the House, in the opposition and the third party, knew differently. Even some of their own members probably knew differently, if they had felt free to say so.

Since the election, we have consistently called upon the Premier to deal with these issues that are impacting our manufacturing sector, and they have done nothing. We have said that you need to deal with the high energy costs our manufacturers in this province have to deal with. We have told the government to reduce the burden of taxes on business and on investment. We have also asked for the government to immediately eliminate the capital tax. My party had a plan to help our manufacturers months before this government woke up to the fact that they had a crisis in manufacturing.

I have the privilege of representing the riding of Sarnia–Lambton. Sarnia–Lambton is a great riding and in that riding is the city of Sarnia. This is a city that relies heavily on manufacturing. All you have to do is read the local paper, the Sarnia Observer, and you can see the storm clouds on the horizon, and that the economy and manufacturing, particularly in some areas, are in trouble. Since the election last October, for example, Lanxess in Sarnia announced that it was closing one of its units, throwing many of my constituents out of work. Recently, Shell announced that a plant it had looked at for months and spent millions of dollars going forward with is being put on hold; they are not going ahead and building a new refinery in St. Clair township.

To add to this problem, the government is still planning to go ahead with their wrong-headed idea to shut down the Lambton generating station, which will throw over 400 people in my riding out of work. This generates over \$40 million a year in economic activity and payroll, along with another \$200 million in related work downstream. Closing the Lambton generating station will cause more economic damage in Ontario than just throwing my constituents out of work. The Lambton generating station generates some of the cheapest power in Ontario. We should be working on making it a cleaner power rather than just shutting it down, especially with the state of the economy.

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One of the other problems already in our manufacturing sector is the high cost of power. Last week, the Ontario Energy Board approved a 10% increase in the cost of electricity. When you remove the ability to produce cheap electricity, these prices automatically will have to go up more.

I know in the case of Lanxess that when they announced their closure, they cited the fact that energy in Europe where they were moving production was at least 20% lower than here in Ontario, where they had their production facilities located. If we know that energy costs are one of the major factors in our manufacturing decline, why are we still talking about closing generating stations like Lambton?

In Lambton county, our farmers are also feeling the pinch of this economic crisis. The McGuinty government rushed out programs to help our cattle, hog and horticulture sectors, and instead of doing it the right way, they designed a program that sent money to many people who have been out of farming for years and didn't send it to the young farmers who really needed it.

On Thursday, the government has the opportunity to take some bold steps to help our agricultural sector. They need to take these steps to relieve the stifling red tape they have put on the agri-food sector. I hope they will start doing that, although I'm not very hopeful in that matter.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Meat inspectors. I know you have a thing about meat inspectors.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hear comments from the other side supporting my arguments, and I appreciate that.

Of course, the way the Ministry of Agriculture is going—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you for your comments urging me forward.

Of course, the way the Ministry of Agriculture is going, it will soon only have two divisions left. One division will regulate the farmers and the other division will throw money at those farmers trying to keep them in business. So it will be kind of a cyclical operation.

Farmers understand what the score is. They know that Agricorp isn't exactly a model of efficiency. The government's own value-for-money audit seemed to point that out. While we on this side of the House want to see real changes at Agricorp, we aren't confident that we will see them from this government. This is the government that has stalled on taking action on their own audit of Agricorp.

So we are a year late in having this debate. We're a year late in coming to the table and trying to find alternatives and ideas for Ontario.

How is the government suggesting that they deal with this crisis in manufacturing and our economy? They say they have a five-point plan. If the truth be told, from what I see it's not much of a plan. As a matter of fact, it reminds me a lot of a five-pointed compass. The five-

pointed compass will take you north, south, east, west and nowhere.

What is disappointing in the government's position is that after a year of saying there's no problem, they want to talk to us about what they should do. Further delay is all we are getting from this government when what we need is action.

My party, the party of John Tory, has already taken the time to consult with leading economists, and it confirmed what we on this side of the House knew. Last month, our party and John Tory hosted a jobs and economy round table so that we could hear first-hand from the experts about how we can make Ontario more prosperous.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hear members of the government cheering me on about the economic conference we had, and you're right: It was very well attended and very knowledgeable. A lot of information was garnered from that, and I'll be glad to share it with all the members of the government as well.

According to Roger Martin, whom this government says it consults with regularly, our tax structure in Ontario is one of the worst on the planet—not my words. These are Roger Martin's, the guy you guys consult with all the time. He says that it has effectively choked productivity to the point where our businesses under-invest in their workers, making them less productive. That means they earn less and pay less in taxes, which helps government run.

What has been the impact of our tax structure? Well, according to these same experts, the purchasing power of our workforce has gone from being \$500 ahead of the median of 14 jurisdictions in America that are half our size or bigger in 1981 to \$6,000 behind the median. This translates into \$27 billion less today to spend than we would have had if we had just maintained our position from 1981. Think of what we could do in this province with \$27 billion. I hesitate to say that because with this government's track record, they probably would have spent it.

Going forward, we could pass this biggest tax cut in Ontario's history. We could go a long way to wiping out the infrastructure deficit in our cities and rural municipalities through roads, bridges and sewers, along with a myriad of other projects.

What we have in fact managed to do is take away our fiscal capacity, in this province, to do the things that Ontarians want us to do: take care of the less fortunate, build infrastructure, and educate our young people so that they can compete for jobs and help them earn a living in the fast-changing world.

According to the same Mr. Martin, our businesses invest 26% fewer dollars in our workers in terms of machinery, equipment and computers. We need to make this province of Ontario a place where businesses are encouraged to invest in their workforce. This government has shown no willingness to deal with the structural problems in our tax system that would encourage businesses to invest.

One of the other things that the government needs to do, according to Mr. Martin, is take a good, hard look at our education system. We know that about 70% of the jobs that are going to be created in Ontario in the future will require some sort of post-secondary education. Currently, in Ontario, only 50% of our young people leaving high school get a post-secondary education. How can we expect our workers in this new world to compete in the knowledge-based economy when only half of them will have any sort of post-secondary education? I believe, on this side of the House, that we do have a fundamental problem with the size and capacity of our post-secondary education system, and it will be the young people of today who will pay the price for this in the future in the form of lower-paying jobs and poorer input to the economy through taxes and their input.

We also know that the economy could benefit from an increase in the number of apprentices for skilled trades.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hear more support for my argument again here.

Again, instead of working to increase the number of apprentices that can go through the system, the government has encouraged and put in place restrictive apprenticeship ratios that guarantee we won't be able to produce the number of apprentices that we need, in this economy, to help grow the economy.

It is fitting that we are having this debate during Small Business Week. The McGuinty government has been actively working to put in place more red tape and bureaucracy to kill our small businesses, when in this week we should be honouring and doing everything we can to encourage small business in this province.

Just this month I raised the issue about a business in Guelph called Cash Rolls, which was forced to move its manufacturing division to the United States because the Ministry of Labour wouldn't give them the time, or work with them, to come into compliance with regulations. That forced them to move that part of their operation to the US.

Closer to home for me, in Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Chris Cooke, who is the owner of Huron Web printing in Wyoming, had a businessman's worst nightmare come true. Huron Web employs approximately 95 people and has annual sales of over \$20 million. They print 14 million grocery inserts per week, making them the largest printer of grocery inserts in Ontario. In October 2005, Huron Web was shut down for nine hours, which doesn't sound like a lot, I'm sure, to many people in this august assembly, but nine hours when you're in a printing business for just-in-time delivery for grocery inserts is critical. A Ministry of Labour inspector looked at the equipment and thought the guards on the printing presses were not adequate. Mr. Cooke immediately undertook the work to get the presses back online so he could meet his deadlines. He made the necessary repairs. Then one of the presses was found to be out of compliance. He had bought this just three months before and it was brand new. The manufacturer of the press, which was built here

in Ontario, still believes the press was compliant with all the regulations.

After completing these repairs to said press, the Ministry of Labour inspector wasn't available to Mr. Cooke to come back and certify the work had been done so they could restart the printing process, adding more delays. In Chris's business, lost time means deadlines aren't met, he loses money and customers are disappointed. The Ministry of Labour was quick to shut down these presses but not so fast to let them get back up and running. Fortunately, Mr. Cooke was able to get someone after-hours and they were able to come back and start them up.

What was maybe worse was that, after the fact, Mr. Cooke found out that the interpretation of these safety rules was left up to the individual inspector. So competitors of Mr. Cooke's, with the same presses, were told they were in compliance and were allowed to keep printing. These regulations were not written down anywhere. Interpretation was left completely up to the local inspector, which led to this problem.

I also know in Sarnia-Lambton of a local restaurant owner who had a government inspector that—the famous words, “I am from the government and I am here to help you” didn't turn out in this case. This government inspector came to audit his PST rebates and spent five weeks there. At the end of the day, after this government auditor spending five weeks there auditing and going through his books, the small business owner, instead of being out cooking meals, which he should have been doing to help make a living, had to take time and also had to pay his own auditor to come in and work with him. They found a discrepancy of \$1,800. Untold thousands of dollars in payroll costs to the government auditor to conduct this, and it was just a waste of time. It seems like a lot of overkill to me.

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All of us in this chamber, on all sides of the House, I'm sure—government members, members of the opposition and the third party as well—have heard from our constituents about these things. Everyone, if they want to be honest, could say that. Small business and even larger businesses feel that the government is working against our businesses and not with them. This attitude needs to change if we are to seriously address the issues in our economy.

As a matter of fact, just last week, the government announced that they are adding more costs to small business through the WSIB system. We'll speak more about that later in the House today; it was addressed this morning. I'm surprised that the government is taking this action now, when we are having problems in the economy. The economy is in trouble, and now is not the time to add more bureaucracy and more costs to small business. Let's get through this crisis, sit down and take a look at these issues and help these small businesses. We're losing these larger employers. We have to do everything we can at this time to keep these small businesses active.

This motion does nothing, in my opinion, to show us that the government is interested in working with all members of the Legislature to help solve these economic problems. This government is far more interested in trying to score partisan political points.

Those are my remarks, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to participate in this debate because I have a lot to say on some of these issues, which will not surprise you, Speaker.

I want to first deal with the government's main motion, because there are some things in this main motion that are no longer true. The McGuinty government would want Ontarians to believe that Ontario's jobs problems and economics problems are all created out there by someone else, so in the first couple of lines of the Premier's motion he says, “Well, it's the high dollar and it's the high international oil price.” Maybe this is a surprise to members of the McGuinty government, but the dollar has dropped a lot in value. The dollar has dropped an awful lot in value. It's now what—about 85 cents US? So the dollar has dropped a lot in value. Not only that, but the McGuinty government would have you believe that the price of oil is astronomical and that is killing off jobs in Ontario. Well, I have to tell you, the price of oil has dropped astronomically, such that today the OPEC countries are seriously thinking about cutting back on production. But according to the McGuinty government, the job losses in Ontario are all due to the high price of oil and the too-high value of the Canadian dollar.

I want people at home to reflect on this. Is this reality or is this the McGuinty government once again looking for someone to blame? I suggest the record strongly indicates that once again it's the McGuinty government looking for someone to blame. And the facts? They don't matter.

But there's something else here that jumps out at me. The McGuinty government would have us believe that somehow what they've been doing over the last five years has been good for the Ontario economy and good for jobs. Well, I don't know about McGuinty Liberals, but I know that Ontarians across this province, working people across this province, don't consider the loss of 230,000 manufacturing jobs and 40,000 direct and indirect forest sector jobs any kind of successful management of the economy. Working people across Ontario consider what has happened a disaster. People who have worked hard all their lives, people who have paid their taxes, contributed to the economy, contributed to the community and tried to raise their kids are suddenly now losing their jobs, losing their homes, losing their livelihoods. And what do they get from the McGuinty government in this motion? A lot more empty words, a lot more trying to blame it on somebody else.

It's worthwhile in this context comparing what's gone on here in Ontario with what's happening in other provinces. Whenever I travel through northern Ontario, I

have to listen to people raise this issue with me. The forest sector in northern Ontario has been decimated over the last four years, absolutely decimated. It's like when the train conductors used to list off all of the towns and cities that the train would stop in. You could start off with Cochrane, Iroquois Falls, Sturgeon Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Chapleau, Nairn Centre, Espanola, Sault Ste. Marie, Dubreuilville, Wawa, White River, Hornepayne, Longlac, Geraldton, Nipigon, Red Rock, Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Dryden, Ignace, Kenora, and Sioux Lookout. It reads just like a long list of communities across northern Ontario.

It's not as if this was unexpected. It's not as if this fell out of the sky. I remember that in the summer of 2004, workers, managers and community leaders from forest sector communities came here to Queen's Park and they said to the ministers of the McGuinty government, "Look, we can see storm clouds on the horizon. What's been going on in the United States in terms of phony mortgages is going to get the American economy into trouble. We can see the housing market hitting trouble. We can see some other problems." They said to the McGuinty government, "Your energy policy indicates that you're prepared to treat energy for industry the same way that you would treat electricity for air conditioning. And if you do that, you will raise the industrial hydro rate so high that mill after mill, job after job, and community after community will be decimated." They were oh, so clear on this. They couldn't have spelled it out any better if they painted a picture. They said, "If the McGuinty government persists with driving the industrial rate of hydroelectricity through the roof, you will kill tens of thousands of jobs, you will shut down dozens of mills and you will decimate dozens of communities."

What was the response of the McGuinty government? The response of the McGuinty government to all of those people who came here in good faith was, "We don't have time for you. We don't have time for you and, frankly, we don't care about you." So what they predicted, what they desperately did not want to see happen but what they predicted would happen, has in fact happened.

The McGuinty government, again, would have you believe that it's the high value of the Canadian dollar and it's the high cost of oil that is the source of this. Well, I invite people from across Ontario to take a trip to Manitoba. Manitoba faces the same oil prices, faces the same value of the American dollar, and faces the same trade conditions. But you know what? In Manitoba, not one sawmill, not one paper mill, not one pulp mill and not one oriented strand board mill has been shut down. Not one community has been decimated, and thousands of forest sector jobs have been sustained. You don't have to go to China to see this, as it seems the Premier does every few weeks now. All you have to do is catch a flight to Winnipeg. Drive to Pine Falls; go to The Pas; go to Swan River. The even greater irony is that companies that operate two or three sawmills in Manitoba and one in Ontario—they shut down their Ontario operation and are continuing their Manitoba operation.

Obviously, it doesn't have anything to do with the high price of oil; they face the same oil prices we do in Ontario. It doesn't have anything to do with the up and down in the value of the American dollar; they face the same American dollar.

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What does it have to do with? Well, one thing it very clearly has to do with is the industrial rate of electricity. The McGuinty government believes that electricity for jobs in sectors like steel and pulp and paper should be valued the same as electricity for someone's plasma TV or for somebody who wants to air condition their home.

I remember, just a couple of years ago, one of the downtown Toronto environmentalists took a trip down Bay Street on one of the hottest days of summer and found stores like Harry Rosen and some of the others with the air conditioning cranked right up—they didn't care how much electricity they used—and the doors open, because electricity might account for only 2% of their overall costs. But the same sort of thing—those kinds of hydro rates—would absolutely wipe out a paper mill, a pulp mill or a sawmill. That is one of the real differences we're talking about here.

Manitoba said, "Look, we value electricity to sustain jobs more than we value electricity for someone's plasma TV." Plasma TVs guzzle electricity like there's no tomorrow. Their policy is that if you want to have three plasma TVs in your house, you pay for it; you pay a higher electricity rate. If you want to turn your air conditioning on, on the hottest days, and open the doors and windows and air condition the outside, you pay for it. But you don't put workers out of work through an electricity policy that is designed to destroy jobs, which is what it's doing here.

I remember when the Kenora paper mill, a two-machine newsprint mill in my constituency, closed three years ago. Their hydro bill under the McGuinty government was \$2.3 million a month. This was a mill that was surrounded by hydro dams that generate electricity, not at some of the lowest costs in Ontario, not at some of the lowest costs in North America, but at some of the lowest costs in the world. This was a mill surrounded by hydro dams on the Winnipeg River that generate electricity for less than one cent a kilowatt hour, but they were paying \$2.3 million a month under the McGuinty government's electricity policy.

Go 80 kilometres down the Winnipeg River into Manitoba and you've got a two-machine newsprint mill in Pine Falls, Manitoba. Their hydro bill was \$900,000 a month. One of the managers said to me, when Abitibi closed the Kenora mill, "Do you know what? Our workers could work for nothing here and it wouldn't make up for the price differential in electricity." It wouldn't make up for the almost million and a half dollars a month more they have to pay for electricity.

Germany, which in many ways leads the world in solar energy and wind energy, and which leads the world in energy efficiency, has said that they're going to have a different hydro rate for industry. Generally, the industrial

rate there is about five cents a kilowatt hour. Why? Because Germany has made the policy decision that electricity that sustains jobs should be valued like this. Electricity that is simply used to power someone's plasma television or electricity that is used to allow Harry Rosen to crank up the air conditioning and open the doors should be charged a rate that's much higher. They value jobs. They want to see jobs continue.

