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des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 22 October 2008**

**Mercredi 22 octobre 2008**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
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*The House met at 0900.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 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. Frank Klees:** In the time I have remaining, I would like to read into the record a very substantial plea from small business owners that was delivered to me by a representative of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. There are numerous such pleas signed by individual owners of businesses. It reads as follows:

"While Ontario businesses, including mine, struggle to cope with high fuel and energy costs, a strong Canadian dollar and intense foreign competition, we are further undermined by the heavy-handed, enforcement arm of government.

"Regulations continue to multiply, imposing ridiculous cost and use of time on small business. To make matters worse, more inspectors are imposing more fines, penalties and back charges against law-abiding businesses like mine, for their unintentional errors in dealing with outdated, confusing, or costly government rules.

"The Ontario government needs to boost business confidence in Ontario at this time, not drag it down! Aren't we all on the same Ontario team?!! Fines, penalties and back charges for rules I'm not aware of, should not be used to build government coffers. Let's redeploy enforcement staff to helping business owners reach the right side of the regulations:

"—Waive fines, penalties and back charges for first-time, innocent, non-compliance of government regulations;

"—Provide a single point of contact that can reliably inform me of all my obligations as a business owner in Ontario;

"—Train provincial inspectors to help small businesses deal properly with the rules, rather than slapping them with orders, fines, or penalties."

I have a number of these petitions that were delivered to me personally, and I know that other members of this Legislature have them as well.

No one is asking the government to compromise the health or safety of employees, no one is asking for a watering down of standards and no one is proposing that there should not be consequences for non-compliance with regulatory standards. What is being asked is that every citizen who interacts with government, including businesses, be treated with respect and civility. That's what we're calling for: Treat the citizens of this province with respect and civility.

The striking of a select committee, as we have been calling on the government to do, will be an important signal that the Premier, his ministers and this government respect this place, respect the Legislature and every member of this Legislature, because that will then legitimize the very debate the Premier has asked us to become engaged in, rather than have it rest as simply more political spin. Strike that select committee. Allow that select committee to travel the province, to invite people to come forward and present, as the federation of independent business is doing, so that we can hear what the practical solutions are and what the practical needs are for our communities. If the Premier and the finance minister are serious about their call to this Legislature and to members of this Parliament to provide them with meaningful input to help develop an action plan for Ontario as we move into very difficult financial times, then they will agree to strike a non-partisan select committee to deal with the issues before us.

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

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I'm delighted to join the debate on the economy. It is something, obviously, that impacts us all every single day, regardless of who we are or what our particular vocation is, so I'm really pleased to be able to stand in my place—in the peoples' place—to share a little bit about where we're at with respect to Ontario's economy.

I'm happy, frankly, because the commitments and progressive policies of the McGuinty government indeed have our province and this government in a position to weather the current economic storm, in spite of the ill winds that are blowing around the world right now. I think it could be said that there is arguably no jurisdiction anywhere in the western world that has equipped itself better to face any impending economic downturn than Ontario. As the Premier has often said—and I agree with

him—we took the time and were prudent enough to fix the roof while the sun was still shining. As one who has made the mistake, in the physical plant sense, of not having done that and borne the price of having to replace a wall and part of a roof, I know how important it is to do that. So we'll not only weather the storm and whatever it brings, but we intend to survive and thrive through whatever challenges we have.

We have a history of doing that. The pioneers would race to finish building a home so that the baby that was just born wouldn't freeze to death in the winter. We got through the Great Depression, as a people of faith who were able to work together to make the kind of difference together that we needed to do. We went to war to fight for freedom at home and to defend it abroad. I'm absolutely sure that we'll get through whatever is pending, whatever is on the horizon for us.

**0910**

And why is that? Simply put, it's because as Premier McGuinty has said so many times about fixing the roof—in addition to that, Premier McGuinty has been the first Liberal Premier to win back-to-back majorities in 77 years. There is a reason for that. The reason for that is that he gets it. He understands that better than any person I think I've ever met on the face of the earth. How's that for a starter? Nobody would remember the Good Samaritan if he hadn't had money. Remember the innkeeper, Cheri? The first thing the innkeeper wanted to see was the cash, right? So we can't stop and look over our shoulders and spot and respond to the needs of the vulnerable, be they seniors or folks who are sick and waiting for an operation, or the little boy in my riding who's got a learning disability—you name it—we can't do that unless we have a strong, prosperous and competitive global economy. We need to continue to work at that.

These are challenging times. Most of the challenges that we're facing today are, to be frank, out of our hands. The slumping US economy, high gas prices, the ups and downs of the Canadian dollar, sometimes we have a federal partner and sometimes we don't—more often—well, I won't go there. And so on. But you know what? We're going to come through these challenging times because our Premier and our government had a plan to deal with the short-term needs of the economy. You've perhaps heard it referenced in this House from time to time—the five-point plan. Has anybody heard about the five-point plan that we have?

**Interjection:** Tell us about the five-point plan.

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** I want to share a little bit about the five-point plan. The most important thing I need to say is that it was put in place before global forces changed our current economic landscape. But this five-point plan is still the right plan for us here in Ontario. Importantly, it shows and reflects the long-term vision that Dalton McGuinty has had for Ontario's economic future. First and foremost, this government's economic plan focuses on this province's greatest asset: our people. It's clear that our five-point plan will make—and is making—a real difference in the lives of people.

I need to just share with the assembly that one of the things that we do in my riding, the great riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot—the riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts and the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams—is we have a series of special advisory and listening groups: on the environment, on education and a new one on post-secondary education. We have a really important one that we meet with from time to time called our business advisory group. We hear a lot of thoughts about how we can assist the business folk in our riding—and across Ontario—and how we can change the business climate. I'm pleased to say that I had a very, very favourable response in seeing implemented many of the ideas that the entrepreneurs in my riding, those who work every single day to produce the wealth of our prosperous competitive global economy—the ideas that they have.

Our government, like no other government in Ontario history, is investing in people. We're investing in people by helping to retrain thousands of Ontario workers through the Second Career and other programs; programs, more frequently than not, that are in partnership with others, notably our union brothers and sisters in my beloved city of Hamilton: the carpenters and the steelworkers and the plumbers and joiners and steamfitters. We're working with them and they're growing up a whole new generation of apprentices who will secure those high-paying jobs and continue to, figuratively and literally, build our great province.

Right now, we're helping people who've lost a job get a new job with support for tuition, living expenses and transportation, linking them with the employers who need them. I could wax on eloquently about our investment in post-secondary education, the Reaching Higher plan, the single largest investment in post-secondary education in Ontario in the last 40 years. Over 100,000 new students, as a result of that recognition that they are our future, are in fact benefiting from a post-secondary education and will, in fact, be out there in the economy, earning the incomes that will ultimately protect us all. We have some 100,000-plus vacant high-skilled job openings in this province, jobs that are begging to be filled, but you can only fill them when you can train up a competent cadre of people to occupy those jobs. We have it right: We're working very, very hard specifically on that through the various programs that I've already mentioned and others.

Some of the research investments that we made with the new innovation centre—and again my beloved Hamilton, my alma mater, McMaster, voted, by the way, as one of the world's 100 best universities. We're working very, very hard with our Ontario public service, recently voted one of the 100 best employers in the country, and the other day, in *Toronto Life*, one of the top 70 in Ontario. First time in Ontario's—in Canada's history, actually—that a public service has been listed as one of the best 100 employers in Canada. I think we should be proud of that, particularly when we hear some others talking about how they sit around and breathe each

other's fumes, right? As if they—anyhow, enough; I think everybody gets the point.