Sweden, another country which leads the world in energy efficiency, which leads the world in its own reduction of greenhouse gases, puts in place special energy rates for industry. Why? Because they value jobs. They want to see people continue to work. Sweden as well says: "If you want to run your plasma TV and suck up all kinds of electricity, you pay a high rate. If you want to air condition your office tower or your department store and open the doors and waste electricity, you pay a higher rate." But when it comes to electricity to sustain jobs, they want to sustain jobs.

If Manitoba can do it, if Quebec can do it, if British Columbia can do it, if Sweden can do it, if Germany can do it, where's the McGuinty government that says they care about jobs? Busy driving the industrial rate of electricity higher and higher than ever. So that's just one of the differences.

Something else has made a big difference in Manitoba: Manitoba said, "Look, manufacturing jobs are going to be the problem. We don't need to cut taxes for the banks. We don't need to cut taxes for the oil companies." God, they're rolling in money at an embarrassing level as it is. They said, "Look, manufacturing is where the problem is, and we need to find a way to help struggling manufacturers get through a difficult time." So they implemented a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. "Refundable" is important, because what it means is that even companies that are not making a profit can apply for the tax credit. In Manitoba they didn't just do it based upon this year; they rolled it back five years and said, "If you've made investments in plants and equipment over the last five years, you can now claim those for this refundable tax credit." What has that allowed Manitoba firms to do? It has allowed them to use that refundable tax credit almost like working capital to pay the workers wages so they're not laid off, to pay for other equipment improvements or technology improvements so they don't have to shut down, so that they can reach a higher level of efficiency, so that they can pay the hydro bill and don't have to shut down. What has the McGuinty government done? Are they talking anywhere in this resolution about a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit? Nowhere at all.

Since Manitoba brought in a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit, Quebec followed suit. Saskatchewan has followed suit. Where is the McGuinty government? Well, their claim to fame is that they say they cut the capital tax. Well, who benefits most from cutting the capital tax? I can tell you, banks love it when you cut the capital tax, because for them it means opening up the vault and shovelling out the money. But do you know

what? The only thing banks need help with these days is protection from their own stupid decisions. That's what they need, protection from their own stupid decisions: investing in mortgages that never really existed in the United States and pretending to everyone that these were secure investments.

Cutting the capital tax helps oil companies. Does anybody in this Legislature want to hold up their hand and say that oil companies need help at the hands of taxpayers these days? Does any Liberal want to stand up and say that those poor oil companies need more money from government? The tax changes: Oh, yes, some manufacturers may have benefited a dot or a dash, but the tax changes have overwhelmingly been to the benefit of big oil, big banks and big finance. I feel as some people in the United States feel. Some of the people at the big banks and big finance companies should be going to jail, not getting more public money. People who have misled not just ordinary people who put their savings in a bank account but just about everybody in the economy shouldn't be getting a handout. They should be going to jail. But these are the tax changes the McGuinty government has had in mind: Help out the banks and the oil companies, but nothing targeted at manufacturing, nothing whatsoever.

Then the government says that they're investing in post-secondary education and training. If the government were truly investing in post-secondary education and training, I would suggest that Ontario would not be number 10 out of 10 provinces in Canada in terms of the per capita investment in post-secondary education and training. But that is, in fact, the record. Newfoundland invests more in post-secondary education and training than Ontario does. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, provinces that are not generally well off, that don't have any banking headquarters in their capital towns or cities, that don't have any corporate giants or Bay Street, invest more in post-secondary education than Ontario does.

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The other thing that's been rapped out by the McGuinty government is the so-called Second Career strategy. The government says, "Oh, this is really going to cut mustard. Boy, this is really going to help people who've lost their jobs." Well, out of the more than 240,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Ontario, do you know that fewer than 1,000 people have signed up for the so-called Second Career strategy? It's a success rate of less than one half of 1%. My 10-year-old would understand that. He would come home from school and say, "Daddy, that's not a very good mark at all," somebody who gets less than one half of 1% take-up on the so-called Second Career strategy. But if you look at the government ads on TV, according to the McGuinty government, this is the be-all and end-all. This is really making a difference in the lives of working people who've lost their jobs. Less than one half of 1% take-up is pathetic. The government should pull its ads off television today and should go back to the drawing board and ask themselves what are they doing wrong.

New Democrats have offered what we think are some practical solutions. We believe we should do what Germany has done, what Sweden has done, what Britain has done and what Quebec has done and recognize that if we're going to keep manufacturing jobs in this province, we need a reasonable industrial hydro rate. We should do what Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan have done in terms of taxes: not a corporate tax cut, but a targeted refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to help companies that are struggling to stay alive so they don't have to lay off more workers.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand and speak on the motion made by Premier Dalton McGuinty on October 8 about the economy. We heard the Premier speaking about the financial situation which is facing the province of Ontario.

As you know, we don't live in isolation. We live in an international economy. We live near a huge country. This is a country on which we depend a lot in many different areas, whether the housing industry, the manufacturing industry or the financial industry.

I have been listening to the speakers from both sides. I have been listening to the Conservatives speaking for the last two weeks, talking about this crisis and their solution to the crisis. They're talking about solving it by cutting taxes. We lived in the province of Ontario when the Conservatives were in government for eight years. What they did was cut taxes, eliminate many different jobs, take money away from the poor people, and there was not much investment in the social areas. What happened? It led to a disaster in our communities across Ontario and led the province to a deficit of more than \$5 billion. We witnessed a deficit in infrastructure of more than \$100 billion across the province: in roads, highways, bridges, sewer systems and many different areas. We witnessed a deficit in the education sector of more than \$20 billion. We witnessed many different deficits in health care and higher education.

Since 2002, we've witnessed migration of jobs, which we acknowledge today. Jobs are moving to different parts of the globe, to China and to India. I know my colleague from Danforth was speaking for 10 minutes about the strategy, how we can overcome and absorb the new era, in which the Chinese and Indians, with more than a billion people, have the financial capacity and intellectual capacity to produce more and control the economy. How can we survive with 32 million people, or at least as Ontario, with 12 million or 13 million people? We found the best solution: to reinvest in our infrastructure. We invested more than \$30 billion since we got elected, to date more than \$60 billion, because we thought this investment would allow us to make Ontario a place where you can commute fast and quick, a place that can attract more businesses to open in this province.

We invested in higher education because we believe strongly that the next generation of jobs will be high-tech jobs. I was pleased to do a statement this afternoon about

our investments in research and innovation, which go to many different institutions, including universities and research centres, to help them to continue to do research in nanotechnology and physics and many areas in order to allow us, as a province, to continue to compete at an international level.

I think our investments are in the right place.

I think our economic situation is not unique. I was listening to the third party leader speaking a few minutes ago. He was talking about how the only solution to fix the economy is by reducing the electricity rate, as if by reducing the electricity rate we can stop the departure of jobs. He was talking about the forest industry and paper mills. He forgot that we depend a lot on the economy of the United States. If the United States economy is not able to buy the wood to build houses, how can we sell it? Do we just want to cut it and produce it to go nowhere—or paper mills, with new technologies where many people use the Internet and e-mails instead of letters and printing papers? So I think the most important things are to keep investing and utilizing our capacity in this province and investing in our people to be able to overcome the results of the next generations. He was talking about the manufacturers, how there's no investment and no strategy in the manufacturing area. We have a strategy called the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, where we've put almost \$1.5 billion. Most of the manufacturing companies in Ontario have a right to access those funds if they want to develop their areas—buy new machinery, green machinery—in order to maintain the jobs and also to be able to compete by buying new technology and hiring more people.

I give you this example: Our government invested in a company called Diamond Aircraft for the last three or four years. We gave them support. They started with 500 people, and now there are about 1,000 people working at Diamond Aircraft. Now their productivity has doubled, and they sell all across the globe due to our investment in this company.

We didn't just invest money in companies. We also invested money in colleges and universities, especially Fanshawe College, to give them the ability to produce skilled workers to feed those companies. This is our initiative: to work alongside colleges, universities, training centres and manufacturing companies in order to create a strategy of people working together to produce workers who will be absorbed by manufacturers that reside in Ontario.

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Fanshawe College, one of the most important colleges in the whole country.

Also, we invested in a company called Original Cakerie, which came from British Columbia. They came to the province of Ontario to open in London almost a year ago. They believe strongly that this province is the right province in which to open because we have a strategic spot, connected to both Michigan and New York state, and also because we have skilled workers and we have a government that understands that the most import-

ant thing is to attract people by creating an environment where people are able to work, where workers can send their people to college or university, a place where if they get sick they can be treated, and a place to be able to sell their products—and a government that's able to understand them and give them the ability to build and get the support they need in order to build in this province.

We know this economic situation is not just in Ontario, not just in Canada. When we turn on the TV or radio in the morning or evening or whenever, we hear about it in China, we hear about it in the United States, we hear about it in France, in England and in many, many jurisdictions around the globe. My friend who came from Italy not a long time ago was telling me about the economic situation in Italy: the manufacturing jobs and layoffs and many different problems facing the economy in Italy. So we're not unique. I think we in the province of Ontario have been preparing for it since we got elected in 2003, reinvesting in our people, reinvesting in our infrastructure, reinvesting in education, reinvesting in health care, because all of these elements work together to attract more people or maintain jobs in the province of Ontario. So we don't think we don't have a problem. But do you know what? Leadership counts when you have a problem. You try to work and absorb it; you try to manage it and get out of it strong and able and building for next generations.

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I was pleased when the Premier stood up on October 8 in this place and acknowledged the financial situation we are facing and put forward his five-point plan to manage our lives for generations to come. I think it took courage from the Premier to address this issue. Acknowledgment is the most important thing—an important plan, because we are obligated as a province and as elected officials to address these issues, and we're obligated to serve our people, who put their trust in us. Due to our investment, due to our acknowledgement, due to our plan, I think we're going to get out of it stronger than ever.

I'm proud to be part of a government that addresses these issues and deals with them, that is not afraid and that doesn't run away from them. Despite what the opposition is saying about cutting taxes, I think cutting taxes will destroy our economy. Just creating a model from British Columbia or Manitoba, or whatever the third party is talking about, doesn't address the issue. The most important thing to deal with it is a solution produced in Ontario for Ontarians. Due to the leadership we have today, I think we are going to be stronger than ever.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I am going to speak on this motion, and I think it's important that we recognize a few things as we start off. This is another motion on the floor of the House by the Liberals. What you can always tell about the Liberals is that they like going through the motions. That's all it is: going through the motions of rhetoric and platitudes, hollowness and empty words. When you look at this motion, there is nothing in it that is

measurable; there is nothing in it that is accountable. It's empty and hollow. The only thing this motion does is provide an excuse for the Liberal government, as if they haven't already used up enough excuses.

They list some of the challenges we are facing. Certainly those challenges are here now; they're in our face. But they have been with us for some time, as we on this side of the House have mentioned. What they fail to do is mention the challenges we're facing that we can control, that we can influence, that we can have an effect on. We know that the value of the dollar is a factor. We know that global economic trade with China and Third World countries is a significant factor. But there are things we do and things we must do in this province if we are going to have a strong, vibrant economy that can pay for the infrastructure, that can pay for the social necessities, that can pay for a good, strong society.

Some of the things we can do: the red tape and regulations this Liberal government has a strong thirst and desire to promote. The number of people I hear from, and I'm sure every member on the other side of the House also hears from their constituents—when I was in estimates last week, one of this government's own members, Joe Dickson, mentioned the problem Ministry of Labour inspectors are placing on businesses in his riding, Ministry of Labour inspectors who are putting businesses out of business. These people are called jobs protection officers, but in essence and in reality they have become job destruction officers.

I know Liberal backbenchers are facing those same concerns, but is there anything in this motion about it? Nothing. There is silence from the opposing side over there, the government side—silence about doing things. What they like to promote is that they can't. They like to promote excuses and can'ts.

We have seen significant destruction throughout rural Ontario and other places with red tape and regulations that are excessive, that are intrusive, that are counter-productive and that are killing our economy. Recently, Forfar Cheese announced that they were closing up their production of cheese in eastern Ontario because of another regulation and the way it's being enforced by this Liberal government. This company has been making cheese for 150 years, and an inspector comes in and says, "You can't make cheese any more. You're a danger to the groundwater." For 150 years that cheese plant has been there, and never once did it harm the groundwater, but it can't stay in business with this Liberal government.

There's more—lots more.

Bar owners in my area such as Fiddleheads' Erik Kafriksen and Patrick Moore are faced with ministry inspectors coming in and closing down their bars on spurious allegations, no evidence, and there's no appeal mechanism. These bar owners are honest, responsible, upstanding business people in our communities, but they are fearful of the Liberal government and its army of inspectors that they have let loose in the countryside, and they have every right to be.

I spoke with Gary Oosterhof the other day. His electrical contracting business is under attack. He's lost three

quarters of a million dollars in revenue and has paid \$135 in fees because of a card-based certification rule put in place by this Liberal government. He went from nine employees to four.

I think the overarching theme that I hear is, “How do you start a small business in this province? Start with a big one,” because this Liberal government is going to make it smaller and smaller and smaller until it is gone. And it is everywhere. Whether it’s manufacturing, whether it is retail, whether it is construction, this Liberal government is at fault. You cannot excuse what you have done to these people in our communities.

There is a reason why we are in last place in this Confederation, and the reason is over there. There are about 70 reasons why Ontario is in last place economically in this country—the policies and the implementation of this Liberal government.

I was in estimates as well with the research minister a short while ago. The research minister had the same rhetoric, the same platitudes that we see in this motion. He talked of commercializing new technology here in Ontario, spoke of Ontario being the leader in technology. I asked him why, then, the Bath cement plant has been trying for five years to get new technology installed and they are hamstrung and handcuffed at every opportunity by this Liberal government. For five years, they’ve been trying to move forward. For five years, the ministers on the other side have prevented investments and technology, other than the investments in bureaucracy, and killed our economy.

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They’ve done the same thing with Perth Soap, another place where new technology can make that 100-year-old business be competitive with China, with India, with Mexico. But this government has diddled and dithered for a year, while Perth Soap winds up and winds down their production.

We all have an obligation in this House to do our utmost, to do our duty, to be responsible, not just to be a voting machine for cabinet and for the bureaucracy. The members on the government side have to begin to take ownership of their own failings and the failings that they have put on everybody in Ontario. We’ve heard them all. Karl’s butcher shop was closed up here in the Toronto area because of red tape and regulation. Those are the themes: They talk about research and innovation, and then they slam the door on it with regulation. We get red tape and we get smaller and smaller businesses, and at the same time our public sector costs increase—more public sector employees, fewer private sector employees. This cannot continue. I’m sure everybody on the government side realizes that it can’t continue. You can’t keep driving people out of business and then expect to be able to tax them, as well. It doesn’t work that way.

The member from London—Fanshawe talked about the deficit that they inherited: deficits in education, health care, a multitude of deficits. There is a deficit that they inherited—I don’t know if they inherited it, but I know they have it now. It’s a deficit in attitude, it’s a deficit in

conviction, it’s a deficit in thinking. You have to do what the people have elected us to do.

We have a new piece of legislation coming in from WSIB which is going to affect more small businesses and put more small businesses out of business.

As we talk about this motion here in this House, think back to just a week or so ago. What were the Liberals doing about it? Of course, the economic development was hard at work. Sandra of Arabia was travelling the dunes of time looking for development. After her great trip to the Great Wall, where are the returns from all these development—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Speaker: It is proper procedure to refer to a member by their riding, and not by some derogatory term, as this member has done. He should apologize and use the riding name.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): I acknowledge that you raised a point. I just want to remind members to try, when you can recall, as much as possible, to use the name of the riding, as opposed to naming members by name. That’s been the practice in the Legislature.

Please continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The cost of doing business in this province is what is harming our economy. This motion doesn’t address the cost of doing business. If the Liberals were committed and had conviction about improving our economy, they would begin to lower the cost of doing business. They would put in some measurable outcomes in this motion, demonstrate to the people of Ontario that they are indeed committed to having outcomes that we can measure, that we can work toward, instead of just rhetoric.

The examples continue: Gene and Marsha Countryman and their winery shop, a fruit winery in eastern Ontario, can’t get through the regulatory maze that this Liberal government has constructed for them. They make a fine product that’s well priced, but they can’t get it to market because of Liberal red tape.

The evidence is clear for all those who choose to look. You can remain with your head in the sand or you can choose to look at what needs to be done, and it is not going through the motions; it is standing up and doing what is right and stopping what is wrong.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I am pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion that was put before the Legislature by the Premier.

I want to say a few things at the outset, and I know there is a lot of discussion that has already occurred and a lot that will occur in the future. We face rather significant challenges as a province. Members have spoken to these, and will. They are challenges that are quite unlike what we have faced for many years, not only individually but culminatively. They are challenges which will affect our future, as they are affecting our present.

We face significant difficulties in our communities—I’ll speak about mine in a moment—and individual

members face significant difficulties, but I am confident that we will overcome the challenges and the difficulties. We will overcome the challenges and the difficulties as long as we all recognize what the Premier has encouraged us all to do, which is to work together to find the common solutions, to take from every one of us our very best and to rest those great ideas for the future on the firm foundation that we have in the province of Ontario. Let us be clear: The people of Ontario have encountered many challenges in the past and will encounter many in the future, and we have met and overcome every single one.

I want to speak about my community. I want to speak about London and southwestern Ontario.

I want to speak first about the workers who have lost their jobs or who are living in uncertainty. I want those workers to know that they do not stand alone and their families do not stand alone. We all stand with them: stand with them in our determination to keep their jobs when they are at risk, stand with them in our determination to support them through difficult times, and stand with them in our determination, when their jobs do leave, to support them to find new opportunities.

A community is only as strong as every member of it. A community can never reach its potential until every single member of that community reaches their potential. So we will all stand and support the workers who have faced difficulty, and there have been recent difficulties with the truck plant in our neighbouring community of St. Thomas. I know the Premier and my colleagues, including my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Mr. Peters, are working very hard to support those in the community and the CAW who are trying to keep the jobs there, and will continue to work very hard.

Ours is a government which recognizes the importance of strategic partnerships. There is no one philosophy that has all the answers for job retention.

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And I must say that after months and years of our calling for the federal government to support strategic partnerships in the province of Ontario, after having some ministers of the federal government say no to strategic partnerships, I was very pleased to see, just on the eve of the election, the federal government recognize the importance of strategic partnerships in Windsor and in St. Catharines, both in the automotive sector.

I say that I was very pleased to see that, and as somebody who lives in London, who lives beside the 401, who knows about the St. Thomas Ford assembly plant, I say I'm very pleased about the federal government's interest in strategic partnerships. I am looking forward to working with them as we work to support new product development at the Ford plant in St. Thomas, one where thousands of workers have toiled very hard over the years, and many workers are there now, working very hard, supporting not only communities in Elgin county, but those in my community as well.

I say that as we look to the jobs that will replace those that have departed, we're facing a different kind of job.

When the Ford plant in St. Thomas opened up in 1967, you could get a job there without having completed grade 8. The new Toyota assembly plant that was spearheaded by the Premier's automotive strategy is about to start production later this year, not far from London, in Woodstock. They had almost 50,000 applications for those jobs—and you couldn't get an interview without having completed secondary school—

Interjection: For how many jobs?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: For 2,000 jobs.

You couldn't get an interview without secondary school education plus something beyond, some post-secondary of some description. The landscape has changed. It is why we have been investing in retraining, new skills, post-secondary education and advanced skills training. It's why we've been doing that for four years, almost five years now.

So let me speak to the jobs of the future and the opportunities that it presents not only for Ontario, but I want to focus on my community in London and in southwestern Ontario. Although we are facing significant challenges, we have the foundation for a bright future, and as long as we work together and pool our collective and individual strengths, we will meet those challenges. Be clear: We are in for some very challenging times, and it is going to take every one of us at our best to meet those challenges. But we will—we will succeed.

Now, in London, we are very pleased to have two great post-secondary education institutions. The University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College provide post-secondary education and advanced skills training not simply to the London community, not simply to southwestern Ontario, but to people from across the country. Indeed, we have people coming from around the world to those institutions. They are institutions of excellence. There is in those institutions a very bright future. And we are located not far from our sister institutions in Kitchener–Waterloo, Windsor, and Guelph. Southwestern Ontario has a great foundation—as well as Sarnia with Lambton College—post-secondary education.

The jobs of the future require post-secondary education or skills training; almost 80% of the jobs of the future will require it. That's why I'm very pleased that in London, we have the great post-secondary institutions. And that's why the Premier launched the Reaching Higher plan: to make sure we invested in extra spaces, over 100,000 more students throughout Ontario—more at Western and Fanshawe. That's why we invested in more professors, more money for research, more supports for the students who couldn't otherwise afford to go. At last count, there were almost 150,000 students receiving some form of assistance through grants, which the NDP cut, or assistance so they could attend post-secondary education, which probably explains why we have more than 100,000 extra students in post-secondary education than when we started, and why we have the highest rate of post-secondary education in the western world—the highest in the western world. It is the foundation for success, because the jobs of the future require it.

We don't stop there. We go to advanced skills training of all sorts. For many years, the government of Ontario attempted to negotiate, and then decided it wouldn't negotiate, a labour market development agreement with the federal government. I was pleased, just a couple of years ago, that I was able to sign a labour market development agreement with the government of Canada, so we now have a billion dollars to support the retraining or initial skills training of the people of Ontario.

I am also pleased, notwithstanding that we deliver those dollars through 1,200 different agencies and 900 different locations throughout Ontario, that you can access any of those training agents through a toll-free number or a website anywhere in Ontario. And if your first language isn't English or French, you can get information about them through a translation service in almost 150 different languages.

Mr. Mike Colle: Even Italian.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Even Italian, my colleague tells me.

We're trying to not only make the services available for people, but easily available, so that no matter where you are, you can find the services you need. That is of great assistance to people in our community of London and of great assistance to people in every part of the province.

What else does London have that will enable it to attract the jobs of the future? I speak of infrastructure next. Of course, power: Not far away, we have the Bruce nuclear facility, many of the workers at which are trained at Fanshawe College, a special program to train the workers. I'm pleased that they are refitting some of the reactors, and there is going to be a new transmission line to bring power down to southwestern Ontario. It is essential to have a good power source. We are not blessed, as are Manitoba or Quebec, by the natural accident of geography, so we rely on other forms of power, and I'm pleased that we have taken the lead and are ensuring power supply for the future.

We have something else that many other jurisdictions don't have. We're located right beside the 401, one of the most travelled pieces of highway in the world. We can reach not only across Canada but far into the midwest, the northeast or the south of the United States in virtually no time. Linked very closely to the 402-401 intersection, linked also to the 401-403 intersection, it is a fabulous location for business.

We have seen what has happened at the 401-403 interchange. We have seen the economic development there with Toyota and the related spinoffs. But if you go to 401-402, part of which is located within the jurisdiction of the city of London, there is an opportunity there, because there is very little there but green. There is an opportunity there for all, a great platform for economic development in the future.

We saw what happened with the innovation park, and I'm pleased that we put an extra \$11 million into the innovation park in London. It's virtually full. If you service the land, business will come and establish. We

have those opportunities to attract and to ensure, both within and just on the outskirts of our community in London.

We are an innovative and creative community. My colleague the member from London-Fanshawe mentioned Diamond Aircraft. It's true that there, in London, Ontario, they are building planes that are used by the United States Army for training, that are used by aircraft industries throughout the world. And as the D-JET comes into production, they are high-skilled jobs—over 650 of them now, I believe, and still growing, from what just a few years ago was virtually nothing.

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We have been able to do it in the city of London, but the story doesn't end there, of course. We have Trojan Technologies, which provides clean water technology throughout the world, with an opportunity to do even more—a business that's been recognized throughout the province of Ontario and internationally for the work that they do.

We have Trudell medical devices, and there's a real opportunity in London for medical devices. Trudell medical devices, which sells medical devices throughout the world, is a long-established, internationally recognized business in London. Of course, we have the reserve capacity and facilities at the University of Western Ontario in the Robarts Research Institute, in CSTAR.

The fact of the matter is that the foundation's there, and I speak to the foundation because although these will be very challenging times, it's important to recognize the opportunities for success. Although these will be challenging times, we have the ability to help people through them. Although these will be challenging times, we have the opportunity to ensure that businesses, working with government, working with the community, such as the chamber of commerce in London, the London economic development community, have an opportunity to establish and succeed in London as so many others have.

We recognize in our community that there are those who need our help today and will need our help tomorrow. We'll be there to help them. But we also recognize that we have the means to assist them in retraining and finding the jobs of the future in a community that has always supported the jobs of the future and a community that looks forward to supporting the jobs of the future and that will enable and help those jobs and those businesses to succeed.

I ask all members and all members of the community to come forward with their best advice, to come forward with their best ideas, because it will take us all at our best to succeed, but succeed we will; succeed we will, Speaker. I look forward to working with my colleagues on all sides of the House and with the federal and municipal governments as we work to meet the challenges of the future.

I just speak to one little initiative that was maybe overlooked by my colleagues from the party opposite; that is, making the regulatory burden less onerous for businesses. We've started that initiative. I'm pleased to

indicate to the members of the House that I have been speaking—and I know my colleagues Khalil Ramal and Deb Matthews have—with Gerry Macartney, the CEO of our chamber of commerce, on how we can get to a point where we not only reduce the regulatory burden but we make it so much easier for businesses to find out what regulations and rules they must comply with in government, and that they might be able in the future to find out what all those rules and regulations are through one-stop shopping, something the colleagues opposite in the other parties never did accomplish but something which really could succeed for the future.

Interjection.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Now my friend opposite says he got rid of them, but he didn't; he just changed their nature and relabelled. Real progress will come when a business can find out all of its regulatory requirements through one-stop shopping.

As I say, I look forward to speaking with all of the members of the House and the members of my community as we face the real challenges for the future.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased today to speak on this economic resolution because, of course, today is the beginning of Small Business Week. I think the one thing that we can all agree on in this chamber is that small business is the financial backbone of Ontario and our economy. Over 98% of Ontario's economy relies on small business.

But I must change from that to talk about what I see with the McGuinty Liberals. They talk about a five-point plan, and what I see on this side of the bench is a three-point plan. The three points are big spending, big taxing and job-crushing policies. I would like to cover off those as we go through debating this economic resolution, because it is critically important that we finally start talking about things that people are concerned about.

In my riding of Dufferin-Caledon we've had some terrible job losses. In Shelburne just recently, Setex has closed up shop—270 jobs; in Bolton, Brite Manufacturing, 100 jobs—100 families out of work; in Orangeville, Greening Donald closed down—300 jobs. So there are many of us who go back to our ridings and talk to people who are nervous, who are reading the newspapers, who are not immune to what we see in the media reports and want to have our government legislators actually talking about how to improve the situation.

If I talk about the three-point McGuinty plan of big spending, big taxing and job-crushing policies, let's start with the big spending. Government program spending is up \$87 billion. That started at \$64 billion in 2003-04. Someone, somewhere is going to say, "Well, those are all critically important jobs." I have no doubt that they are, but they are not part of keeping Ontario's economy strong. While the private sector has shed thousands of jobs, primarily in the manufacturing area, the public sector has posted gains of 114,000, or approximately a 10% increase. If you break that down further, education

employment is up 8% over the year, health care and social assistance is up 4%, and public administration has soared 13%. I am not sure if I would be able to explain to a constituent across a table what public administration is, but I have concerns that it would involve more spin doctors than doctors and nurses.

The other tie-in to the public sector jobs is something from Stats Canada. Since October 2003, Ontario has created more public sector jobs than any other province and has the second-lowest rate of private sector job creation. In fact, since October 2003, Ontario has created more public sector jobs than all other provinces combined, and nearly four times as many public sector jobs as Alberta. I don't think there's any doubt that when the economy is going well, when governments are putting out policies that are being proactive and making economies strong, there is a call and an ability to say we need to invest more in health and education—but more public sector jobs than all other provinces combined, including the province of Alberta? I need to have someone explain how you can justify that when we are facing very challenging economic times.

Let's be honest: This is not something new that happened in September or October 2008. This is a crisis and an issue that we saw coming, that we have been talking about, quite frankly, in the Progressive Conservative Party for quite some time.

So we have to rein in that runaway spending. We have to rein in the desire to always want more employees, to always want bigger programs. There is a role for government, absolutely. But there is also a responsibility for government to be judicious and to be reasonable and responsible when deciding how to use those taxpayer dollars.

1520

The second point of the three-point McGuinty plan of big spending, big taxing and job-crushing policies is big taxing. What have we done in terms of taxation? The obvious one is the one-time, huge increase of the health tax. It currently is pulling out \$2.7 billion per year in Ontario's economy. Total revenue that this government is collecting is up, \$91 billion from \$68.4 billion, and personal tax revenue is up. So while we are faced, back in our ridings and in our homes and talking to our constituents, with individuals who are dealing with MPAC increases and hydro costs that are increasing beyond their control, we also, quite frankly, have a government that is taxing beyond their control.

Those are three aspects that Ontario taxpayers and Ontario business people can't control. We all—in our own jobs, in our own households—try to manage how much money comes in, how much money gets spent out. The reality is, when government taxes us more, when the hydro rate goes up, when MPAC brings in 25% increases, we can't control that. As governments, I think we have to do a better job of being cognizant and being aware of what is happening out there beyond these walls.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about was the job-crushing policies, because this is something that the

Greater Dufferin Area Chamber of Commerce and other manufacturing businesses have spoken to me about in the riding. I met recently with the Greater Dufferin Area Chamber of Commerce and they talked about some of the things that they would like to see government do, because while it is easy to talk about the negatives in opposition, I think there is a role, as well, for us to come forward with some proactive suggestions. So part of my role as a provincial member of Parliament is to meet with the manufacturers and to meet with the chambers and hear from them what they recommend.

From that meeting with the Greater Dufferin Area Chamber of Commerce, they make reference to the fact that they would “like to see, through tax credits, perhaps, some recognition of the millions of finite resources (both financial and time) that companies spend training employees to ensure we are compliant with the myriad of government regulations. Not only is this type of training costly, but it often inhibits companies, especially smaller ones, from investing in training that might actually move the firm ahead. If you’re not convinced the financial burden is significant, then we suggest the government should pay directly to have all the workers trained, according to the regulations.” Actually, it’s a nice tie-in to something that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has brought forward, which is to say that \$13 billion annually is being spent by businesses to comply with government regulations, and government regulations, quite frankly, that are a bit of a moving target.

They raise an excellent point, and I would like to continue reading from the chamber’s letter to me: “Finally, we seek your advice. We are looking for ways to ensure that all the government rules and regulations that are passed, all the new government initiatives that are launched, all the good work that you are doing to help us, be disseminated in a meaningful, targeted way and not just made available through portals in the ether”—those are the famous websites that the ministers often quote from when they are responding to questions in question period. “Communication requires more than just making stuff available. Like sound, it requires two basic elements, a sender and a receiver”—and this is the chamber talking. “If I can’t hear you, or don’t even know you are trying to communicate, well, we won’t be very successful.”

It raises a point that they talked about in a great amount of detail, which was that so many of the regulations are now out on the Internet. In my riding in particular, there are large areas and large groups of the population—up to 20% to 25% in Dufferin county, actually—that don’t have access to high-speed Internet. So what happens is that they are spending an inordinate amount of their staff time, first, trying to find out what changes and what regulations have been made or changed, and then of course they transfer that into assigning the responsibility to people. In a company of 2,000 people, maybe that’s not a big issue. The companies that I’m dealing with and, quite frankly, that the vast majority

of us would be dealing with are companies of 200 or less. When you pull your HR person or when you pull one of your management team of three aside to review, figure out, the intent and then build the training for a new regulation, there is a cost to the company, both financially and, of course, in the time for that person not to do something else.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, on that note, has some suggestions. They are suggesting that you look at waiving fines, penalties and back charges for first-time, innocent non-compliance with government regulations, and “provide a single point of contact that can reliably inform me of all my obligations as a business owner in Ontario.” I think that’s an important one to point out, because part of the frustration that small businesses and manufacturing firms in Ontario have to deal with is that they’re not even sure which ministry they need to be talking to to find out what regulation has changed. So, we have business numbers; we have lots of ways to communicate that don’t just rely on someone spewing out a website and saying, “Go there; it’s all there.”

Finally, from the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business: “Train provincial inspectors to help small businesses deal” with the rules properly, “rather than slapping them with orders, fines or penalties.” If we are going to make changes, whether they be formally through the form of legislation or, ultimately, regulation, I believe we have a responsibility to communicate those changes more proactively to our partners in the business sector. We would not make a rule that says, “If you’re under 16, you need to have a helmet to ride your bicycle in Ontario,” and not tell anyone, yet we seem to do that far too often with our provincial businesses and manufacturers across Ontario. There will be a rule change that happens through cabinet and through regulation, and nobody bothers to discuss or ultimately inform the manufacturers and small businesses that are most obviously affected.

As I pointed out before, the regulatory burden on business is currently estimated to be \$13 billion annually. That’s an awful lot of R and D; we could be changing our resources and focusing on that. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business told the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs that 66% of their survey respondents said the overall burden of provincial regulation has increased during the past three years. Since 2003, this government has created 437 new regulations, and they’ve revoked only 81.

I want to talk about this, because in the Liberal platform that’s a year and eight days old, there is, in their promise to Ontarians, a comment where they talk about regulations, under “Maintain Strong Fiscal Management”: “Reduce the paper burden on business through a ‘cap and trade’ system for government regulations. Every time a new regulation is put in place, an old one will have to be removed.” Tell me how creating 437 new regulations and revoking only 81 is a cap and trade on regulations.