We're also about lowering the cost of doing business through the province with specific business tax cuts and reductions. And I can assure those in the House that we are already feeling the positive impact of this approach in my riding. I hear from my colleagues all across the province: It's working. It's prudent, thoughtful, strategic intervention by a government that gets it and by our partners who are working, every single day, to build a stronger economy. Simply put, we're enhancing our competitiveness in order to give Ontario businesses a further advantage when they need it most, which is now. To accomplish this we're aggressively partnering with business all over the province to push our economy through these challenging times, and we're doing it now. We're not waiting; we're doing it now. We built that foundation and that foundation is bearing some fruit for us.

Furthermore, this government is investing in innovation, particularly when it comes to green technology and information technology, both of which will be key, as the Minister of Innovation knows all too well, to our continued successful participation in the global economy. In fact, we've gone from last to first in wind-generated energy and we're building the largest solar plant in North America. The green economy is coming upon us all fast. We can pursue no greater effort to help to strengthen our economy and to do our part to combat climate change than to understand and engage in this process. Our government has proven over and over again that it's keen and green—[keenandgreen.ca](http://keenandgreen.ca); check it out.

**0920**

We were the first government to come to the table with funding to clean up that awful toxic mess in Hamilton harbour known as Randle reef. I don't even want to get into the greenbelt and the endangered species and the Clean Water Act and the clean air act and all the other things that have placed us as leaders in North America—world leaders.

Finally, we're making significant investments in Ontario's infrastructure with the help of our municipalities. The \$1.1 billion that some see as a trifle investment is in fact making a significant on-the-ground and in-the-ground difference. Infrastructure is important—roads and bridges, hospitals. Do you know, Minister of Health, our government has invested and is investing and currently has cranes putting together hospital and infrastructure in Hamilton alone worth over \$1.32 billion?

**Hon. David Caplan:** I knew that.

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** You did know that.

**Interjection:** Billion or million?

**Hon. Ted McMeekin:** Billion, with a "B."

Our investment will make our province more competitive, and the infrastructure investments are going to create, I'm told by the people who can advise us on that, about 11,000 new jobs. This work on bridges and our highways, our transit systems, is vital to our province in both the short and the long term, and an important employment initiative right now in Ontario.

Where I live and throughout the Hamilton area, people can already see the McGuinty economic policies working for them. My honourable colleague Minister Smitherman made note of this the other day, when he talked about the skyline changes in Hamilton and the kinds of investments we've made. He's right to be optimistic, and our friends across the aisle from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and Hamilton Centre know in their heart of hearts that Hamilton and its people are an optimistic people; we're not a doom-and-gloom people. When you see the light at the end of the tunnel, you don't run out and order more tunnel.

Provincially, we've made record levels of investment in health care and education: the innovative McMaster-Mohawk bachelor of technology program, support for the new innovation centre and that new highway infrastructure that connects the inner city of Hamilton with the John C. Munro international airport—another great asset in our community. We've created 450,000 jobs in just four years, and 101,000 new jobs in the last year—more than any other jurisdiction in Ontario. I think, in fact, some 63% of all new jobs in Canada were created right here in Ontario. We generate 44% of the nation's wealth. We are equipped; our people are the highest-skilled in the world, and we're ready to compete with anybody.

In the Hamilton area, almost \$33 million has been invested in the Metrolinx program alone—thank you, Minister of Transportation, for that.

Our government also announced an early \$6-million investment to rehabilitate social housing units in and around Hamilton. We've reduced wait times at the Hamilton General Hospital and consolidated the acquired brain and injury rehab services from 14 different buildings to one focused site. And we're adding 44 beds and more efficient ambulatory programs to Hamilton General.

Meanwhile, my own alma mater, McMaster, remains an internationally recognized research facility, which this government is so proud of, and we've supported McMaster through a series of grants and other key investments.

One still very important manufacturing side of Hamilton's economic life which I need to note: Our city is ranked number seven among the best places to do business by Canadian Business magazine. Our new mayor raves optimistically—and appropriately—about the great future our city has and, by the way, about his willingness to partner with a progressive, pragmatic, prudent government to make Hamilton the best place in the world to raise a child, among other neat mission objectives.

The naysayers from across the floor and in Ottawa love to spread their partisan pessimism about businesses not investing in Ontario. Well, shame on them. You don't build Ontario up by ripping it, and its people, down. That's just not how it works. I also want to suggest that when they do this, they are spreading the same stuff that Ontario farmers spread on their fields, only thicker.

Speaking of farmers, let me just take a minute to talk about our agricultural sector. When you talk about the

importance of solar energy, nobody relies more on solar energy than our farmers. The sun shines down, the weather is good—if we don't manage to completely screw up the weather, the weather's good—the crops grow, and you've got a government that's prepared to partner with "Good Things Grow in Ontario." You're prepared to make the kinds of investments that need to be made in farmers' markets, in the wine industry, in corn support programs—the first jurisdiction in Canada to put that in place. Those are important.

Let me speak for a moment longer about Hamilton. ArcelorMittal is investing millions of dollars to upgrade the blast furnaces in its Hamilton operations, and we're pleased to be helping there. US Steel is making further investments in Hamilton at its Lake Erie operations. We welcomed Superior Boiler Works with a grand opening in October, and SFS intec and Bunge, which opened a new facility in July. Indeed, the Hamilton area is doing well under the McGuinty government, and with the help of the initiatives outlined in our five-point plan, we'll continue to hold our own and move forward through whatever economic challenges we have, not just surviving but thriving.

Finally, I want to say a quick word about our green procurement strategy in Ontario—the hybrid vehicles and the paper that we're purchasing. It all adds up to a cleaner, greener, keener, more competitive and welcoming Ontario.

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

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I'm very pleased to rise today to enter this debate, because this afternoon at 3:15, Dalton McGuinty is going to announce Bob Rae II, the sequel. Following the lead of his Liberal Party cousin, Bob Rae, Dalton McGuinty is digging a big hole for our children's future. We call it "Dalton days." Get ready for it. Since he has been elected, Dalton McGuinty has incurred a total debt of \$20 billion. But every night he goes into our children's bedrooms and takes their piggy bank. He takes their future; he takes their money.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. I'd like to read a guest column I wrote for the Cambridge Times on March 13, 2008, some seven months ago. The headline is, "The Blame Game."

"I am seriously concerned about the future of this province. Without the present tax revenues, the level of benefits provided by the Ontario government to our citizens and the most vulnerable is in jeopardy.

"We know that the US is close to a recession and that Ontario will be adversely affected. A recession historically is a temporary condition, but it could accelerate the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario over and above the 200,000 lost during the last three years.

"Manufacturing job losses are at a new high, and companies are fleeing this province due to high taxes, unfair offshore competition and the high Canadian dollar. Korea just broke off negotiations with Canada after a futile attempt to reach an agreement to reduce Korea's unfair import restrictions. Both Democratic candidates in the

US, vying for the party's presidential nomination, have promised to reopen or abolish the NAFTA agreement with Canada.

**0930**

"In Canada, the high dollar could be a permanent condition known as the 'Dutch disease,' a name coined by The Economist magazine to describe the condition of the Netherlands in the 1970s. There, the discovery of natural gas drove the guilder to an artificially high valuation and made Holland's manufactured exports uneconomic. Put another way, the Netherlands unexpectedly became poorer and not richer as a result of substantial energy exports. The Alberta oil sands resource is reputed to be the second-largest oil reserve in the world, next only to Saudi Arabia, and can be expected to provide oil for decades to come.