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You made a promise to the Ontario voters—that they trusted you would actually fulfill—that said you would not create another regulation without eliminating an existing one. And yet we see, obviously, that has not happened: 437 new regulations have been created, and you have removed only 81. Where does that leave the Ontario voter, the Ontario taxpayer, the Ontario business person who says, “How can I trust a government which publicizes a document a year ago that means absolutely nothing”? There is no way that you can justify creating 437 new regulations when you promised—when you made a commitment—to eliminate one for one. You clearly have not done that. So where is the trust that Ontario voters, Ontario business people can have in a McGuinty Liberal government which promises one thing just over a year ago and does quite another?

Keep in mind that this is all happening when, in the last month, they've been receiving their MPAC proposals. We have municipal property assessment letters and flyers coming in the mail. In my riding, the general increase is sitting at around 20% to 25%. And you are saying, “We didn't want to talk about this during the election, so instead, we're going to freeze it. We're going to freeze it during the course of the election.” It's a wonderful little Liberal system. And now what we have is MPAC property assessments that are going up 25%. There is not a taxpayer in Dufferin–Caledon who can accept that without some kind of reaction to a Liberal government which promised one thing and gave us quite another.

I have to quote from the newspaper on this one, because I loved how he phrased it. “The problem for us and for most others is that we” purchased our home “in a particular area because we like it and not to be land speculators. We need a system of property tax assessment that doesn't penalize those who just want to be able to afford to live in a home.”

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Someone is a little disturbed. “I haven't even gotten to the plight of those on fixed incomes.”

It is unfortunate that instead of talking in a reasonable way, we have come to the point where we have to yell across the House, instead of actually listening to the ideas that are coming forward.

Interjections.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm quoting from the Liberal platform, and the response seems to be: “I'll just yell louder and be more aggressive, and then I'll be right.” Is that what we have come to in this chamber? It's a little rich, coming from the other side.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Come to order, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Back to the MPAC: As I pointed out, these are the same taxpayers who are receiving assessment values that are rising in the 25% to 30% range. And because there is no cap—during the election,

we proposed a cap—they're going to have to downsize their home or sell their house, because they can't afford that kind of increase. If you're on a fixed income, if you're looking at your pension or your job disappearing because of the economic system that we have right now, then it's not a very pleasant time to be looking at the Liberal government and saying, “Why aren't you fulfilling some of the things that you actually committed to in your platform?”

It's unfortunate that although this debate was set up as an opportunity to listen to debate, we're instead yelling across the floor.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. It's 3:35. We are on live, and on Rogers, it's cable 105, right up there. I don't know that there's anything much higher than that—that's it. So welcome to this political forum. It's one of the best shows in town. This is true.

Today we're debating a resolution moved by the Liberal government, including an amendment made by my own colleague from Beaches–East York. I've got to tell you, I am so excited, with so many Liberals, having an opportunity to speak when the Premier said to the Liberal members, “You boys and women, go out there and enjoy yourselves as much as you can.” I am amazed and happy to see the minister, the Attorney General, take almost 20 minutes for this resolution. That is how important this is. The federal election is over, and yet we have so many individual Liberal members and ministers taking the time, all of the time, if needed, to debate this resolution. It's a rare thing to witness, because most of the time most Liberal MPPs have very little to say, and yet on this resolution, which has nothing, says nothing, we have a whole lot of members who are going to speak to it. We could be here for the whole week debating this resolution, if you can believe that.

My sense, citizens of Ontario, is that the Liberals have nothing on their plate. They have nothing on their agenda. They're scrambling to create some bill or other to present to this place in order to be able to hold us here until the second week of December. That's how I see it. I could be wrong. I could. I don't want to say that I am prescient in any way, because I don't believe I have that ability, but it seems to me that the Liberals have nothing, or so little, to debate that we are discussing a resolution that speaks about a five-point plan that is failing so utterly that I don't understand why they're debating it. Because, look—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, just to tell you a little bit about the job losses; this is why I don't understand why they would be talking about their five-point plan. It's presented as a way of suggesting that their plan is working, is it not? Yet, if the plan is working, was working, will be working, here are the losses, just to give you a sense of the tremendous job losses we've had in this province for the last couple of years: Sterling Truck,

St. Thomas—700 jobs plus, 600 announced earlier, sayonara, gone; DDM Plastics, an auto supplier of Tillsonburg—430 jobs gone; John Deere, Welland—800 jobs; Henniges Automotive, a.k.a. GDX Automotive, of Welland—300 jobs along the 401 gone; PPG Canada, Mississauga and Owen Sound—320 jobs gone; Volvo, Goderich—500 jobs, au revoir to those jobs; Abitibi-Bowater, Thunder Bay—hours reduced for 150 workers; AbitibiBowater, Thorold, closed plant during November—au revoir to 480 jobs; Toyota, Woodstock, postponed plans for a second shift at their sport utility plant; Progressive Moulded plastics in the GTA—2,000 jobs; Magna's Formet Industries factory, St. Thomas—400 jobs. It's important to keep this in mind as they speak about their five-point plan.

I would rather be hiding my tail as best I could than showing it, because the plan isn't working. Some manufacturing statistics that I think are useful: Manufacturing sales in Ontario decreased 3.1% between July and August—doesn't bode well. Primary metal manufacturers experienced a 13.4% drop from July to August. The transportation equipment industry also reported lower sales in August as sales decreased 4.2% between July and August. Investment in machinery and equipment declined 1.9% last quarter. Investment in new residential structures declined 3% in the last quarter.

October 20 Management Issue Survey results, a poll that was done by reaching into approximately 1,300 companies across Canada: 80% of respondents expressed a negative sentiment toward rising costs on transportation and shipping materials and energy, and 34% of respondents are expecting their sales to decline in 2009, compared with only 17% who believe their top lines will grow next year. The outlook for investment is also negative, with only one third expecting to increase spending on production facilities, machinery, equipment and research and development in either 2008 or 2009. At least 14% expect to decrease investment in these areas over the next two years.

1540

Things are not looking good. The five-point plan is not working. Why highlight a plan that is in dire straits? Why highlight a plan that, when seen in the context of these tremendous job losses, makes you look bad as a government? That's why I don't understand why so many Liberals are hungry to debate a resolution that doesn't look good on them. Why would the Attorney General—in the past, the minister responsible for post-secondary education—talk about a Reaching Higher plan that is failing us? What is the Reaching Higher plan? They call it an investment of \$6 billion in the post-secondary education system. They speak of it as a plus, as a great achievement.

Interjection: It is.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A number of folks in this place who are Liberal are saying, "It is." The reason they say that is because they know nothing about where we stand in the ranking vis-à-vis the other provinces in Canada. We are number 10—numero dieci, numéro dix—last

in ranking in Canada when it comes to per capita funding in the post-secondary educational system.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Pardon?

Mr. Mike Colle: U of T, McMaster—they're great schools.

Interjection: You can't debate from the—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sure he can. Let him. Besides, he's my friend. Michael, sit down.

Number 10. They speak of that with pride. You do, right? You've all got smiles as you talk about that, and you are number 10. I would hide that as a fact, because that fact only makes you look bad in the context of Canada. Within your own context, you could say, "We've increased funding to the post-secondary sector." Okay. That, in and of itself, makes you look good if you compare it to no one. But when you realize that your investment, the one that Bob Rae, my former friend, talked about—he did the study recommending tuition increases, which I strongly disagreed with, and also recommended that you increase your funding. What did you do? You increased tuition fees, and a hefty one at that, whacking a whole lot of university students with tremendous debt. Then Bob Rae said, "If you do that, you've got to increase your investment." So the government said, "Okay, we'll do that too." So they increase their investment, and where does that leave us? At last place in Canada.

Mr. Mike Colle: But what about U of T and McMaster? You haven't talked about those.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, you're going to talk about that when your turn comes; you or your colleague is going to talk about it. You see, as a New Democrat, I have to make my points, and then you make yours. The point is: Your investments were supposed to take us to the middle of the pack. That's what Bob Rae said, and that's what Bob Rae thought. Your funding was going to lead us in that middle range. And where are you? Proudly last—number 10—and all of you keep on saying it. This is why I make fun of you each time you say it. You say you made a \$6-billion investment, and I say, "You're number 10; don't forget that." That's part of your grand scheme, the five-point success plan, which is failing us. This is why we make fun of some of the things you say. Clearly they're not working very well.

Mr. Mike Colle: Our schools in Ontario are the best in Canada.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Our schools, member from Eglinton-Lawrence, are not doing very well. At the elementary level, we have higher class sizes from grades four to eight. We have more special education kids without support in regular classrooms than ever before. If you're going to have a special education kid in the classroom, you need an educational assistant, at least, to support the regular teacher. We don't have them.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry, Dave?

Mr. Dave Levac: It depends.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It depends on nothing. We have fewer people getting the attention they need as a

result of Minister Papatello, formerly the Minister of Education, who decided to move money away from directed funding to help students in need to block funding on the basis of how many students were in the classroom. Since that day, students are going into the regular classrooms without support, and all of the special ed money that used to be targeted for special education—children who needed the help are not getting it.

Interjection: Gone.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Gone. So in the context of all of these job losses, your strategies have failed. In that context, our leader talked about a number of things—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can't hear you—that I think would have been helpful to you in the past, that would still be helpful.

For four, five long years, the leader of the NDP said that we need “an industrial hydro rate so Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates.” For four, five long years he said that.

They produce hydro at cheap rates, yet they have to pay inordinate amounts of money to get the hydro they desperately need. They said, “We cannot compete. Even within our own Canadian jurisdictions, we can't compete with Quebec and Manitoba.”

So it was a useful suggestion made by the third party to say to you that we need to—

Mr. Mike Colle: What about Conawapa?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Eglinton—Lawrence—

Mr. Mike Colle: Conawapa—what about that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As I was saying—

Mr. Mike Colle: Be fair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am trying to be fair. It was a very useful suggestion that he made. They produce cheap hydro. Why should they be paying more for hydro rates than anybody else? They keep people employed in the north, well-paying jobs in the north that are desperately needed so that people don't move away from their hometowns and go to other places like Alberta, but keeping them there. Having an industrial hydro rate would have saved so many of these jobs that I announced that have been lost in the last three years.

Why wouldn't you listen to that? Oh, I see; you had your own plan. What was your plan? Your plan was to lend money to corporations that were crumbling before our eyes. They were saying, “We don't need government money as a loan that we have to pay back. We need an industrial rate that cuts down our rates so we can be competitive. We don't need a loan. We need other measures, such as the industrial rate—lower it so we can be competitive.”

Not once, not one Liberal said, “Yeah, that's a good idea.” Every now and then Liberals say, “Yeah, we've got to work together.” But it seems to me that it's a unilateral kind of working together. It sounds like a soliloquy where we say that we need to work together,

“but it's all about me. It's all about following my Liberal policies and saying at the same time, ‘But we need to work together with Tories and New Democrats. It would really be a great idea.’” It just doesn't work to say, “We need to work together,” and when others make suggestions, you simply turn it away—not good.

We had another suggestion that we made, and that was “a Buy Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs,” and “tougher plant closer legislation”—before I get to that, staying with the issue of a Buy Ontario policy, what's wrong with that? Under New Democratic pressure, the Liberals that had no policy then determine that yes, 20%, 25% would be connected to a measure that says, “We will build here, and it has to be produced here in Ontario”—but under duress and under pressure from New Democrats. We said, “Look, a Buy Ontario policy is no different than a Buy American policy; they do it, and they do it in Europe, and it keeps jobs in your jurisdiction rather than giving them away to other jurisdictions.” It is a modest proposal that Liberals could buy into, and they haven't and I just don't understand why. Then they say that we need to work together. What does it mean to work together? If you reject modest proposals made by other parties that would help our own people in our own province, it means nothing.

1550

They talk about a job training policy that they've got, which only trains a modest number of people. Then, when I brought my resolution forward last week that says, “Let's do what Quebec is doing”—and what's Quebec doing? We often use Quebec as a model for so many things, including the proposal that I brought forward last week, which was that any firm earning over \$1 million should invest 1% of their money in training of their workforce. What could be so wrong with that? If Quebec can do it, since 1996, why can't Ontario? If Quebec can learn from France and Ireland, why can't we learn from Quebec? Yet not one Liberal stood up to support my resolution—and not one Tory, but I understood that and I accept that. Not one friendly lefty Liberal would support my resolution. I know some of you were not here, and if you were here you might have; I understand that. But every Liberal stood up to oppose my resolution, as if somehow there is a training fairy just waiting around the corner to bring the training dollars and the training for all of our workers here in Ontario. There is no training fairy. I said to the Liberals, “I'm not attacking your plan, however modest it is and however inadequate it is.” I was proposing a resolution that would oblige corporations to invest in training. Why? Because they, too, benefit from a workforce that's trained, and it would provide the resources they desperately need to replace their own workers as they age and leave the workforce and have no one to replace them. Not one Liberal stood up to support my resolution, which was a bill—but it's a long story to talk about why it wasn't a bill, but a resolution. I said to the Liberals, “Look, this

measure would help you as a government, it would help the corporations, because then it would prevent one company poaching from another. Companies who train, versus those who don't train and steal the workers of those companies who invest in the training, are poached of their workers, and we don't want that. We don't want one corporation to poach other workers from other companies that have invested. If they all invest, we all benefit from that kind of a plan." But not one Liberal stood up to support me. Where are all the Liberals when you need them? Certainly not around the corner.

Our leader, Howard Hampton, talked about a Manitoba manufacturing and resource tax credit. He speaks of this tax credit as an "investment tax credit that would encourage manufacturers and processors to make capital investments and create jobs. The credit would be 10% of investments in new machinery, buildings and equipment and would be available to all manufacturers and processors making eligible and verifiable investments that result in good-paying jobs. An added incentive of a 20% credit would be available for investments in green industry jobs." It's a plan that's working in Manitoba, and it's a plan that has been rejected time and time again by Liberals.

We have put up a number of suggestions that would help the people of Ontario, and indeed could help the Liberals in power, should they decide to take some of the suggestions and make them theirs. None of these suggestions have been taken up by this Liberal team. They have been rejected each and every time.

What do we have? We have been debating a resolution for the last couple of weeks, and we're going to be debating, it seems, for another week. Why? Because they have nothing else to say.

Your five-point plan is failing Ontario. It's time to reflect on what else you could be doing. It's time to borrow from the third party to get some of your ideas to keep people working.

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

Hon. Michael Bryant: As ever, I listened intently to the speech of the member for Trinity–Spadina, who not only is an excellent orator but also, in this case, was attempting to bring ideas into the Legislature that the government, I say to the member, could reflect upon, although the member will know, particularly with issues such as private members' business or something that's proposed in, say, question period or by way of NDP resolution or by way of press conference—I know; I've sat on the opposition side. If there is in fact a commitment and a seriousness—and there is, with respect to the member for Trinity–Spadina, there is a seriousness in executing. Let's face it: There are some matters that are opposition strategies, I'll say—I won't say "tactics." And I know—again, I've done that. But then there are other matters: There are resolutions, proposals, bills or ideas for which there is a desire for the particular MPP or caucus to actually bring into effect. That requires, certainly, a level of work by the MPP, to discuss it with

other government members, to discuss it with other opposition members, to discuss it with the people on the executive council who are responsible for this, with a view to trying to get a level of understanding, knowledge and, I dare say, trust around a particular proposal, to avoid a situation where it's a rhetorical "gotcha" proposal—which is not, I understand, what the member was saying.

For some reason, around here, in this legislative chamber, we sometimes treat proposals as if they are once and for all either accepted or rejected, and I don't think that ought to be the case. The member says, "What are we doing here? We need to take"—I obviously completely disagree with him in terms of this characterization of our approach to date and what it has done, and I'll talk about that. But what does the future hold? Well, the purpose of this debate is to hear just that, hear from members, and in particular hear from members who are not sitting around that table, who are not sitting in the executive council, who are bringing back to this Legislature what their constituents are telling them, and stakeholders, the people members work with.

The Minister of Finance highlighted one instance of giving credit where credit was due, to the member for—Mr. Prue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Beaches–East York.

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member for East York, who brought forward a proposal. I know that the member for Trinity–Spadina might say, "Well, okay, there's one example; it's the exception to the rule." But this House has not operated like a bipartisan congress in the past, which is not to say that that might not be part of its future when it comes to, particularly, these challenging economic times. The proposal to have bills co-authored by an opposition or a third party and a government member was in the spirit of that. I recognize that does not completely address what the member for Trinity–Spadina is saying.

Just to give one example: Buy Ontario. In the province of Ontario, the government has put forward a 25% requirement that there be Canadian content in transit procurement. So we anticipate that will mean upwards of \$15 billion invested on Move 2020 right here in the province. Is there more that could be done in that area? Perhaps yes, and not just in terms of procurement policies, but in other areas; perhaps yes. Perhaps, in addition to encouraging consumers to buy Ontario and Canadian products, there ought to be other specific structural changes, legal changes, whatever it may be.