"Our dollar could continue to be artificially high permanently, to the detriment of manufacturing exports and jobs. Without the actions taken by the Netherlands and Norway under similar circumstances, Canada will be poorer and Ontario could be much poorer.

"Remedial actions, however, would require a coordinated approach of all parties, the Ontario and federal governments, unions and business, all working in partnership.

"However, I have not seen any indication by any of the parties of such a partnership. To the contrary, there is a constant pointing of fingers and blaming each other; no one taking responsibility for the problem.

"It's called the blame game.

"Without coordinated remedial action, Ontario will continue to lose high-paying export jobs, and will soon become a have-not province for the purpose of the Canadian government's equalization payments. From the economic engine of Canada for over a century to the poor man of Canada. I can only hope I am wrong."

That was written, as I mentioned, some seven months ago, and unfortunately, some of my greatest fears have come to fruition over the past couple of months. If I, as a backbencher without great resources, could conceive that there was a grave problem in March, why did Dalton McGuinty, with all the expert advice and opinions he has as the head of government, not know of the possible problems? The answer is: He was aware of the problems and concerns but chose to set up strategies to deflect the blame rather than meet the problems head-on. It's called "perception is reality."

The strategy of this government is to do nothing but blame others for failing their responsibilities. They blame former governments, the federal government, unions, banks, business and, of course, the citizens of Ontario themselves. You constantly belittle valid concerns raised by the opposition until it is too late, and now we face what could be the biggest economic downturn we've seen in the past 50 years. Dalton McGuinty could be remembered as the Herbert Hoover of Canada.

Has Dalton McGuinty finally awakened to the fact that Ontario's economy is in trouble? Has he finally decided to acknowledge the fact that more than 200,000 of our

residents have been laid off from manufacturing jobs since 2005? Mr. McGuinty, are you at last expressing a sliver of sympathy for the hard-working families of this province who cannot make ends meet? These people who have lost good-paying manufacturing jobs cannot, and likely will never, find jobs that pay comparable wages.

There was a study in the news just recently that in both Germany and Canada over the past few years there is a greater disparity between the rich and the poor. More of our citizens are leaving the middle class and, unfortunately, ending up in poverty. It is a serious matter when our middle class is attacked. Mr. McGuinty, do you ever wonder about the effects on families when a good-paying manufacturing job is replaced with a low-paying part-time job? Do you ever think about the stress it places on a marriage and the impact it has on young children? You have ignored these families and the challenges they face.

Many of the families I am referring to live in my riding of Cambridge. Five hundred of them worked at ClosetMaid, another 70 worked at Cambridge Stampings, while 550 worked at Image Craft, and most of those latter were women. I often wonder where those women turned for new employment and if they are earning a wage that allowed them to live comfortably. This government washed its hands of these hard-working people.

Just last week, W.C. Wood, an appliance manufacturer in Guelph, announced a layoff of 148 workers due to the rising cost of raw materials and shipping. This is in addition to the 200 workers let go at W.C. Wood in 2006.

At Imperial Tobacco in Guelph, 555 people lost their jobs in 2006. These were good-paying jobs that allowed workers to give their families a good quality of life and a future. I wonder how they are coping today.

And the list continues. The remaining 500 workers at Kitchener Frame—formerly Budd automotive—have been told that the plant could close by Christmas. Let's remember the thousands of people who once worked at Budd and have since struggled to find other decent-paying jobs.

There are also 1,100 workers affected by the closure of BF Goodrich in Kitchener, 413 at La-Z-Boy in Kitchener, and 450 at NCR in Waterloo. Another 250 people at MTD Canada, in Kitchener, will be out of work at the end of the month when the production moves to the United States. Let's not forget the 314 hard-working people in my riding who lost their jobs at Tiger Brand Knitting in 2005.

This government has turned its back on the manufacturing sector of this province and instead chose to devote its time to feel-good pieces of legislation that do nothing to enhance the quality of life in this province. These laid-off workers needed your help long before now.

The Canadian Auto Workers estimate that 7,800 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Waterloo region since 2002. All of these families were living comfortably on decent salaries, only to have it all disappear in an instant. You offer little comfort to these people as they worry about losing their homes and their life savings.

According to a Toronto-Dominion Bank report, those who find new jobs experience a wage loss of 25%.

For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Ontario's unemployment rate remains above the national average and is forecast by all major banks to stay that way through 2009. TD Bank Financial Group has said, "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."

Announcing \$355 million in new spending for your Second Career strategy is too little, too late. This smoke-and-mirrors program will help only 20,000 workers, less than 10% of those who have been out of work since 2005. The program will also be of no use to people laid off before June 1, 2007. Those who have lost their jobs by that date will have already exhausted their unemployment insurance and are therefore not eligible for this program.

Mr. McGuinty, while you were busy enjoying the year-end spending sprees and playing cabinet musical chairs, Ontario jumped on a fast-moving slope to becoming a have-not province. TD reported this year that Ontario will have this unfortunate distinction by 2010. We should have been debating this economic downturn before now. We should have been debating this six or seven months ago. We have called on you to stimulate our economy by reducing the tax burden on business and new business investments, eliminating capital taxes in Ontario, reducing taxes on small business, and initiating serious negotiations with the federal government on tax reform. You didn't listen, Mr. McGuinty. So now, instead of taking responsibility, you point the finger and the blame game begins.

#### 0940

Your motion calls on the Ontario government to adjust its spending during these tight financial times. What an understatement. Since 2002-03, this government has increased spending by over \$27 billion for a total of \$96 billion. Total program spending has increased by nearly 50%, or \$28 billion, to \$87 billion today from \$59 billion in 2002-03.

It should be noted that the NDP government of Bob Rae only managed to increase total spending by 21% in five years. In the eight years of PC governments under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, total spending increased by only 20%. Only former Liberal Premier David Peterson came close to this government's runaway spending when he increased spending by a record 45% in five short years.

So you've set records in spending, and I am concerned that you're about to set new records in our debt. You've already accumulated over \$20 billion since election, the carrying charges of which are over a billion dollars a year, and you've just started.

Not only is spending growing rapidly, but this government is consistently spending way beyond what it budgets from year to year. In 2007-08, this government raked

in \$5.6 billion in excess of revenue projections for that year, and \$4.1 billion of that revenue came from taxes.

We have encouraged you to tighten the reins on public sector hiring and labour costs. 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 the other provinces combined and nearly four times as many public sector jobs as Alberta.

Just last week, your government admitted that we should be prepared for a provincial budget deficit. Instead of using this unprecedented revenue to provide tax relief or pay down the debt, you went on a spending spree with taxpayers' money. Now you're about to do the same with our children's money. Now, interest on debt costs more than \$9 billion a year, which is just under \$25 million a day in interest repayment.

The pain caused by this economic downturn is widespread. Ontario housing starts declined by 27.8% in July to 59,200 units. Ontario recorded 68,123 housing starts, down 7.2% from 2006.

Over the first six months of this year, the value of Ontario international merchandise exports was down 12.9% from the same period in 2007. Over the first five months of 2008, Ontario wholesale trade was 2.7% lower than during the same period in 2007. Also, the first six months of this year saw Ontario manufacturing sales drop by 7.5%.