What we can't do—and I know the member for Trinity–Spadina wasn't advocating this, or I don't think he was advocating this—is do what happened in the interwar period, after the Great Depression in particular, when there was an effort to turn within that came after a period of enormous prosperity. There was a protectionist impulse, there were a lot of populist policies that came forward, and it just didn't work. Historically, every effort by countries to engage in insular policies that are protectionist and avoid international integration has

simply not worked, which is not to say that the idea of complete international integration does not bring with it very important responsibilities for national, provincial and municipal governments to provide services and training to try to level the playing field; recognizing, for instance, that with respect to the trade situation in Ontario, a lot of our export-based economy, yes, does see manufacturing jobs, high-skill jobs, high-knowledge jobs and all those sectors—which I'll get into in a moment—which allow us to be this export-oriented jurisdiction, means that the wealth of other countries is coming into Ontario—that approach, which is treated with great chagrin, as you can imagine, by some people south of the border.

1600

Just within the last couple of weeks, a pretty well-respected editor of Manufacturing and Technology News wrote an editorial that has retained a buzz in referencing, and I'll quote from him: "The real culprit is that fact that almost everything Americans buy is made somewhere else. The country continues to ship all of its wealth overseas.... The core of America's economic problems stem from the trade deficit and the elimination of tens of thousands of factories and millions of jobs that were creating the wealth the country needed to pay for everything."

Well, I agree to the extent that we have to support our manufacturing industry, that it has to be part of our future, but anybody who wants to argue that the manufacturing industry of today is rendering the equivalent of buggy whips and that the future is 100% in the service sector, I just don't agree with that. I do believe that we need to be increasingly trying to create those circumstances and those policies that will see the manufacture of products that Canadians buy. So instead of Canadians buying products that are built in other countries, built in other jurisdictions, we have to try to better be a part of a supply chain that includes more Canadian companies, and that's going to happen worldwide. But to the quote that I provided from Richard McCormack of the Manufacturing and Technology News, south of the border, there is going to be a big push for Buy America, there is going to be a big push for the protection of American jobs and the American manufacturing industry, and there is going to be a big push to address the trade deficit.

I know the member for Trinity-Spadina was not encouraging a whole scale reversion to protectionism, but there has to be a limit because, with our jurisdiction, engaging in a trade war—which is not, I hope, what the member for Trinity-Spadina was advocating—is one that we will lose. It is not one that our jurisdiction can succeed in. We can succeed and have succeeded and will succeed in this international integration, in global capitalism, but obviously there are going to be some significant structural changes internationally with respect to the financial sector, and there is going to be an on-going effort by this province to try and create those circumstances that will attract investment, that will keep

jobs, that will attract new jobs, and that will do those things that everybody agrees will build a labour force that will make this a good jurisdiction to build a business in and to stay in and to work in.

That means a high-quality health care system. It's a major competitive advantage that Ontario has, that Canada has, over many other jurisdictions, in particular the US. In fact, instead of the employers having to, in some cases, spend huge amounts to pay for the health care expenses of their employees, in Canada, this represents a major competitive advantage.

A recent disadvantage is the dollar. Although today was a very low day—it was 85 cents—I think everybody is in agreement that the dollar is likely to be in the 90s for the near future, and the province of Ontario has recognized and needs to build on making those investments that overcome that. How do we do that? We invest in innovation, we invest in business capital—partnerships with business, partnerships with universities—to assist in allowing businesses to improve their productivity by making direct investments in new technologies.

We also do it by way of investing in people and skills training; it has to be done. Within the first few days of my receiving this appointment, I found myself on the floor of a small factory announcing the investments the provincial government had made in the Yves Landry Foundation, which is administering a program that will see on-the-job training for manufacturing workers. As technologies change and the focus of a particular manufacturing business has to shift quickly in order to be competitive, workers have to be able to shift their own skill set on the job. I think we can expect more and more of that in the future.

The major investment, though, is in people, in human capital, in workers and in businesses that are providing the jobs. That is the marketplace. I know that some Conservatives, members of the official opposition, are of the view that those investments are corporate welfare, that those investments are wrong-headed and that we should just let the marketplace do its thing. The problem with that is that the marketplace includes jurisdictions—the United States, in particular—that provide massive subsidies, massive loan programs and massive incentives for companies to come and build in their state or in their country. That is the marketplace. It includes governments having to provide incentives by way of direct subsidy or loan that will amount to a partnership and leverage greater investments from a company that will allow the company to build its product or develop its technology here in Ontario. That's the purpose of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, that's the purpose of the advanced manufacturing program, that's the purpose of the Ontario Centres for Excellence in terms of encouraging businesses in getting off the ground that is rendering success stories.

Of course, we in government want to talk about the success stories, and not because we are unaware of what is happening out there. We are very aware of what is happening out there, and that is why we have the com-

munity transition program for certain communities. If there is a community that is particularly hard hit and needs some assistance, that's what that program is there for. It recognizes that some municipalities, like Hamilton and Windsor, just to pick a couple, are facing particular challenges, and investments are made in those communities in order to assist them, because they're going through a particularly tough time.

But the success stories are success stories. The \$500-million auto strategy meant that plants landed here in the province of Ontario. Had that not happened, had those investments not been made, then you would not have had the wealth generated in the province that allowed for revenue that was used to build infrastructure, to provide for high-quality health care, to allow for the largest investment in post-secondary education in the province's history and to allow for a massive influx of additional funding for our public education system. We would not have had that revenue but for those investments, nor would we have had those jobs, nor would we have had the increase to the gross domestic product that resulted from that, nor would we have had the experience, the skill sets those workers now have as a result of that.

Obviously we want to remain competitive and attract even more of that sector, and obviously we'll want to retain as many jobs as we can from that sector. But that is not to say in any way that in becoming a global leader in this area this was anything other than a successful strategy. Of course it was. There are jurisdictions around the world that say that that strategy obviously worked. Look at the jobs; look at all the automobiles that were built in this province as a result of that.

1610

It's not just in the manufacturing sector. It's in other sectors: high-tech, life science and clean tech, to name a few. Sanofi Pasteur, a pharmaceuticals company, as a result of an investment by the government will be producing life-saving vaccines at their expanded facility in Toronto. That means more than 900 existing research and manufacturing jobs here in Ontario—900—and creating another 300 construction jobs. 6N Silicon, another example—I raised that this morning at question period—a company producing refined silicon for the solar power industry, is aggressively pursued by jurisdictions in Europe and south of the border.

The leader of the third party was saying, "What about Quebec? Quebec is making investments." Yes, and so is Ontario. Quebec is making investments to try and support the solar power industry and so is Ontario. That's the purpose of the Next Generation of Jobs Fund. I would expect that we're going to see more of the interprovincial coordination, just as you saw with British Columbia and Alberta, as we are putting together with Ontario and the province of Quebec, and hopefully with other provinces as well, as the member makes reference to Manitoba. I was speaking to an individual from the Canadian Manufacturers' Association today from the province of Manitoba, and we were talking about just that: the extent to which we can not only borrow best practices, take

advantage of the best practices that they have learned—for example, in the area of on-the-job training, interestingly, which sees in some cases competitors training their competitors, or future competitors, in part to build the skill set and the labour force. These are all within the future of the province and part of what the government is doing right now with the province of Quebec.

Yes, there's always going to be an element of competition between the provinces, but that doesn't mean we cannot try to work together as a sector or as a region to attract investment and jobs and also potentially harmonize regulations and best practices; to try and take that part of the nation, the provincial-federal divisions, that is a part of our very structure and turn it into an advantage as opposed to one that might make our jurisdiction less than competitive. We are competing with jurisdictions that don't have multiple regulatory regimes, that don't have jurisdictions competing against other jurisdictions. So, yes, we will continue to engage in that healthy competition, at the same time recognizing that we can also work to try and attract businesses together and do the same with the province of Alberta. Minister Pupatello began undertaking that work. I look forward to continuing that work with the province of Alberta so that we can become more of a part of the supply chain for industries and businesses in the province of Alberta, so that we are attracting investments and keeping jobs right here in Ontario. That requires partnerships between the provinces.

Each of the provinces has a role to play in this regard. The federal government obviously has a role to play in this regard. Time will not permit me to discuss that. But we on this side of the House will continue to make those investments in human capital, in business capital and in education and health care. There is a different approach on the Conservative side of the floor.

I appreciate what the member for Trinity-Spadina said in terms of a number of initiatives, many of which I absolutely think we ought to be taking a look at, but international integration is going to continue. Doing so with responsible government policies that also serve the people, serve the businesses and create new jobs is the approach of this government today and will continue to be the approach, although we do appreciate and look forward to taking many of the good ideas from this debate and making them part of Ontario's approach in the future.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for the opportunity to address this economic mess that we find ourselves in here in the province of Ontario. I guess there are a number of players we should thank for getting us into this morass. Bill Clinton comes to mind. In 1999, he cancelled the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933. That act was there to save the banks from themselves, to save other financial institutions from themselves. That particular piece of legislation, drawn up during the Depression, prevented these institutions from running up risky debt and creating high-

flying equity and debt trading that we're seeing as they now self-destruct. They now come running to government, particularly in the United States, the UK and in the European Union, for bailouts while handing out generous bonuses and severance packages. Now we see the downside of Clinton economics. Some did achieve short-term gain over the ensuing nine years, and I would suggest that the rest of us are now enduring the long-term pain.

Then there's Dalton McGuinty, who did his best to spend away every single penny of surplus revenue that he taxed in over the past five years—surpluses during the better economic times created by Mike Harris and the Common Sense Revolution. We've been getting the warning signs from the banks. This government has been receiving the warning signs from the opposition for some time now that tough times were coming. Did Premier McGuinty listen? Obviously not. In fact, in the last fiscal year, revenues were \$5 billion higher than even this government thought they would rake in, and they've spent it all—every last penny. So much for saving for a rainy day; so much for John Maynard Keynes or listening to liberal economists like John Kenneth Galbraith. In fact, instead of the restraint that we should have seen during the good times in the last five years, I predict that this government now, now that we are into these tough times, will come up with basically a half-cocked Keynesian-Galbraithian excuse to continue to spend in the spirit of people like David Peterson and Bob Rae.

I really wonder: Has this government learned nothing from the blunders of those two peas in a pod, if you will—the Liberal David Peterson and the born-again Liberal Bob Rae? Are we looking at a further three years of tax-and-spend McGuinty Liberalism, with the predictable deficits as the only response to this present economic turmoil?

Premier McGuinty couldn't balance the books in his first year in office, and that was during good economic times, I'll point out. Who now doesn't expect him to run our finances into the ground? Who would not expect McGuinty to run our finances into the red now, with the all-too-predictable economic cycle that's upon us? Is the McGuinty plan to spend our way out of the coming recession? We saw that a number of years ago. It didn't work.

Question: Does anyone over there have an inkling of what this government will do during the coming economic storm clouds? Does anybody across the way run a business or run a farm, or perhaps have a degree in economics? If anyone does, I would ask you to stand up, because in my view you're presently needed in cabinet.

I really wonder if anyone across the way has an interest in any of this stuff. I posit that it's one thing to have credit cards and expense accounts, to dream up new taxes and suffocating rules, regulations, red tape and forms to fill out, but does anyone running this government have an inkling of how to address the coming tough economic times, how to address the coming—actually, the present—new realities and to steer a course beyond merely taxing and spending?

1620

I don't think a lot of people in my riding made a lot of money in the last few years when the stock market was being artificially revved up with easy money. I do worry that if this government does not get its act together, people in my riding—I think of farmers, truckers, industrial workers, small business people—are all presently about to get kicked in the teeth. I think of the cattlemen, the young farmers in my riding getting into hog production, my tobacco men. People living in Caledonia, people living throughout Haldimand county, are pretty well at the end of their rope. They've already been kicked in the teeth.

I do welcome this debate on the economy, and I point out that we now have a finance minister who recently suggested to the media that the upcoming economic statement will be printed in red ink. Now, that generates more concern about his ability, let alone his willingness, to deal with these economic challenges. Seven months ago this government stressed that to achieve a balanced budget, they would be looking for a billion dollars in savings and efficiencies. Here's the question: Where's the evidence? Where are these savings and efficiencies? And will the books be balanced? As I said, Premier McGuinty could not balance the books in his first year in office. That was during good times. How will we do it now in the coming tough times?

With the present turmoil in the financial markets, people are rightfully worried and they are looking for answers. All we hear from this government is to trust in the five-point plan—the plan, I've heard it in this House, for failure, as I understand—and to await the updated budget numbers they'll have, I think, two days from now.

As Ontarians demonstrate this tremendous anxiety about the state of the economy, we only hear innocuous platitudes from across the way. In recognition of the gravity of this situation, this government should have already presented the economic update. This government should have already presented a detailed plan to address the coming revenue shortfalls and the projected bloated public sector compensation commitments that we've been hearing recently.

With job losses over the last five years—we know of the 230,000 manufacturing jobs—continued high taxes, continued free spending, bigger energy price shocks to come from electricity—we were recently told that that's going up another 10%—and price shocks from natural gas increases, this government has ignored the makings of an economic wreck, and sadly, no one in this government seems ready to acknowledge what is happening.

It wasn't so long ago that Ontario was Canada's economic engine. We've known this for years. We paved the way for prosperity in the country with a very strong economy. Regrettably, the numbers show that we've lost that status. We've now become, and are becoming, a have-not province. Our private sector job creation is the lowest in the country, and our economic growth rate this year is also expected to be at the bottom. And everyone knows about those 230,000 manufacturing jobs that disappeared on Premier McGuinty's watch.

This official opposition has stood in the House and has warned this government of the economic storm clouds—clouds that were on the horizon a few years ago. Now they are upon this province, and we see a province that continues to dither. We've given warnings. Ontario is potentially facing an economic storm, and instead of changing course, the McGuinty crew is headed straight for it as they fiddle with long-standing traditions like the Lord's Prayer, and debating speed limiters on tractor-trailers. There may well be a lot fewer trucks on the road if the brakes continue to be put on the economy with the present provincial policy. As of next year, I remind the House, Ontario will be out of the business of building pickup trucks.

This government motion claims that the higher dollar has prompted them to address the financial crisis. We heard mention recently of the dollar being at 85 cents. Actually, I picked up a reading today, and the Canadian dollar sits at 83 or 83.249 cents, something like that. Why were we not debating the strong dollar last year? Last year at this time, the dollar was not 83 or 84 cents; it was \$1.10. Why was there no motion put forward at that time when we had a very strong dollar? Why was this government not taking note of the economic situation at that time?

Again—and this has been put forward in the House—one theory is that this motion was put forward, very simply, because it was in the middle of an election, a week before the federal election, and in a fairly blatant attempt for this government to assist Dion and his federal Liberal colleagues.

The question is out there: Are the wheels falling off this Ontario economy? Both the Bank of Montreal and the Bank of Nova Scotia, very recently, are predicting a recession, not only in Ontario but across Canada. Ontario's real gross domestic product declined 0.3% in the first quarter of this year, 2008. That's following a mere 0.1% increase in the fourth quarter of 2007. In 2007 Ontario's GDP rose only by 2.2%, down from a growth rate of 2.5% in 2006.

This steady slippage in gross domestic product tells us something. Over the past few quarters, it conveys the ominous signals about Ontario's economic future. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December last year. Ontario's unemployment rate today remains above the national average, and regrettably it is forecast—this is a forecast by all the major banks—to stay that way right through 2009.

This from the TD Bank: "We anticipate further bad news in Ontario's employment pipeline over the next 18 months, with the jobless rate moving above 7% and personal income growth essentially stalling."

Housing starts: a decline of 27.8% in July, down to just over 59,000 units.

Over the first six months of 2008, Ontario manufacturing sales were 7.5% lower than the same period of 2007. Again, that means lost manufacturing jobs, and we all know that present 230,000 figure: 230,000 jobs lost in our factories in Ontario.

Since October 2003, Ontario has created more public sector jobs than any other province and has the second-lowest rate of private sector job creation. In fact, since October 2003, Ontario created more public sector jobs than all other provinces combined, and nearly four times as many public sector jobs as created in Alberta.

The problem is that government jobs do not create wealth. In that sense, they really can't be considered real jobs from an economic standpoint. They are simply a redistribution of income by taxing private businesses and individuals. Every new public sector job obviously creates an equal demand for taxes from those who are working in the other jobs.

I want to make mention of farming. In less than one year since the last election, October 2007, Ontario has lost 8,500 agricultural jobs. That's a decrease of 9% in farm employment. Thanks to McGuinty, young farmers in hogs, for example, are getting no support at all through any program.

We have also been looking at the past five years of runaway spending. The fiscal policy approach of this government appears to be focused largely on increasing government revenues—they even created a separate ministry for that purpose, which turned out to be not a very good idea; that Ministry of Revenue no longer exists—in order to fund, guess what? Increased government spending. In light of the current economic outlook, this policy approach now looks dangerously risky and economically harmful.

1630

As we all know, in 2004, Premier McGuinty brought in the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. Government revenues increased—no surprise there. They increased by \$28 billion to the \$97 billion figure today. That's a 41% increase. They increased from \$69 billion in 2002-03—that was the last full year of the Ontario Progressive Conservative government. However, Mr. McGuinty in those five years increased total spending by a whopping \$27 billion. That's a 40% increase—again, up to the \$96 billion level of today. That's up from only, in a sense, comparatively speaking, \$69 billion in 2002-03. So what we have here is five years of knee-jerk liberalism—jack up taxes and then jack up spending by 40%.

To put this in perspective, consider the historical spending of the Ontario government. The NDP government of Bob Rae only managed to increase total spending by 21% in five years. In the eight years of PC government, under both Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, total spending increased by 20%. Only former Liberal Premier David Peterson holds a candle to McGuinty's runaway spending. Premier Peterson at the time increased total spending by a record 45% in five years. So Mr. Peterson still holds the provincial crown for tax-and-spend liberalism.

But instead of using the unprecedented revenue that we've seen come in today and last year and the previous three years to provide tax relief, for example, or to pay down the debt, this present government has used this

money to fuel the traditional year-end spending sprees that we've seen in the last five years—again, robbing taxpayers by shovelling cash out the door as fast as they can.

As this government continues to mortgage against future taxes, total debt in Ontario continues to climb. It now sits at \$168 billion. For every man, woman and child in Ontario, that debt comes in at \$13,125. Don't forget: Add the interest to this debt. That eats up \$9 billion every year, and that's just under \$25 million a day in debt interest repayment.

As my time wraps up, I wish to quote Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School Of Management. He presented this year to the Standing committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: "In Ontario, we still have one of the highest marginal tax burdens on business investment in the world."

Ontario presently imposes the highest effective tax rate on capital in Canada. Ontario's effective tax rate on capital is higher than the worldwide average, and higher than averages in the United States.

Developments so far this year continue to confirm the separate paths the western provinces have been taking in comparison to Ontario and to manufacturing-heavy central Canada, this according to RBC Economics. Record-high commodity prices and strong global demand for natural resources other than forest products are the benefit. We do have an issue with the Canadian dollar; we've got a weak US economy and high energy prices. We need a plan, and we need a plan from this government quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this extremely important motion and a very important issue.

I've been very intently listening to the debate that has taken place in this House for the last two weeks. First, I want to thank all the members who have participated in this debate. It is an extremely important issue, and it is important that all of us in this Legislature, on behalf of our constituents, take the time, take the opportunity to share our ideas about the economy not only in Ontario but also in Canada.

Before I get into some ideas, I wanted to highlight the kind of extraordinary times we are living in at the moment, in terms of what's happening globally. This is definitely not the time to engage in partisan rancour and finger-pointing activity. That is not going to serve anybody's purpose in our province.

I don't know about you and other members in the House, but when I'm at home at night, watching the news or reading the newspaper, half of the time, like many of our families in Ontario, I'm trying to make sense of what's going on globally; I mean, it's extraordinary. The details are extremely complex as to what is causing all this economic chaos. The system as we have known it—in fact, major world leaders are meeting to redefine the system, to find the flaws, and try to fix it. That's what our

families are doing when they're sitting at home and trying to figure out what is going on. The last thing they want to see, when they look into this chamber, is a bunch of finger-pointing. They know the problem. People are smart; our families are very smart. They know what the problem is. What they're looking for from us is, they're looking for solutions; they're looking for ideas. That's the job which we have been given on behalf of our constituents: to put our collective minds together—we are very smart people around this room—to come together and come up with ideas, come up with solutions that will create a long-term solution for the changes that are taking place in our economy.

This is not a made-in-Ontario problem. This is definitely not even a made-in-Canada problem. This is a global issue, with far-reaching ramifications. It's up to us to see what we can do here in Ontario to make sure that our families, our constituents and the members of our community continue to prosper. I think it is incumbent upon us to be together in order to do that, as opposed to highlighting the problems and difficulties and, "You did this" and, "We did that" etc., etc. I don't think that really creates the long-term solution we are looking for.

I want to talk about, in particular, one aspect which I think is extremely important and that we need to focus on, and that is building a knowledge-based economy. As the member from Ottawa Centre, with Carleton University and St. Paul University within the riding and with the University of Ottawa next door, and with Silicon Valley North to the west of me, that is something that is extremely important to my constituents, to the city of Ottawa and, I think, across the province: What are we doing as a collective to ensure that we are supporting, producing and encouraging cutting-edge technology, things which others are just thinking about but we are researching, we are commercializing and putting out in the market?

Just this past Friday, I was listening to CBC Radio early in the morning. I heard something which really struck me, and I thought I would mention it here today: Ideas are a renewable resource. That kind of caught my attention, because it's true. Ideas keep coming up, and we never run out of ideas.

If you think further, ideas turn into research and research turns into innovation. In the case of Ontario, innovation turns into the iMac or BlackBerry, and that's just to mention two. There is immense potential in this province for turning ideas into productivity, into products that can create jobs, wealth and prosperity in our society.

As a government, as elected members, we should all encourage all kinds of investment, all kinds of unique ideas to make sure that innovation becomes the cornerstone of our economy, so that we can, to an extent, get away from the ups and downs of the economy, as possible, and to our benefit.

1640

Friday morning, I had the opportunity, with Minister Wilkinson, to announce Ontario research grants under the Ontario research fund, basically investing in our

scientists. We had a few professors from Carleton University, a university from which I very soon will be graduating with my master's degree, investing in their ideas, saying, "This sounds like a great thing. Here's some money so you can work with students, your graduate and undergraduate students, and with your research to turn this idea into something innovative." Right there, that's the kind of investment we need to do, so the next thing we know it's the next generation of BlackBerry or IMAX or whatever technology you might want to refer to.

That's why I'm very excited about the 10-year tax exemption, the Ideas for the Future Act, which we are also debating in this Legislature. Once again, what we are doing is that if you take intellectual property that has been created into an innovative product anywhere in Canada, not just in Ontario—any Canadian university, college or research centre—and commercialize that product right here in Ontario, you will not pay corporate income tax for 10 years. I have had the opportunity to speak with many businesses, with many professors or researchers in the universities in Ottawa, with lawyers who practise in intellectual property law, and again I've been told that this is one of those extremely unique, out-of-the-box ideas which the government of Ontario is pursuing; that we need to encourage that kind of tax incentive to spur further innovation in the province. These are the aspects we need to really focus on to ensure that what we're doing is creating a long-term solution to the challenges in the economy.

Yes, we need to focus on short-term issues, because it's extremely important that our families continue to have the jobs they need, to ensure that they're supporting their kids and their parents and grandparents. That is why investment in infrastructure is very important, because it does create short-term jobs. It does help individuals in our communities, in our constituencies and in our homes ensure that they have meaningful jobs. That's why I'm very proud that this government, the McGuinty government, has spent \$9.9 billion in infrastructure this year alone. In my riding of Ottawa Centre, we have seen many, many projects undertaken to renew infrastructure, to ensure that we get away from the infrastructure gap that exists—I mean, we have an infrastructure portfolio which is crumbling, and we need to keep investing in it to make sure there are good roads and sewer systems and a water system available. Also, on the other hand, we are creating the kinds of jobs, short-term jobs, necessary to get away from the economic challenges we are facing across the province.

But I think that a key focus, a key emphasis, should be on long-term solutions. It is, as I said earlier, our responsibility as elected members to create that hope within our communities, to inspire confidence within Ontarians that we are one of the best and the brightest in the world, and their government and their elected members are, together, ensuring that there is a future; that we are working to ensure that we as Ontarians will continue going further and further in our federation, as we call

Canada. That's why I think the emphasis on skills training of individuals and investment in our universities and our colleges is extremely important, and creating apprenticeship programs is extremely important, because we are investing in our future.

To be very honest, this whole debate that is going on is about the pages who are in our Legislature. It's about their future. What we are working toward is to make sure that these kids, who are out here helping us every single day, have a bright future in this province. It's their future we're investing in, and it's up to us incumbents to create confidence in them so that they feel good, so they know that when they grow up, their government has invested in them. That is what we need to do as a province, as an economy, and that's why I'm very proud of the kind of steps that we have taken in our economic stimulus package to ensure that we can get away from this global turmoil that is taking place. I'm confident that we will get through this as a collective in this whole Legislature by working with our communities, by working with our families.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this important motion.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I appreciate the opportunity to make a few comments and join this debate on the economy, because certainly this is the most important issue that is concerning Ontarians today, as we see worsening economic conditions locally, nationally and internationally.

Frankly, Ontarians get it. Ontarians understand that there are some things that are beyond the control of the Ontario government to deal with. There are things that are happening internationally that are big and that we can't do much about. But they also know that there are some things that can be done that are not being done by this government. The McGuinty Liberals love to tout their five-point economic plan for dealing with the economy, but there's one thing they don't mention—and to my mind this should be front and centre—and that is: Stop spending like there's no tomorrow. That's what this government is famous for, and if you look at the statistics, let's look at 2002-03. In that fiscal year, this government spent \$69 billion, in total, on all programs. What is it today? It's \$97 billion; that's an increase of 40% in spending in those few years. And over those years, have Ontarians received 40% better health care, 40% better infrastructure, 40% better transportation systems? I believe that most Ontarians would say an emphatic no—nothing is 40% better; in fact, it's arguably worse.

To put this into perspective, let's also take a look at some of the spending of other governments. Bob Rae's NDP government increased government spending by 21% in five years, whereas the PC governments over eight years, under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, increased spending only 20%. But nobody comes close—although the McGuinty Liberals have tried, they still can't beat the

record that was made by David Peterson's Liberals. They managed to increase spending by 45% over five years. So they're the big winners, but the McGuinty Liberals are close behind.

What does this spend-a-thon lead to? That means that, even in years of record revenues, the total debt in Ontario continues to rise, not fall, and it's currently up to \$168 billion. That means that there's over \$13,000 in debt for every man, woman and child living in Ontario. Instead of using the record windfalls in revenue that the government has received over the last few years, instead of using it to pay down debt, which would be the responsible thing to do, this government has been spending money on year-end spending sprees and election promises. That has huge repercussions in terms of the future, because it hampers our ability to spend money on the programs that we really need in Ontario and also to protect ourselves from things that are going on internationally and that are beyond our control. Currently we're spending \$25 million a day on interest repayments; that adds up to over \$9 billion annually. That's a huge amount of money that could be spent on keeping seniors in their homes, spending on employment programs and helping to lift people out of poverty. But instead, no, we're spending money on interest. That's what the ramification is of using the money that you get during those windfall years and not paying down debt. So I would suggest that instead of the five-point plan, the McGuinty Liberals add a sixth point to the plan, which is: Stop runaway spending, if this so-called economic plan is going to have any chance at success.

Looking at the other five points of this economic plan, I would like to comment specifically on two of them because they really resonate within my riding particularly, and one is on the McGuinty Liberals' commitment to making targeted tax cuts. I'd suggest that so far they're missing the mark, if that's what they're looking at, because businesses are leaving this province in droves. We've had many job losses in my riding of Whitby-Oshawa as well, which indicate that this part of the targeted tax cut plan is not working.

1650

Why isn't it working? Because we haven't cut taxes enough. Ontario's corporate taxes are still way too high, despite the federal government's efforts to reduce federal government tax revenues to a 15% corporate tax rate. They've been strongly encouraging the McGuinty government to lower its corporate tax rate to 10% over the next few years, so that we could have a combined 25% corporate tax rate, which would be a huge incentive to international businesses to locate here. Don't listen to us, and don't listen to the feds. Look at what other jurisdictions are doing across the board in other provinces. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are not all Conservative governments, but they realize the value of reducing corporate tax rates to incent businesses to do business there.

The capital tax, still widely seen as a huge, significant barrier to investment, was gotten rid of by the federal

government in 2006, some two years ahead of schedule. But here we are still dealing with it in the province of Ontario.

Then there is the granddaddy of all of them, the so-called health tax. As the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has noticed, to date the health tax has taken \$12.2 billion out of the pockets of families, businesses and individuals in Ontario. As Kevin Gaudet, of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, has noted, that's enough to build 12 Rogers Centres, just to put things in perspective. Why can't we be realistic about this? The Premier has said that the health tax is here to stay. Let's face the fact that in the face of our economic situation there should be nothing that's off the table and there should be scrutiny of every program to make sure it's going to provide value for taxpayers' dollars.

One of the great myths of this so-called health tax is that most Ontarians believe that all of this money is actually being used to improve health care in Ontario, when of course we know that's not the case. The money simply goes into general revenue and gets spent on a variety of programs. Yes, some of it is health care, but a lot of it is not. Most people are incredulous when they find that out. They would be happy to pay this money if they were seeing a benefit, if they were seeing an improvement in the health care being delivered across this province. But of course we're not seeing that. Moreover, we're not seeing an equitable allocation of health care resources across this province.

We've heard the Premier saying that we should be seeking fairness for Ontario from the federal government; in fact, it's even included in the body of this motion. Well, what about fairness in Ontario in terms of health care? What about fairness for all parts of this province? I can tell you that for some parts of Ontario, specifically high-growth areas like my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, Durham region and many other areas across the province, including Dufferin county and many other ridings that are represented in this House, there is not the same kind of equitable spending in terms of health care dollars for all communities across the province.

That's not just anecdotal. The Growing Communities Healthcare Alliance, formerly known as the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, has done some excellent work documenting the allocation of health care and social service agency funding across the province that clearly demonstrates the large and ever-widening gap between high-growth areas and the provincial average. In 2007-08, there was a gap of \$221 per resident between the provincial average and what some of the high-growth areas were actually receiving for health care dollars. That means that in some parts of Ontario, including my riding of Whitby-Oshawa, they only receive about 76.5% of the health care funding that is received in many other parts of the province. This is true not just for hospital funding but for other types of health care funding and social service agency funding. For my constituents, this means there are many big concerns, one being that many people in my riding can't find a family physician. Many more can't

access essential services like mental health services, because the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering Hospital has been forced to close their in-patient mental health beds and move them to Toronto. That means that there isn't local service available for people with high mental health needs. Some people actually have to wait, if you can believe it, a year to get an appointment with a psychiatrist in my area. That is unconscionable and potentially quite dangerous.

In my own riding of Whitby–Oshawa, the actual hospital in Whitby has been physically closed for a over a year and a half because of a fire, which is putting a huge strain on many other parts of our health care system, the other hospitals and service providers, because the Whitby location was the focus for the regional dialysis which other hospitals are now being forced to provide. But this government doesn't seem to be in any hurry whatsoever to reopen it. That, again, is a huge stress on our health care system.

So, certainly the people in my riding are not feeling that they're getting better-quality health care. They know that the gap is ever-widening and it's not being addressed by this government.

In conclusion, I would suggest that this government stop wasting their time braying at the federal government about not getting fairness, and concentrate on providing fairness in Ontario for health care and on really working hard to develop and implement an economic plan that's going to be of benefit to all Ontarians.

I thank you very much for the time.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to be able to join in on the debate on this motion on the economy by Premier McGuinty.

I think, first of all, we do need to begin by recognizing that our economy is facing serious challenges. We all know that the banking system, the economic system, in the United States has had some extraordinary developments and extraordinary challenges and that that is disrupting international economies. Here in Canada, given that our next-door neighbour is in serious economic trouble, that inevitably will have an impact on our economy, and we recognize that. I must say that we're seeing that play out in my riding of Guelph.

Most people who would be watching here in Ontario know the University of Guelph, but a lot of people aren't necessarily aware that my riding is also a manufacturing town, and the largest component of that manufacturing is, in fact, auto parts. Inevitably, when the big assemblers assemble less cars, they need less auto parts, and unfortunately that has led to some really significant layoffs, particularly in the auto parts sector in Guelph. We really do understand that those folks who have been laid off are going through terrible challenges. Finding jobs to replace those jobs they've lost is a huge challenge for those families that have been laid off in Guelph, and they're facing very, very difficult times, and our hearts really do go out to them.

I'd like to talk a little bit about what we are doing about that. Insofar as the provincial government can have some impact on that, we have been working very hard with our five-point economic plan. I'd like to talk specifically about how that has had an impact on my riding, because while we're seeing negative impacts in my riding because of the economic challenges that we're going through, we're also seeing some really positive things happening in my riding. I think that we need to recognize that while negative things are happening, we also have some very positive things happening, and that those positive things are, in fact, a part of our five-point economic plan. Let me just quickly go over some of those things.

The party down the way here talks about tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts, as if that's the only thing you should do, but we understand that tax cuts are one of the things that we must do. We have, in fact, eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers and the resource sector, effective January 2007, which has led to \$190 million in rebates going out to Ontario manufacturers and people in the Ontario resource sector. For other businesses, it has been cut retroactive to 21% and will be phased out for all businesses in Ontario—the capital tax—as we move through the next few years.

1700

One of the things I've heard that really pleases me is that the chamber of commerce in Guelph has said, "That's a move that we needed to have happen. We've been talking in Ontario for years about the need to eliminate the capital tax. It's the McGuinty government that has finally moved on eliminating the capital tax in Ontario and we are very grateful for that."