Your continued high taxes were counterproductive and discouraged investment by job producers. In the case of cigarette taxes, you have encouraged smuggling, and as a result, we see lower, not higher, revenues.

This government has actually increased the cost of doing business in Ontario.

Let's discuss the job-killing capital tax. Ontario would not have a capital tax today had the Liberal government not postponed the 2003 PC budget plan to fully eliminate it along the schedule of the federal government by January 1, 2008. The capital tax is widely acknowledged to be among the most inefficient forms of taxation and acts as a significant barrier to investment. The federal government eliminated its capital tax in 2006, two years ahead of schedule, and proposed incentives in the 2007 budget to encourage provinces to do the same.

While Dalton McGuinty has significantly increased the cost of doing business in Ontario, other provinces are moving in the opposite direction. For example, in 2001, British Columbia's newly elected Liberal government abolished the corporate capital tax over a two-year period and reduced the corporate income tax from 16.5% to 13.5%. The BC Liberal government's 2008 budget further cut the provincial corporate income tax rate to 11% on July 1 and to 10% in 2011. Of course, this makes them much more competitive than ourselves. Let's look at Saskatchewan in 2006. Saskatchewan's former NDP government reduced corporate income tax rates from 17% to 12% by July 1, 2008. By this same date, the government also phased out corporate capital tax for all

non-financial companies. Alberta eliminated corporate capital taxes and reduced the corporate income tax rate from 15.5% in 2000 to 10% in 2006. Manitoba, in 2007, reduced corporate income taxes from 14% to 13% effective July 1, 2008, to be further reduced to 12% on July 1, 2009.

Let's not fail to mention the red tape imposed by this government. Dalton McGuinty has done nothing to reduce the regulatory burden on business, which costs the economy an estimated \$5 billion annually. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 2,212 Ontario businesses have said that the overall burden of provincial regulation has increased during the past three years. The 2008 Ontario budget introduced a cap-and-trade system for regulation, promising to eliminate a piece of regulation for each new regulation introduced. Essentially this means that for each regulation removed, a new one will be created, keeping the level of regulation constant. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund was launched on March 3, 2008, with a 45-day turnaround guaranteed. That was over 200 days ago, and we have since then heard of only one announcement of funding. Is nobody interested in this program, or is the government turning down applications it does receive?

Premier Dalton McGuinty, it's about time that you realize that many of the citizens and businesses of our province are in dire straits. Your motion asks that we acknowledge these tough economic times. We did that months ago.

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

**Hon. David Caplan:** It's indeed a pleasure to rise in this debate on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, whom I have had the privilege to represent in this chamber.

In listening to some of the earlier speeches, particularly from across the way, I think we're losing sight of what the motion actually says and what in fact we are here to debate. I would like to read that into the record so that members will understand, and that folks who are listening and watching at home will understand. The motion says:

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

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

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

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

**0950**

That is what we are debating here, and it is indeed a pleasure to be here, because Ontarians, I believe, are well aware of the challenges our economy is facing. In fact, I hear from my neighbours in Don Valley East that they too are aware. I read in the newspapers daily about the economic concerns—not simply here in Ontario, because we are not an island unto ourselves; we are part of a larger country and part of a larger global picture. We're hearing and seeing these conversations played and re-played, indeed, across our continent and across other parts of the world. This is not simply an Ontario story, as I mentioned earlier. It's a topic of conversation, for sure, in Don Valley East, but it's a topic of conversation throughout our province, throughout our country and throughout North America.

Even the best economists, as wide opinions as you would have from them, would not have predicted a year ago that we would be here today. In fact, economists have revised their projections quite regularly over the course of the last number of months in response to the economic changes, in response to markets, in response to a tightening of credit and in response to many of these pressures under which they're finding themselves globally. A higher Canadian dollar has made business challenging for our manufacturers in particular, who in better times were able to export their goods at much more enticing prices for their clients. If you ask people in this chamber or people in Ontario, “What are some of the more export-oriented jurisdictions in the world?”, somebody might say “Japan.” In Japan, in fact, about 14% of their GDP, their gross domestic product—the services and goods they produce—is for export.

I want to compare that with Ontario. Ontario's exports as a percentage of our GDP are around 56%. More than half of what we produce in services and goods is a result of and for export markets abroad. Most of that, about 75%, is to the United States, mainly through the automotive sector. In fact, Ontario is the highest and most dependent export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. The change in the valuation of the dollar has made significant pressures and significant challenges. In fact, we've seen, very sadly: Hallmark, which is an employer in Don Valley East, has consolidated their operations. They've closed two plants in the United States. They've said that as a result of the change in the valuation of the dollar, they have decided to close their plant in my neighbourhood, and that's meant that 190 of my neighbours have lost their jobs. That's terribly tragic.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** What are you doing about it, David?

**Hon. David Caplan:** Hallmark confirmed that the services of a outplacement agency were secured to provide the needed adjustment services to the affected employees. Additionally—and I hear my colleague across the way say, “What are we doing about it?”—the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, through the Toronto District School Board and through Service Canada, arranged for facilitators and public liaison officers to deliver a series of information sessions and supports for the employees back in June and July. Two outplacement agencies were enlisted by the company: Golden Mile Management for hourly employees and Equinox Consulting for salaried employees. These laid-off individuals will have complete access to Employment Ontario programs, including Second Career.

I'm going to be speaking about Second Career a little bit later in my remarks. But Second Career, just for your information, is an Ontario government program that offers training for new jobs and includes financial support. Second Career provides career planning and financial support specifically designed to help laid-off Ontarians participate in long-term training for a new job.

Of course, one of the areas—and one in fact that motion speaks to—is to seek fairness for Ontarians from our federal government. I haven't heard members across the way speak to the fact that an Ontarian receives about \$4,600 less per person than unemployed workers do in other provinces. An unemployed worker in Alberta, an unemployed worker in Quebec, an unemployed worker on the east coast of Canada receives more support from the federal government through employment insurance than an unemployed worker in Don Valley East does, than an unemployed worker in Kitchener–Waterloo, an unemployed worker in northern Ontario or an unemployed worker in Ontario, and that's shameful. That's about a \$2-billion discrimination against Ontario workers that exists that should not. This motion speaks to it and asks members of this Legislative Assembly to work together to address that.

I was speaking about the impact of the change in the Canadian dollar, but there are other impacts. The fast-rising and now fluctuating price of oil has increased the costs of running a business over the past number of months. Competition from overseas is truly ramping up. Truly, this is a much more globalized world when it comes to competition than our parents or our grandparents ever saw or ever could have imagined, and it is meaning those kinds of impacts in the communities that I had and continue to have the privilege of representing. My constituents want to know, what am I doing, what is this government doing in order to protect, in order to promote, in order to expand, in order to support them and in order to support our economy as best we can. I would say that by any measure, truly, truly this government has shown the kind of leadership that is necessary to be able to not only plan for and anticipate, which we have, but

also to be able to chart a steady hand through these turbulent times.

Last year, I had the privilege to be here as my colleague Minister Duncan gave a budget address to this assembly. The focal point of that budget was in fact in anticipation of what were shaping up to be some troubling economic times. There were some storm clouds on the horizon. Minister Duncan laid out the five-point economic plan for this province. There are five elements to it, and I'd like to articulate those and elaborate on those for the members present.

We must be competitive in our taxes. We must target tax cuts to be able to help. I heard the member from Cambridge speak earlier about capital tax. In fact, that's one of the taxes that was eliminated as a result of the work, the target and the focus—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. David Caplan:** My colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation points out quite rightly that members opposite voted against that measure.