There's another piece of legislation before the House right now, first announced in the budget, and that's a 10-year income tax exemption for industries which take research from a Canadian research institution and commercialize that. For those industries that do that, those businesses that do that, there will be a 10-year tax exemption. I find that to be a really exciting opportunity for my city. In fact, there's one project going on in Guelph that has the potential for this to be a huge help.

Some of you who have been around this place for many years will recall that under the Conservative government, the jails in Guelph were closed, and the jails were actually one of the major employers. There were huge layoffs in Guelph, or at least loss of jobs in Guelph, related to those closures of the provincial jails in Guelph by the Conservatives. What that has meant is that in Guelph there is land originally used by provincial corrections; also, more recently, some of it has been used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. That land is now central to the city of Guelph. It's the largest block of unused land, quite frankly, in the centre of the city, adjacent to the University of Guelph.

We've been having a discussion in Guelph about how that land should be used in the future. We have some very exciting proposals on how we can take the strengths that Guelph has—its strengths in food technology, bio-

tech and bioproducts—how we can take those research strengths and develop an industrial centre of excellence in the bioproducts area, in the food technology area. This piece of legislation that is before the House right now will allow us to give a financial incentive to those businesses who want to partner with the fine research capacity we have at the University of Guelph to actually move that research farther into commercialization, because we know that if we are going to move this economy forward, we will not do it simply based on the jobs that used to exist in Ontario. If we are going to revitalize our economy, we have to look at the jobs of tomorrow. And the jobs of tomorrow are jobs based in those areas, those exciting innovation bioproducts areas, and Guelph is situated in a very exciting place to move that forward, so I'm very pleased.

Another thing that we have done is invested very heavily in infrastructure. There's a \$60-billion infrastructure program that relates to hospitals, schools, courthouses, transit and roads and bridges. One of the things about investing in infrastructure when economic times are tough is that it creates jobs, good jobs, in the construction industry. But not only does it create jobs in the short term; what it does is, it leaves us with that economic infrastructure in the long term. Guelph has really been very blessed with a number of investments related to our infrastructure initiatives. For example, we've received money so that Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis can move into a new, expanded home and provide much better service. That required a capital investment from the province of Ontario to enable them to do that.

Within the last month, I've been present at the opening of two new elementary schools in Guelph. Parts of Guelph are growing, and to serve those growing parts of Guelph, those subdivisions where there haven't been any schools, we have built new schools. It was really a joy to see the enthusiasm of the community coming together around those new community hubs, those new elementary schools that are becoming the focus of their new communities.

One of the things we have never had in Guelph is a residential hospice. We have a very, very good Hospice Wellington association which has provided support for people who are facing the end of life, but we've never actually had a residential hospice. We were able, in last year's budget, to secure the funding to move forward with the province's share of that residential hospice, and that project is ongoing to, again, invest in the public infrastructure in the city of Guelph, but also to provide valuable social services, in this case valuable health support services.

Another really exciting opportunity in terms of health services, one of the things that our government recognized when we looked at health services in the city of Guelph, is an understanding that Guelph is underserved in terms of the number of long-term-care beds. We have been able to provide the funding for 287 new long-term-care beds in Guelph, and that's going forward as a 93-bed wing at the existing St. Joe's long-term care—a 194-bed,

I guess it is, new home. The approvals have just been granted by the city of Guelph to get that sod-turning under way—so 287 new long-term-care beds in Guelph.

Not only does that provide long-term care, but that helps with a problem in our emergency room. One of the big problems in the emergency room in Guelph is that of bed blockers. There are a lot of people waiting in the emergency room for service, and they can't really get the service in the emergency room because it is full of people who should be in the wards, and they can't get a bed in the wards because the people in the wards should really be in a long-term-care home, and it all backs up. So what we're also seeing is that that infrastructure investment has a ripple effect in providing better service at the hospital, not just in the long-term-care homes—another great thing.

We've heard a lot of grumbling from the opposition about how we've been handling the province's debt. In fact, this year there was \$600 million that went to paying down the province's debt, but there was also \$1.1 billion that went into infrastructure in every municipality in the province of Ontario.

Guelph got \$11 million to support infrastructure in the city of Guelph. That's on top of the money we got through the municipal infrastructure program last year, a project that has generated a great deal of interest in Guelph. There is what used to be a convent at the Church of Our Lady. Anybody who knows the city of Guelph—there's a magnificent cathedral, the Church of Our Lady, up on the biggest hill in the centre of town. Adjacent to that is a convent, which has been abandoned for many years. The diocese was facing having to demolish the building; it had no further use for the building. It's a wonderful old limestone building, very significant historically, and the desire of the people in Guelph has been to convert that old convent into a new civic museum. With that infrastructure grant, we were able to get \$5 million to go to that project. That was the money that was needed to make that project move ahead. I've got to tell you, it was a cold blustery day, standing in the parking lot of a cathedral, and we had people there yelling and cheering and crying because they were so pleased that we had finally gotten the money that would let that go ahead. So there are a number of things that have happened that are really important.

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Our gas tax initiative, which has allowed us to take gas tax and invest that in transit, has actually been very important in Guelph. Guelph, traditionally, has had a bus transit route, with very high ridership, but which was designed as daisy petals around the central square in downtown. The money from the gas tax enabled the city of Guelph to be able to fund a new perimeter route around the outside of Guelph. That's what the gas tax money did for Guelph—so, very, very important.

Another one of the things we understand is that if we're going to go and look at those new jobs, people need to be more highly skilled. We've had a major investment in skills all throughout the various levels—in

secondary, in colleges, in universities, with training and apprenticeships. What we're seeing is a payback there. We've got 100,000 more students in universities than when we came in. We've got a large number more that are going into apprenticeships, about 25,000 more already going into apprenticeships. We've changed the high school program so that we get more kids going through to graduation. We've had, because of that, 10,000 kids graduating who probably wouldn't have under the old program.

One of the things we've done is we've introduced the high-skills major into high school, so that there are routes for kids in high school who don't necessarily want to pursue an academic route but who do have talents and certain skill levels, and we're making sure that high school can provide those skills. In Guelph, I've got a couple of really exciting ones. We've got a food and hospitality one. The Minister of Agriculture was there at College Heights just a little while ago, looking at some of the wonderful things with Chef David Racco that we can do with helping students to learn healthy food prep.

We've got another high-skills program at one of my other high schools, Our Lady of Lourdes, which is robotics—so, totally different; a huge variety of these things. They're learning how to design robots. They won an Ontario competition and went on to be finalists at a high school robotics competition down in Michigan. So, again, a huge, huge success there, and wonderful things that we're doing.

We've invested \$1 billion in agriculture. If I can come back to where I started, we understand that it isn't just manufacturing, that there are other opportunities in Ontario. Again, the Minister of Agriculture was in Guelph—you've been in Guelph a lot recently, but that's a good thing—recently to take part in the opening of the Guelph Bioproducts Discovery and Development Centre. We have a Premier's chair of excellence. We're funding the chair, the director of that centre. What we're doing there is providing research that can look at products that come from the agricultural sector or the forestry sector and use them to create products that can be used in the industrial sector, so that you can replace non-renewable plastics with renewable products that give you plastic-like materials. That's going on at the University of Guelph. It's based on the investments we're making in innovation, in research at the University of Guelph, and it's going to provide us with a great opportunity to move forward in the future.

Yes, our economy has challenges. We admit that our economy has challenges. We admit that there are families who are hurting because of the layoffs. But it's also important to understand that we're making the right investments in our economy and that with our five-point plan we will all work together and move our province forward.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm pleased to join the most important debate in Ontario today, and that is the state of

our provincial economy. At a time when world markets are extremely volatile and when Ontarians are worried about losing their jobs and paying their bills, it is timely and relevant that we are having this emergency debate today.

The challenge, of course, before us is to ensure that this debate is substantive, that the problems we face are taken seriously and that the solutions we each bring forward are considered regardless of which political party they come from. We need to be honest about the circumstances our province and its economy are facing, and we need to work together to bring our province out of a recession.

We have learned in recent weeks that Canada's economy has stronger fundamentals compared to other developed nations, and that our banking sector is the envy of the world. In today's *Ottawa Citizen*, Dennis DesRosiers, founder of DesRosiers Automotive Consultants, pointed out: "Our banks are rated five of the top 20 banks in the world.... We have a strong banking system in Canada and that is going to help us get through this." The same article, written by Vito Pilieci, concludes by pointing out, "Earlier this month, the World Economic Forum stated that Canada has the best financial system in the world, largely thanks to mortgage market laws that have prevented Canadian banks from taking on the same kind of toxic debt that their American counterparts have."

Unfortunately, while the World Economic Forum sees the strength of the entire Canadian economy, the province of Ontario's economy has weakened since the McGuinty Liberals took office. We are now lagging behind other provinces, and we have not been sufficiently sheltered from the economic turmoil faced by our neighbours to the south. I think that's in part because the McGuinty Liberals have not taken seriously until now the economic file. Today, Ontario faces some of the most severe economic circumstances in the country, and the facts before us are troubling for legislators, economists and citizens.

Earlier this year, the Toronto-Dominion Bank reported that Ontario is on track to becoming a province with have-not status, a province that will receive equalization payments. We are set to receive these equalization payments in 2010, when our per capita GDP is projected to fall to 5% below the national average.

We all remember in this chamber when Ontario was the economic engine of this country. Our economy was the strongest in Canada, but sadly, today our fiscal capacity has fallen in four years from \$400 above that fiscal line to just \$84, on average, this year. Ontario's economic growth has slumped from first to worst in Canada. This year, our provincial unemployment rate is now the highest it has ever been in 33 years. It is now higher than that of the national average.

There are serious consequences to these very real problems, and in this chamber we have a very sombre message for Ontarians who could use a little injection of hope at a time when we are confronted, in this province, with massive job losses in the manufacturing sector and

in other sectors right across this province. One must ask: If Canada's fiscal fundamentals remain strong, according to the World Economic Forum, why, then, is Ontario, Canada's largest province, in a recession?

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I fear that the problem is twofold. The first part of the problem is the ignorance, by the present government, on economic policy. I say this with the utmost of concern. When you consider the facts, it is clear that the economic downturn Ontario is facing has been brought on since the McGuinty Liberals took office in 2003. Higher unemployment, a lower per cent of the GDP and straddling the line of have-not status—all since Mr. McGuinty took office. Their economic policies and their lack of interest in the economy in general have led us to this point.

The second part of the problem, of course, is the lack of understanding of the economic crisis which we are in and the absence of any workable solutions by this McGuinty government to the challenges we face. Let me explain the problem in more detail, first in terms of the previous economic policies of this Liberal government and then in terms of what the Liberals are suggesting as proposals to get us out of this recession.

Today in the Legislature, my colleague Tim Hudak of Niagara West—Glanbrook pointed out four of the failed economic policies of this government. The first one: Less than 20% of the funds from the \$500 million in the AMIS program has been distributed to Ontario manufacturers since 2005. If you believe 100% in this initiative, then why are only 20% of the funds being invested?

Less than 18%—this is my second point—of the \$500 million allocated by the McGuinty Liberals for the province's forestry sector has been utilized. This is quite a problem, considering that our forestry industry is one of the most important industries and one of the most important sectors in this province, particularly in the north.

The Next Generation of Jobs Fund, created 200 days ago, has made one funding announcement—that's it—even though the program is supposed to have a turn-around time of 45 days. The question is: What have you been doing with the other 155 days? Absolutely nothing.

According to media reports, only 600 people are currently enrolled in the McGuinty government's Second Career strategy since its creation six months ago. Of course, this is a strategy paid for fully by the government of Canada—thank you, Mr. Stephen Harper, and thank you, Mr. Jim Flaherty.

Most of these failings are a result of the 2008 budget. Since tabling and then passing the 2008 Liberal budget, our economic outlook has significantly worsened. The Liberals left no room to manoeuvre. For example, since the budget was passed this past spring, the price of a barrel of oil has increased by 35%. Their budget projected a balanced budget in 2008-09 and 2009-10 after deducting contingency reserves, and our GDP is now poised to come in about 0.5% under its plan. That will cost Ontario taxpayers about \$500 million. All this, in the face of major economic indicators that should have told the McGuinty Liberals to slow down, halt the spending,

reduce taxes and get a hold on inflating their bureaucracy. Finally, after their failed policy is an international economic crisis, the Liberals have decided to join the debate. So I'd like to welcome the Liberals to finally debate this with the Conservative Party, and I hope that they will take some advice from us in the Progressive Conservative Party.

This, of course, brings me now to the Liberals' five-point plan and their desire to convince us that their solution is the right one for this economic crisis. So I'll discuss it, but I will not support it. Let's run down the five-point plan, and I'll add my thoughts as I read through them.

Investing in skills and knowledge: This point is actually code for, "Thank you, Steven Harper, for funding our Second Career strategy with your \$357 million in federal skills training."

Their second point, investing in infrastructure for a stronger Ontario, really means, "Municipalities, we promised you this money when we thought we had a surplus. But since we might be in deficit financing this year, do you think you can spare some change?"

Lowering business costs is their third point. This is code for, "We raised the cost of business, and everyone knows it. But we're really, really sorry."

Fourth, strengthening the environment for innovation, is code for, "As we have seen in the money we handed over to Dell, this is not really about saving or creating jobs; it's about employing people long enough to print pink slips." This is actually not funny. Maybe it's a funny little line, but it's not funny. I think we actually had one of our Liberal colleagues say, "We're creating short-term jobs." What is the point? Fix the economy. Do what we need to do to get on with this.

Anyway, I'll go back to their fifth point: Forming key partnerships to strengthen Ontario. The first partner I can think of is the federal government. But after continually picking fights with the Prime Minister, his finance minister and his housing minister—I'm surprised that they haven't picked a fight yet with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but that's coming. The new government hasn't even sworn in its cabinet, but I'm sure they'll find a way to pick another fight.

These are challenging times, and Ontarians expect us to work together. They require strong leadership, and they deserve it. Today's resolution and debate would be far more meaningful had the government entered our discussions by working with the opposition, in terms of briefing us on the state of their books, providing us with the opportunity to work on the solution together and, of course, ensuring that this debate is relevant.

This week, the finance minister will deliver his finance statement, and this is what I hope is included in it, because this will be good for the folks in Nepean—Carleton but it will be great for people right across Ontario.

I hope they have a plan to bring the three party leaders together to work out and implement a plan for Ontario—not a partisan plan but a productive plan.

Restraint: Kevin Gaudet of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said that program spending by the Liberal government has increased by 30%, limiting the ability of the government to offer tax relief to Ontario families. I hope that many people, regardless of political party, joined their federal counterparts in the last month. What was really important was we all had the opportunity to go door to door and talk to the people we represent here. In some cases, we might even have gone to a place that another one of us represents. In any case, I can tell you that what I heard time and again at the doorstep is that people are finding it's tough, with higher food prices, higher gas prices, higher utility prices. Some people are losing their jobs. They can't afford big government spending anymore. They need some relief at home. That's what that government should be looking at providing.

They should be cutting business taxes. Roger Martin, who heads their Ontario Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, has been calling for lower business taxes. He reports to the Liberals. He's been telling them for years to cut business taxes. I hope they actually start to listen to Roger Martin on Wednesday.

Reduce regulatory burdens: Catherine Swift, of the CFIB, tells us that senseless regulations are costing Ontario businesses \$13 billion a year. That's an awful lot of money. That's enough money to put toward new machinery, investments, innovation, hiring new employees, priming the pump, so that we can actually get more people working in this province; a province, I might add, that while Canada's stature in the world is rising because of our sound banking system and the strength of our economy, its largest province is afflicted with a slowing economy.

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So these are four simple points. The first one, I think, is achievable as early as today. The others are what Ontario business people are calling for to bring Ontario out of a recession created and abetted and fostered by this McGuinty Liberal government. These are not pie-in-the-sky ideas, and they don't rely on federal money, partnerships that the Liberals don't want, surpluses the Liberals don't expect, programs that don't work and problems that the Liberals created.

As I mentioned, I think this is a very important debate. In our caucus, we have been discussing for as long as I've been elected, which was 2006, the challenges that the economy is going to face. I'm really pleased that the McGuinty Liberals have decided to engage in this debate. It wasn't very long ago—in April, in fact—that I spoke to their 2008 budget, where at the time I remember my colleague, our finance critic Tim Hudak, warning the Liberals that we were going into a recession. He warned them that we were going to be receiving equalization benefits. He warned them that our percentage of the GDP was dropping. They did nothing. Their budget in 2008 was quite unremarkable, with the exception that it raised and increased spending. Ontarians can't afford much more of their spending. Ontarians need relief, and I

would urge the finance minister this week, when he delivers his economic statement to Ontarians in this Legislature, that he think about real measures that will make a real difference to people whom we represent.

You know, the real challenge that the Liberals face is that they've stuck themselves into a rigid ideology. From time to time in this chamber we'll talk about tax cuts, and they'll hiss and they'll boo and they'll pull their hair out, but the reality is, tax cuts are happening right across this country, and they're happening whether it's a provincial Conservative government, a provincial Liberal government or a provincial New Democrat government, because it's the right thing to do in challenging times.