We're investing in infrastructure. In fact, we're investing in infrastructure as we never have before: this year alone, \$9.9 billion. In 2003, when we saw a change in government, the government of the day was investing approximately \$2.1 billion in infrastructure. It was one of those areas, unfortunately, which did not receive the needed kind of support. Infrastructure has a doubly good effect. It promotes jobs and job growth in the short term and gets people working—particularly in the construction sector, but that means engineers and architects, lawyers, and a whole array of other professionals who support that work—but it also provides the long-term economic fundamentals that you'd want to have. We've seen the result of some of those infrastructure investments in Don Valley East. We've seen affordable housing projects like 121 Parkway Forest Drive, built as a result of a partnership between the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and, yes, the federal government. When we do work together, we can provide affordable housing and the kinds of infrastructure projects that I think serve our communities very well.

The other elements: I mentioned that my colleague the Minister of Research and Innovation is here. In fact, that's another pillar of the five-point plan, because we have to be able to support the future economy, support the research that takes place today that allows us to invent marvellous new opportunities for entrepreneurs, and that starts with a culture of innovation, a culture of research and a culture of commercializing. We have a very good history, whether in the medical area, as we've seen in the discoveries of insulin or the manufacturing and the discovery of pacemakers—all Ontario inventions, all making tremendous differences in people's lives and also providing tremendous economic stimulus. There are two other elements that are equally important in that five-point plan. One is an investment in our people. In fact, that's the single greatest thing and the most important thing we could do.

**1000**

I would contrast the approach with my colleagues opposite. When they were in government, the first thing they did was cut half a billion dollars in our post-secondary sector. I've heard members opposite bemoan the fact that we're hiring teachers and nurses; that we should not be expanding these positions. In fact, their position was to cut those, and that has put not only our public services, but the people who depend on them, children, youth, adolescents—and the resulting turmoil that causes for future generations because they don't have the kind of support through our education system.

We must invest in our people to give them the opportunity to reach their potential so they can be the best they possibly can. I've been to many schools in Don Valley East and, in fact, Seneca College is there. I can tell you, that kind of programming and that kind of support have truly made a difference. Seneca College has a wonderful program with York University that allows students to move from practical to theoretical education and back again. It provides the kind of added value which is going to give those young adults the ability to get the best jobs. The best-trained people do get the best jobs.

Last but not least in the elements of the five-point plan is strategic partnerships with businesses, strategic partnerships with other levels of government, strategic partnerships with sectors right across the board. As we've discovered, we can do an awful lot on our own, but when we work together we are truly at our best. That has to be a culture. We have seen previously an approach which has worked to divide people, to exclude people. That's not the approach that gets us firing on all cylinders and helps us to realize the potential that we have. These are the elements of that plan.

I think people in Don Valley East understand that there are circumstances outside of the government's control. I mentioned the rising dollar, the global price of oil and intense global competition, but there are things that we can do to ensure that our economy emerges strong through these challenging economic times, and that's what the five-point plan is all about. I truly believe it is the right plan for the right times. Ontarians know that challenging times mean that we're making tough decisions, that sometimes adjustments will have to be made because of the changing financial circumstances. The families I know and my neighbours in Don Valley East at one point in their lives have been forced to make difficult choices when their circumstances have changed. I know that we will make the right adjustments, because this motion speaks about our core priorities. It talks about protecting health care and education, the environment and public safety, those things which truly on our own we would not be able to tackle. But collectively, through our cherished health systems and our local hospitals or community care, through our local schools, through our post-secondary endeavours, we are able to invest and support people.

I do want to have a bit of a contrast, because I think you've heard from across the way that my friends in the

official opposition do have a plan; it's a one-point plan. It's "Cut taxes and everything will take care of itself."

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** George Bush did that.

**Hon. David Caplan:** Look at what my colleague the Minister of Transportation says. Look at what happened when that philosophy was followed south of the border. We are seeing the results of a misguided plan that is focused only on one element, which was to provide indiscriminate tax relief. If you target it to the right people, if you target it to those who will really provide a stimulus, I think you're going to see a better result. But look at the results of what we saw eight years ago: 8,000 nurses fired. We saw thousands of teachers laid off. We saw water testing and meat inspectors cut. We saw—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. David Caplan:** My friend from Peterborough asks, "Well, what was the result?" We saw the tragedy of a town in Ontario, Walkerton—the result of the kind of philosophy that, in the words of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, turned their backs on public health.

There are differences in the times that were faced as well. I heard the member from Cambridge talk about the unemployment rate. The facts are that the unemployment rate was 7% under the previous government; it is currently 6.3%. So I think a one-point plan does not serve Ontario particularly well. In fact, a comprehensive plan focused on investing in our people, supporting infrastructure, research and innovation, having targeted business tax cuts but also in strategic partnership, is one that supports people.

I have also listened intently to members of the third party. They, too, have some ideas. One is the notion of a jobs commissioner. In other jurisdictions where this was tried, particularly in British Columbia, it did not work; it did not protect jobs. In fact, after a very short period of time, the government decided to abandon that, and rather, to adopt an approach very similar to the one that we've laid out.

I've heard as well a suggestion—and by way, I appreciate the suggestions of all members and the ideas that all members bring to this House. That's why it's important to have this debate: to allow members an opportunity to share their ideas and their perspectives, in the hope that we can come together to be able to support the people from the various neighbourhoods that we represent.

One of the ideas was to establish an industrial hydro rate. Interesting outcome, however: That would be to shift the burden of the cost of electricity from certain businesses onto the backs of residents. I don't know that that's necessarily a good idea, and I think that would place a burden on particularly our seniors, which would be an unfortunate one, and one that they might not be able to bear. I think that idea really needs some rethinking. I know that the leader of the third party has written a book where he has come out against that idea, so I'm very surprised that it has resurfaced.

Suffice to say the people of Don Valley East are well aware of the challenges that we face, and I hope aware—and I will do my best to make them aware—of the plan

we have laid out before them. But by working together, I know that we will be able to come through this challenging time stronger, and that when it is behind us—and I do hope it will be soon—we will be stronger for our collective efforts. I thank you very much.

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

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I'm certainly pleased to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people in the province of Ontario who, regrettably, today or last night, or as a result of the Premier's trip to Montreal, have learned that this province is now going to be facing a deficit. This is despite the fact that both the Premier and the Minister of Finance, as recently as one month ago and since then, have been predicting that, "All is well with the Ontario economy. The five-point plan is working. We still have the money in the reserve." We've now learned that that \$800-million reserve is gone, plus, the 40% increase in revenues that have accumulated over the past five years has been spent as drunken sailors would spend their money. People in Ontario woke up today to discover that we would have a deficit somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$1 billion.

So I would say to you, this is a government who has pretended that all is well, and it is not so. It's not unlike the announcement they made in 2003, when the Premier said, "We will not raise your taxes, I promise you." What happened in the very first budget? They introduced the health tax—a health tax that has collected somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$12 billion.

Again, you can't trust this government. Even today, people are wondering, "What happened from one month ago to today? They tell us it's a billion-dollar deficit." The Premier is saying there won't be any new taxes, but at the end of the day, people know that they can no longer trust this government. In fact, I think what we've seen over the past five years is a government that had a tremendous amount of revenue, that has taken a \$5.6-billion surplus which has now become an apparent \$1-billion deficit in just one month. So how can you trust them?

**1010**

They're great at spending, and they're great at making all sorts of commitments, but I would say to you that today there's a lot of anxiety and there's a lot of stress in the MUSH sector: the municipalities, which have started their budgeting for the next year; the post-secondary sector—the universities, the colleges; the elementary and secondary panels; the hospitals and the long-term care.

The government has not lived up to their commitments. They've never been able to hire the first 8,000 nurses. They've never been able to eliminate the hospital deficits. They announce new wait times, which isn't new money; it's money they've taken back from hospitals that didn't manage to deliver the number of cases in the first six months of this year because there wasn't enough money for operating rooms, there wasn't enough money for beds.

So today the MUSH sector is feeling anxious and they realize that life is going to change in the province of Ontario. Despite the promises that have been made by this government, they are feeling anxious and they're feeling stressed. This government has a tremendous amount of explaining to do.

This motion, by the way, is not an attempt on the part of the government to elicit advice or to work in co-operation. It was simply an attempt to put forward their five-point plan. It's a farce, as far as asking the opposition parties for their input, because day after day we sit in this House and we hear the government put us down for any suggestions that we do make. They're not prepared to incorporate. They're not prepared to listen. For example, we recommended that they make some changes to the apprenticeship ratios, but we get put down. We asked them to review this decision they're making to put more of a financial burden on the small business sector by starting to use those people as another source of revenue for the WSIB. We asked them about looking at the whole tax environment. Roger Martin has certainly told us that our taxation system needs to be reviewed and there are lots of flaws. This motion that the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has put on the table is not an attempt to get the best ideas from the opposition parties. It's simply an opportunity to tell the people of Ontario falsely, at this point in time, that a Liberal plan is working, when we know it's not. In fact, we have suggested that if the government were really interested in listening to the opposition parties, they had an opportunity to do that.

Yesterday, we introduced an opposition day motion asking for a select committee which would have offered a totally new approach. It would have charted a new course at a time of economic uncertainty, at a time when we've seen the loss of at least 230,000 jobs, jobs that are creating pain and hardship for the people who have lost them and for their families.

We have Don Drummond predicting that this province could lose another 250,000 jobs in the next five years if the Liberal government doesn't make changes. That's a possible half a million jobs that could be lost. You compare that to our government: During our time in office, we created the economic environment—with the help of the private sector, who are the individuals that create the jobs. Governments don't create jobs. Jobs that they create are paid for by the taxpayers. You need the private sector jobs. We saw the creation of one million new jobs, and that was because of the economic environment we created. We picked up the pieces from the devastation that was left by the Liberals under David Peterson and the devastation of Bob Rae, where we saw the loss of 10,000 jobs in the province of Ontario. We decided that we would work with business, we would work with labour, we would work with the private sector, and we would create the environment that would encourage individuals to come to this province and create new jobs for our people.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

*The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** It's my pleasure to welcome to the House the members of the Hamilton AM Rotary Club, which I'm a member of.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon:** I'm pleased to introduce the students from Mr. Fletcher's grade 5 class from Alexander Stirling Public School, in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, which is visiting the Legislature today.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I'd like to welcome the presence of our sign language interpreters this morning in the Legislature for the first time. This is indeed a historic day, and certainly most welcome.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I would like to welcome in the House today the Canadian Hearing Society. They do tremendous work for those who have hearing impairments. Especially I would like to recognize former MPP Gary Malkowski—Gary, welcome to the House—who has been a great advocate for the hearing society.

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today Linda Strevens and her niece Candice Skelton. Linda was crazy enough to participate in one of those bids to have lunch with your MPP at Queen's Park. She won't tell me how much lunch was worth, but the proceeds went to e3 Community Services. Thank you, Linda.

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I want to welcome grade 5 students from William G. Davis Junior Public School from the great portion of the Scarborough East part of my riding.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Also, we'd like to welcome, on behalf of the member from Welland and on behalf of page Faye Campbell, her mother, Kim Meade, in the public gallery today.

Also, we'd like to recognize, as has been done already, Gary Malkowski, the member from York East in the 35th Parliament, in the east members' gallery. Welcome, Gary.

Joining us as well today will be Derek Fletcher, the former member for Guelph, also in the 35th Parliament.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I want to introduce Carly Jones from Parkdale—High Park.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to recognize Nancy Frost, Murray Pollard and Rex Banks from the Canadian Hearing Society, who are here today in the gallery.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is for the Premier. It deals with sincerity and motivation, and what

the Premier says and what he means. He's used the words, over the past few weeks of the crisis, "emergency" and "co-operation." He's talked about co-operation with the federal government and colleagues across the country, and we have to assume he meant within this chamber as well, but his actions belie those words. Yesterday, this House had before it a motion that would have established a select committee with equal representation from all parties in this House, based on the structure used in the past with the Select Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources—non-partisan and looking towards the best interests of this province.

I ask the Premier: If he's sincere about looking toward co-operation across the aisle, why did he order his members to vote against that motion?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to say again that nobody, certainly in this Legislature, has a monopoly on good ideas. We aren't suddenly vested with wisdom simply because we sit at the right-hand side of the Speaker. I remain very much open to good ideas that might be forthcoming from my colleagues on all sides of the House. I appreciate some of those that have already been put forward—some of with which I profoundly disagree—but we remain open to good ideas from all Ontarians as part of the preparation for our budget. There will be a committee that will be consulting Ontarians broadly and I fully expect that the members of the opposition will want to contribute to that process as they usually do.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** "We're open as long as you do it our way" is really the bottom-line message from the Premier's response.

We've talked about this in terms of the cynicism of the public with respect to looking at this Legislature and its inability to find ways—primarily because the Premier and his colleagues sincerely do not want to work with either opposition party—to address the challenges facing this province.

We have to question the Premier's commitment as well when he tabled this so-called emergency motion on the issue of the economy. I think it was the next day that he left for Mexico. We find out now that this Friday, when we're having an economic update which will lead to a deficit, he's leaving for China. Does he think that's—

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

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** Shame on you, Bob.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Minister.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Notwithstanding the thrust of my honourable colleague's question, I believe that he believes it's appropriate and, indeed, a principal responsibility of the Premier to reach out and establish stronger trade ties with other parts of the world. About 84% of our exports go to the United States of America. That's great and we've got a powerful alliance, economic in nature, with the US, but the most basic advice that you get from

financial advisers is that you have to diversify your investments.

The member knows that I was in Mexico to work hard to land the 2015 Pan Am Games, which represents a \$2-billion economic investment for Ontario. I'm off to China, obviously, to enhance trade ties—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, Premier. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** The Premier has used the words "emergency" and "crisis" to describe the challenges facing the province of Ontario. The definition of "emergency" is "an event requiring immediate action," yet his immediate action is to hop on a plane and head to the Far East. I think that sends out all of the wrong messages to the people of this province.

We had an opportunity yesterday to send a very clear message that we're going to work together to find answers, to meet these challenges, yet again he orders his colleagues to vote against a very sensible, reasonable opportunity to reach across the aisle and find answers that we can all agree upon to answer the challenges of this province.

I ask the Premier again about his sincerity with respect to making this decision. We're not asking him to cancel his trip to China. We're asking him to take a look at delaying it to at least deal with the fallout from the economic statement we're going to be hearing later this afternoon.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I appreciate that my honourable colleague has a real interest in the economic state of affairs of Ontario and a desire to make a contribution to the solutions. There are a number of means by which he can do that. One of those is what he's doing right now, putting questions to me and hopefully offering positive, constructive suggestions. That we're having an economic debate in this House now is an opportunity for every member to make a contribution.