So you folks opposite have a big job to do. You will not be judged by your massive health care premium. You will not be judged by broken promises. You will not be judged by cuts to farmers and agriculture. You will not be judged on anything else. You know what you will be judged on in three years? On how you handled this economy. You will be judged on the number of people you put out of work because of the fiscal policies that you have adopted and employed. That's what you will be judged on, and that's why it's extremely important—as much as you want to heckle and jeer—to take this very seriously. This is an economic crisis. It is happening in other parts of the world, but we know from the World Economic Forum that Canada is well placed to weather the storm. It is your job to make sure Ontario is well placed to weather the storm.

So I'm going to conclude now, but I think it's extremely important, during these times that are very confusing to people who have retirement savings, to young families who have purchased their first home, that we take this role in this chamber very seriously and remember that what we do in this chamber and what we pass on as law and the plans that we put in place impact real people.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wish everyone good luck, and I look forward to hearing how the finance minister and Mr. McGuinty are going to solve this provincial economic crisis.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I am delighted to have the opportunity, as a rigid ideologue, to put a few of my views on the record this afternoon. I apologize to the good folks in Peterborough riding for being a rigid ideologue when I get a chance to chat today about what we're doing.

First of all I want to talk about some good news. Just last Friday I had the opportunity to be in the municipality of Havelock Belmont Methuen, indeed in the village of Havelock, to announce—through the good work of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs for the province of Ontario, her parliamentary assistant my colleague the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, and indeed on behalf of the Premier of this province—a \$5-million investment from the Ontario Ethanol Growth Fund for Kawartha Ethanol Inc.

What's interesting is just to see the enthusiasm of that farm co-op—the members of that farm co-op that have

made that important project a reality. They were enthusiastic about investing in Ontario, not the Herbert Hoover–R.B. Bennett approach that we're hearing across the aisle. I don't want to quote the very distinguished federal finance minister who talked about investing in Ontario, but I met 25 individuals at Havelock last Friday who were prepared to make a solid investment in the future of Ontario, a solid investment in Peterborough riding and a solid investment in the municipality of Havelock Belmont Methuen which will create 45 new jobs. We're looking forward to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and her parliamentary assistant, and indeed if the Premier is available, in March 2009 to open up this state-of-the-art ethanol facility in Havelock, Ontario, which is going to be a closed-loop system. All of the by-products that will be used will be putting electricity back into the Ontario grid—a real success story in the riding of Peterborough. But it doesn't just stop there.

We talk about manufacturing. Of course, one of the largest plants that GE has in Canada is located in Peterborough, Ontario. We currently employ about 1,200 employees on that site. It is the headquarters of GE nuclear products. I just want to read verbatim from an ad that appeared in the Peterborough Examiner on October 4, 2008: talk about confidence in Ontario and Canada:

“GE” energy “Motors Division, Peterborough, large motors and generators, manufactures engineered-to-order AC and DC motors for a variety of industrial applications, including petrochemical production, mining, steel mills and air separation. Motors up to 65,000 HP and generators up to 32,000 kw have been designed and built on this site. We are a world leader in providing high-value, custom, large-motor solutions leveraging premier technology and quality. This is a Canadian ... design and manufacturing facility with a global product mandate. We offer a competitive salary and benefits package, and the professional advantages of environment that supports your development and recognizes your achievements. Located an hour's drive northeast of Toronto in the beautiful Kawartha Lakes region, Peterborough boasts an extraordinary quality of life, outstanding educational facilities (Trent University and Fleming College)—thanks to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, that's made many investments in both Trent and Fleming—“and a new, 500-bed regional health centre” that just opened its doors on May 9. Thanks to the revenue that's generated by the health benefit in the province of Ontario, the government of Ontario was able to put \$200 million into that new facility. “A vibrant arts and cultural community, exceptional sports facilities and programs for all ages, and an expanding regional retail/commercial base make Peterborough a special place to work, live and call home.”

It is interesting: This ad in manufacturing is the largest recruitment initiative of GE Peterborough since the mid-1970s. Whom are we looking for? We're looking for quality specialists, supervisors, engineers, project managers, electrical systems and control engineers, mechanical/electrical technicians and technologists,

mechanical/electrical engineers, and we're also looking for fitter-welders, millwrights and industrial electricians. Indeed, beyond that we're creating junior and management positions to supervise all of these people. This is one of the great success stories in manufacturing in the province of Ontario.

Again, you hear the doom-and-gloom, R.B. Bennett–Herbert Hoover approach that we hear from across the aisle.

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Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: My good friend from Eglinton–Lawrence talks about the Bush–McCain–Palin view of the world.

So, there's a lot of great optimism out there, if you just take the opportunity to consider it.

This afternoon, I did get a little concerned when the member from Dufferin–Caledon was talking about a number of municipal issues. Many of us who had the great privilege, members on this side of the House—indeed, I'll go back to that famous AMO meeting in 1997. The then Premier of the day came in with his large entourage of 25 or 30 people, with all the big, fancy backdrops, to announce the revenue-neutral Who Does What plan. I remember that we were all in Ottawa and we were there to listen to the Premier's speech. A few of us were standing in the back of the room that day at the Who Does What panel—you were in municipal politics; you might have been there at that meeting, Madam Speaker. A number of us thought for a moment, and we did a quick analysis of what the Who Does What ramifications would be for municipal governments in the province of Ontario. Well, it wasn't too long after that that we got the opportunity, when we came back to Peterborough—we had our great finance staff of the city of Peterborough. Their director is still there, my good friend Brian Horton. That's when I nicknamed the Who Does What panel as the “Who Got Done in” committee. That evening at Peterborough city council, I said that when you did the calculations, municipalities were going to get done in, and that's exactly what happened.

When that government had the privilege of being government, they just about destroyed municipal government in the province of Ontario. In fact, they were given advice not to do some of those things. The very distinguished David Crombie, a well-known mayor here in Toronto and a former federal cabinet minister, was charged with the responsibility to provide them with some advice about what should be handled at the municipal level and what should be handled at the provincial level. One of the things that David Crombie recommended that they didn't pay any attention to, because I guess they thought he didn't know much about municipal government, was that you can't off-load some of those social programs onto the property taxpayer—social housing and some of the social welfare costs. They just dumped that on the municipalities. In fact, many of the municipalities really got done in through that exercise.

I'm very proud to be part of the government, over the last five years that we've had the privilege of governing,

that has started to upload some of those responsibilities. We've uploaded the cost of public health to a 75%-25% basis. We've uploaded the costs as a partner in housing. We're taking back the ODSP benefit costs and drug costs on a very progressive basis. We look forward to when the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announce the further evolution of how the province of Ontario will take some of those costs that are income-redistributive in nature back to the provincial level where they belong and have the property tax look after those items that were always identified to be supported by property tax.

Again, the member from Dufferin-Caledon talked about assessment in the province of Ontario. Well, that's a good one. Who brought current value assessment into the province of Ontario?

Interjection: Who?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was the Conservative government. And to make matters worse, they off-loaded 90% of the assessment costs, an impact that was picked up by municipalities in the province of Ontario before assessment was a function of the Ministry of Finance.

I'd be the first one to admit that that system needed to be reformed. We had the situation here in Toronto where some properties in Rosedale hadn't been reassessed since 1925, and out in what was then the city of Scarborough, they were using a 1975 assessment base. All of us in this chamber recognize that there were some inequities in assessment that needed to be corrected. But we had MPAC brought in—again, municipalities picked up 90% of the cost. Many of the assessors who were working in the Ministry of Finance took early retirement because they didn't want to have any part of MPAC, so we lost all that institutional knowledge that, I think, put fair values on properties in the province of Ontario.

Thank goodness, from our side, the Ombudsman came in with about 50 or so recommendations to reform MPAC, and being the responsible group that we are, we brought those 50 recommendations in. The new assessment notices will be brought out. Any decreases in assessment will go down automatically and any increases will be phased in over four years.

We've brought in a high degree of transparency. I remember as a city councillor going and representing some of my constituents to appeals where the onus was on the individual to prove that MPAC was wrong. Through the work of the Ombudsman and the reforms that we've brought in, now the onus will be on MPAC to prove the value of that property. So for them, our friends across the aisle, to talk about what's happening at the municipal level of government truly is shameful for what their record—I mean, downloading all those services, virtually killing municipal government in the province of Ontario. To hear some of their speeches now about municipal government leaves a lot to be desired.

I want to talk a little bit about our five-point plan. There's no question Ontario is certainly facing some real economic challenges, but it's interesting to note, in June of this year, Tom Courchene—whom we'd all recognize in this chamber as one of Canada's leading economists,

headquartered at Queen's University—wrote a paper, and he said: "Let's cut some of the myths that are being perpetuated here in Ontario." In fact, from 1977 to 1982, under the leadership of one of Ontario's most distinguished Premiers, Mr. Davis—who, of course, during his 14 years as Premier had 14 straight deficits—Ontario, as Tom Courchene points out, technically qualified for equalization. Why did that happen in that five-year period? It was because there was a rapid escalation in energy costs. It was the first big wave of the price of oil going up internationally.

When you look at equalization and the formula, some people say it's complicated. It's not really all that complicated because when it comes to equalization, you add up your fiscal revenue base in any given province. So any time there's a huge escalation in energy costs, particularly for those provinces that have the resources, your equalization formula is going to be thrown out of whack, because the Premiers from those provinces have always argued that because of the finite nature of natural resources, all the revenue shouldn't be calculated on a full-value basis—which was always very interesting to me, because if we take a kilogram of iron ore out of Sudbury or take gold out of Timmins, that's always been calculated in Ontario's economic base on a full-cost basis.

So the real issue is, when we have rapid increases in oil and natural gas, it throws the equalization formula on its head. A province like Ontario, because of that and the increased fiscal capacity brought about by rapid changes in energy prices, would technically be put in a position to be a have-not province. What happened between 1977 and 1982? They rewrote the equalization formula so that Ontario wouldn't receive it, because of its historical nature, as the late John Robarts used to say, as the linchpin of Canada's Confederation.

So indeed, I think these things need to be pointed out because we have an interesting rewriting of history from across the aisle on many of these key issues that I think need to be addressed. I do have some time to take the opportunity to talk about the five-point plan.

The other thing I'd like to say is, when I'm chatting with the mayor of Peterborough, my good friend Paul Ayotte, and the warden of Peterborough county, my good friend Ron Gerow, they're very impressed by how we've made a lot of strategic investments. I know, for example, through the distribution of the surplus of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, that the city of Peterborough gets about \$7 million to invest in priorities in Peterborough. They haven't seen such a cash flow in many, many years. They were starved to death for those eight long years during the Harris-Eves administration, as the infrastructure crumbled in the city of Peterborough.

Let me tell you, when October 2003 came, for many of the municipalities, including mine, it was certainly a new day, that there would be the establishment and the nurturing of a new partnership between the province of Ontario and municipalities across the province of Ontario.

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I know that the county of Peterborough got \$2 million from the fiscal surplus. That will allow them to start rebuilding bridges and roads, the kind of things they need to do. But when you put that on top of the MIII initiative that we've brought in, there's renewed hope in our municipalities, a great sense of optimism. I don't know about other ridings, but when you're in Peterborough right now, you can't move for graders, dump trucks, building this, doing this—a great sense of optimism.

I just talked about GE and what they're doing and the investments in Kawartha Ethanol Inc. The good news is out there. We can dwell on and on and on like the R. B. Bennett–Herbert Hoover/McCain–Palin–Bush approach, but you've got to be optimistic out there.

When we start talking about some of our investments, I look at the agri-food sector, which is so very important to the 40% part of the Peterborough riding that's rural. I look at \$1 billion to help farmers and support our ethanol program. I mentioned what we're doing in Peterborough. We have the new risk management program, designed by our government, certainly helping out the grains and oilseeds sector. We have \$150 million for the cattle, hog and horticulture sector.

We're providing some targeted tax cuts and more spending on training and retraining. We've initiated about \$3 billion in targeted tax cuts for businesses that our friends across the aisle voted against.

On the training program, they voted against the \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan, including the Second Career strategy to retain 20,000 workers.

There are a couple of other things I just want to highlight here. It's really interesting, because each and every day we hear from the opposition, we get the "spend" questions asking us to provide more of this and more of that.

Let's talk about nurses, for example. During the Harris era, there were 8,000 nurses in the province of Ontario who got their pink slips, and indeed the Premier of the day actually equated nurses to being as obsolete as hula-hoops. Remember when he made that statement? Now they want us to go back to the old days of giving nurses a pink slip.

Let me tell you, the Minister of Community and Social Services just came in here, and one of the reasons that she got into municipal politics is that she was a very distinguished Ottawa city councillor, but beyond that she was a nurse, and she was able to witness right up front those 8,000 nurses, many of them from the Ottawa area, who got their pink slips. She wanted to come to Queen's Park to right that ship. One of the ways we did it was that we brought in—controversial at the time—the health care premium. But we've been able to use those dollars from the health care premium, as I said, to build a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital in Peterborough, and for five family health teams that have reduced the wait list for access to primary care by 10,000 people. We've put more nurses and front-line care workers into our long-term-care homes. I frankly admit that more has to be done.

These are just the fruits of our investments in Peterborough and all the good things that we're doing.

It's rather interesting. One of my friends across the aisle asked a question today about putting a new MRI in her community in Lindsay, Ontario. Well, when they stand up and ask those questions, do they think we're paying for this with Canadian Tire money? It takes fiscal resources to make those kinds of investments. So we have this really interesting contradiction. One day, they stand up and say "Cut, cut, cut," and by Wednesday it's, "Spend, spend, spend." I think they've got to get a consistent message out there.

You look at their campaign platform from a year ago. I know that faith-based schools was a centerpiece, but when you look at some of their other initiatives, there were a lot of "spend" items in that platform. And I know my friend from Glanbrook—what is it, Tim?

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, I'm out of time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have five minutes. I enjoyed my friend from Peterborough's comments, although his recollection of history reminds me of Joe Biden's recollection of history when he said that, when the stock market crashed in 1929, FDR went on television to calm the nation. You remember that one? Television was not available to families across the United States, or North America, at that point in time, and, secondly, FDR was not even President at that point in time. So my friend has a very similar recollection to Joe Biden's.

My time is limited, so let me say this: I really hope that when the Finance Minister stands in his place on Wednesday afternoon of this week to read the economic statement, which is a sort of halfway-through-the-fiscal-year update, he will not announce that the McGuinty government will be running a deficit in 2008-09. I really hope that's not the case, because all that means is that he is loading up future generations to repay that fund, plus interest, putting another burden on our children and grandchildren. The McGuinty government has already run up the provincial debt to record levels because of their reckless spending.

Why do I say that? Well, do you know what? Revenues to the Dalton McGuinty government are up a phenomenal \$19 billion because of your tax increase on the backs of working families and seniors, because of increased transfers—quite frankly, generously from the federal Conservative government's additional funds that have come in from non-tax revenues—some \$19 billion more revenue coming. Let's put that in perspective: The entire budget of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador is \$6.4 billion. The entire budget of the province of Nova Scotia is \$7.1 billion. I'll bet if you throw in New Brunswick there, those three Maritime provinces combined would not have a budget of the \$19 billion of increased revenue that has come in to the Dalton McGuinty government. So why I'd be flabbergasted, with that much more money coming in, that

Dwight Duncan would open the floodgates and spend all of that money for the McGuinty government so they'd be running a deficit in 2008-09. Frankly, it is incomprehensible.

What did they do? How did they generate those funds? Well, the result is, while in the short term they may have increased revenue, they have done some significant medium- and long-term damage to our economy. Their big moves, once they became government, were to increase the tax on the backs of seniors and working families and to raise the tax on new business investment in the province of Ontario to the highest in all of North America. The result: Over 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have now fled our province under Dalton McGuinty, many of those in our area, in Hamilton and Niagara. And what is the experience of the seniors in our province and our young families trying to make ends meet? They're facing higher taxes. They are facing higher prices when they go and fill up their grocery cart at their grocery store. This winter they'll be finding higher prices when they're trying to heat their homes. Energy prices, it was just announced, are going to increase one more time. All the while, they're seeing a liquidity crisis, the value of their savings and their RRSPs drying up, and the cost of borrowing potentially

increasing as well and, this past month, receiving skyrocketing property assessments in their mailboxes, courtesy of Dalton McGuinty's new assessment scheme that's going to raise taxes on homeowners across our province.

So I do hope that the Finance Minister in a couple of days' time will rise in this House and actually have a plan to reduce the tax and regulatory burden, to help create new jobs in the province of Ontario and restore Ontario to its rightful place as a leader in Canada in growth and job creation. Secondly, I do hope—there are record revenues coming into the Treasury—that Dalton McGuinty hasn't wasted this incredible opportunity by spending it all without setting any kinds of priorities and by announcing a deficit on Wednesday. That would truly be a horrible circumstance for Ontarians and a very difficult burden on families in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The time for debate has expired.

It is now 6 p.m., so I declare this House adjourned until October 21, at 9:00 a.m.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
		Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu

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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
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
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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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
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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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	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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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	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
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Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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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
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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
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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