We're going to have an economic statement delivered in this House this afternoon. Members of the opposition will have an opportunity to respond to that. There will be a budgetary process which enables all of us to make a contribution to the strengthening of our economy. There are a number of venues and avenues and possibilities for members opposite and we will continue to remain receptive to good ideas, notwithstanding what political—

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

1040

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** To the Premier—you have to wonder why he went to the expense of creating a new Ministry of International Trade when he's having to do her job instead of staying here and addressing this economic crisis.

I want to ask the Premier about something his finance minister said in this House on September 25. That's less than a month ago. He said the budget would be balanced,

even with the downturn in the US economy. He said, and I'm quoting your finance minister, "We built in reserve and contingency at all levels of the budget." Premier, how is it that just four short weeks ago the budget was balanced, but today there's going to be a deficit of almost \$1 billion?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I don't know where my colleague is getting his numbers. I think we should just wait until the Minister of Finance provides us with his fall economic statement. I think it's important again to note, though, that we're in a pretty good position now to withstand these powerful winds that are blowing out there, and as I argued yesterday, we have done much to fix the roof while the sun was shining.

Now, my colleague opposite may call these kinds of things waste, but I think there's a certain element of wisdom in the kinds of investments that we've made. If we look at education alone, we've got 100,000 more young people in our colleges and universities, 50,000 more people enrolled in apprenticeships and 10,000 more young people graduating from our high schools. We have smaller classes and higher test scores. That's a good investment, it's a wise investment and it's the kind of thing that will help us withstand these powerful economic winds.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** I think we have a different view with respect to the past five years and the place this government has put us in, in terms of our ability to weather the economic storms that we're going to be facing.

With respect to the comments made by the Minister of Finance, I would think that if he were a financial adviser, you would be firing him if you were his client, based on his management of the portfolio.

Words like "fiscal responsibility" and "prudence" aren't handy sound bites for tough times. Premier, you, in reality, have blown the bank. You've been asking Ontarians to tighten their belts. Yesterday and today they're hearing their cities, towns, schools and hospitals won't get the funds they've been promised, and that is creating significant anxiety. We're getting calls. Why aren't you staying in Ontario to reassure families, hospitals and schools that they won't see cuts to their—

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

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** A couple of things on that score: My honourable colleague belonged to a government which not only saddled Ontarians with a \$5.6-billion deficit, but they were in power for—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** They don't like to remember this, but they were in power for eight years, and during that time they ran five deficits. The price of oil was low, the Canadian dollar was low and the US economy was firing on all eight cylinders. They had the best of times and they ran, out of eight years, five deficits. I would

suggest they don't have the best pulpit from which to sermonize.

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

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Any objective review of the record would indicate otherwise, and the Premier simply doesn't want to answer the questions with respect to his failed management of the economy over the past—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. This is an important series of questions that the honourable member is asking, and I would just want to make sure that the Premier can hear the questions. With all the heckling behind the Premier, I'm sure it's difficult for him, so I'm sure the Premier would appreciate your support.

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** —not to mention one million new jobs created under the former government.

Four weeks ago, the finance minister said it was all sunshine and roses, things were great. Today it's doom and gloom, tighten your belts, and the sectors that provide services that people rely on—hospitals, schools, cities and towns—are told there's no more money. That's a shock to the system, and you have an obligation, I would think, in terms of your office, to get out there and explain to the people of this province how you—you—allowed that to happen. You don't go off to Mexico and China; you lead from the front of the battlefield, you listen, you show you care, and you reassure them that you're going to do something for them, right now, to make things better.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I would just remind my honourable colleague of something he said as Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He said, "'As Ontario companies sell more to foreign markets, they make our province more competitive and our future more secure. That's why we continue to aggressively build on our global strategy.'"

My colleague was right then, and it speaks to the importance of us—that while we take the necessary steps here at home to manage our finances, we also continue to reach out as aggressively as we possibly can. I'm off to China shortly. I'll be spending two weeks there. I'll be joined by four other Canadian Premiers when I'm abroad; I'll be accompanied by a couple of dozen environmental technology businesses from Ontario. China is looking for solutions to its pollution problems. We've got those solutions; we're going to sell those solutions to them and create jobs here.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question, of course, is for the Premier. One year ago, the McGuinty government, with much noise, promised a strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario. A year has now passed, and the promised strategy has been announced and re-announced, most recently in the 2008 budget, but there has been precious little in the way of new money to fight poverty in

Ontario. Instead, the Premier now utters hints that the poverty reduction program, announced and re-announced—mostly recently in the 2008 budget—might be cut or delayed.

My question is this: Will the Premier assure those people, hard-pressed, fighting poverty in Ontario today that there will be no stalling or cancelling of the government's much-announced and re-announced anti-poverty strategy?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** It is true we have made some announcements when it comes to addressing poverty, but we have yet to announce our strategy. My honourable colleague knows that the commitment we have made was to put that out by the end of December. We intend to do that. He knows, as well, that we're going to do something that has not been done before: We're going to put in place some indicators that tell us what is the true state of poverty in Ontario. We'll put in place targets, and we'll hold ourselves to account for meeting those targets, and we'll put in place a strategy to help us achieve those targets. That's an important part of our announcement to come in December. We've taken a number of other steps along the way, and of course, we intend to continue to follow through with those steps.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Talking about indicators and talking about more studies isn't going to do anything about poverty. We already know, for example, that social assistance rates under the McGuinty government in Ontario today are at the same level they were in 1990. Meanwhile, the hydro bill has skyrocketed, the heating bill has skyrocketed, the food bill has skyrocketed and the rent bill has skyrocketed. This business of talking about poverty isn't doing anything to fight poverty.

One of the things that the Premier mentioned and promised in the election campaign was a dental program. A year later, not one red cent has been put forward for a dental program for low-income people who fight and struggle with dental illness. I want to ask the Premier what's his response to people like Charles, from Niagara, who has to have two teeth extracted and two root canals but can't afford a dentist?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We've taken a number of steps, and we look forward to taking more. In addition to the investments that we've made in our schools and in our health care system, which benefits all Ontarians of all economic backgrounds, we've also continued to invest in enhancing the quality of our social services. In particular, we're very proud of our Ontario child benefit. It didn't exist before; we created that, we invented that. At present, it pays \$600 to families with children—we're benefiting 1.3 million children. That will grow to \$1,100. We have in fact raised the minimum wage now, on a number of occasions.

There are a number of other things we can do and that we look forward to doing in the future, but I think the most important thing we will do as a government is put forward a comprehensive strategy to be announced in December.

1050

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** The Premier talks about minimum wage. The fact is, the minimum wage in Ontario today is a poverty wage. Workers in Ontario, most of whom are women who work for minimum wage, continue to live in poverty. The Premier talks about the child benefit. The child benefit is not going to do anything meaningful until 2011 or later. In fact, today, when it's a very cold day, low-income kids in Ontario will not get a back-to-school clothing allowance because the McGuinty government has taken that away.

I say to the Premier, you talk, talk, talk about poverty. Meanwhile, more people are falling into poverty. When is the McGuinty government actually going to do something about poverty? You said you didn't have time when Ontario's economy was doing well. Now that Ontario's economy is not doing well, are you still saying to people living in poverty that you don't have time for them, that they have to wait, wait, wait?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We've taken a number of steps forward to deal with poverty, and we look forward to doing more. We will be speaking to that in a more full-some way in December, when we announce our comprehensive plan to address poverty.

For observers, it's important to understand that we've got the Conservatives saying we shouldn't be running a deficit, we've got the NDP saying we need to find ways to spend more. There is an element of truth in the position put forward by both sides. Our job on this side is to find a way to reconcile those competing interests. It's to find a way to deal with all those demands, to make advances on the poverty front, to act in a way that is fiscally responsible, to protect health care and education, and we will do that. I'll tell you why I'm so comfortable and more confident with this: It's because we allow ourselves to be continually inspired by the values of Ontarians.

## POVERTY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Once again to the Premier: The Premier wants to talk about nebulous things like values at a time when hundreds of thousands of people are losing their jobs and many hundreds of thousands more are falling into poverty. We don't need lectures about values, Premier. We need action from a government that has promised over and over again to do something.

Here is the reality: Economic times are tougher, a lot tougher. The McGuinty government has a choice—to continue to talk but do nothing, or show up for those people who are most in need and for those people who now need the help of government more than ever. Which is it going to be, Premier? More talk about values, more promises and promises and promises, or is the McGuinty government actually going to show up for the people who need help—

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

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I appreciate the representations being made by my colleague the leader of the NDP. Again, there is real legitimacy to some of the points he is making. We are going to find a way to balance those representations with those made by my colleagues found in the Conservative Party, with those stakeholders who are found in the education community, with those who are found in the health care community, with those businesses that would argue that their levels of taxation are too much of a challenge for them. We are going to find a way to reconcile all those competing interests and do it in a way that is in keeping with Ontario values.

They want us to make some progress, but they don't want us to do it in a way that compromises our fiscal strength tomorrow. So we can't do it all at once. But we will find a way to protect our public services, we will find a way to make some advances on the poverty front, and we will find a way to ensure that we can turn to Ontarians and say we protected—

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** A minute ago, it was talk about values. Now it's talk about competing interests. For five years, Premier, you told the lowest-income Ontarians to wait. They weren't important enough during five years of good economic times. For five years, you told people who were losing their jobs that they weren't important enough for your government to take action.

Now your answer seems to be, when the economy is rough, that those people should continue to wait. Well, if low-income people are told to wait when the economy is good and now you're telling them to wait when the economy is bad, when do low-income people really matter to the McGuinty government? Obviously, not in good times, and not in bad times either.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My colleague is nothing if not creative. We have never said that the poor are going to have to wait. We've said that we're going to have to wait until December until we make public our strategy to address poverty. But we've moved all along during the course of the past five years, whether you're talking about our new Ontario child benefit, increases in the minimum wage—my friend says that they're not enough, and I understand that, but we've got to bring some balance to these issues. We've moved ahead with social assistance rates. We've invested in affordable housing. We've doubled the student nutrition program in our schools. So the fact is we've moved along in a progressive way and in a thoughtful way and in an affordable way, and we will continue to do so. Again, the big announcement on the poverty front comes in December, in keeping with our commitment.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Premier, here is the problem: Your government continues to say, "Wait, wait, we'll

maybe do something sometime in the future." In the meantime, conditions grow worse every day. Some 240,000 good-paying jobs have been lost in Ontario over the last three and a half years under the McGuinty government. Many forecasters say another quarter million good jobs will be lost because your government doesn't have a plan. The OECD says that poverty is getting worse in Ontario; in fact, there are more kids coming to school hungry; in fact, there are more people struggling to find an affordable place to live.

Premier, all you've done for the last year is talk, talk, talk, as the situation grows worse. When are we going to see some bold action from the McGuinty government to take on these problems, or are we simply going to get more talk, talk, talk?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The leader of the NDP may see our new Ontario child benefit as talk, but I think it's something that is pretty substantive and pretty helpful to low-income households. The fact that we've increased the minimum wage several times—again, he may consider that talk, but I consider it pretty substantive. The same thing, I would suggest, applies to our increases in social assistance, affordable housing, our dental program, our student nutrition program, our new parent and family literacy centres, and the work that we're doing with respect to our overall poverty strategy.

I understand my friend's impatience and I can appreciate his single-mindedness on this, but we need to bring a comprehensive view on this side. We've got to reconcile all of these competing demands for new investments, and we will find our way through this together.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** My question is to the Premier. Just a few months ago, Premier, your government was boasting about a \$5.6-billion surplus and an \$800-million contingency fund. That's a total of \$6.4 billion. Now we're hearing today that you could be running a billion-dollar deficit. That's a difference of \$7.4 billion. Premier, where did that money go? You knew there was trouble ahead; why didn't you plan for it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Again, I think a bit of compare and contrast is really helpful here. During their eight years in government, they had the best of times. Throughout, they had a low cost of oil and a low Canadian dollar and a US economy firing on all eight cylinders, but notwithstanding those good eight years, they ran five deficits, including a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit with which they saddled our government. We took a couple of years to come out from under that, and we managed to balance our budget two years in a row now. So in terms of comparing and contrasting, we've done what we could, we think, in a responsible way and at the same time made significant new investments in public services which families need to be able to count on.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I take it that the Premier doesn't know where the \$7.4 billion is. I would point out to him

that we inherited a \$12-billion deficit from the NDP and it took us a few years to correct that. I'd also point out, Premier, that the deficit you inherited—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Perhaps you could bring the children to order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Order.

1100

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I'd point out also that the deficit you say you inherited—you were in power for six months during that period of time. That deficit was at least half yours and you never put out one restraint order to the civil servants. Premier, do you have any idea where that \$7.4 billion really is?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I think we're making some progress here: We had an acknowledgment of their deficit. But they've only acknowledged half of it, so we'll keep working on that.

What else have we done in order to fix the roof while the sun was shining, you might ask? We have 8,000 more nurses working in Ontario. We've got doctors for 630,000 more Ontarians. We have over 100 hospital construction projects underway and we've got wait times down. Again, good investments, wise investments, made on behalf of Ontario families.

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Premier. In the face of this economic downturn, you should not expect students to pay higher tuition fees. It lacks vision to raise tuitions when our economic future rests on an educated workforce. It's like taxing a service that you want people to use. It lacks economic focus to force large debts on recent graduates. They should be buying houses or purchasing green cars instead of paying down huge loans. It lacks general common sense to put the weight of the economy on the shoulders of the young who are just starting out. When will you stop reaching deeper and deeper into the pockets of students to pay for post-secondary education?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I think that members on all sides of the House appreciate the challenges facing students. I was very proud that the Reaching Higher plan devoted \$1.5 billion specifically targeted for student assistance.

But let me share a few facts with the honourable member on where Ontario stands. Ontario students receive the highest amount of needs-based assistance of any province in Canada. Ontario students currently receive the highest level of non-repayable assistance than ever before. We've doubled our investments in student aid since 2003-04. We're helping 150,000 students per year with financial assistance and we've tripled the number of grants available to students. In fact, one in four students, approximately 120,000, receive non-payable grants under the Reaching Higher program.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Minister, when you said "reaching higher," did you mean higher as in the second-highest tuition fees in the country, according to Statistics Canada? When you said "reaching higher," did you mean last in per capita funding? And when you said "reaching higher," did you mean reaching deeper into the pockets of students? Please stop reaching higher. The higher you reach, the worse the problem gets.

Student debt is a fiscal problem, not a solution. What's your economic response to the massive debt problem you are creating for our youth?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I'd like to go on to list some more facts for the member. We've increased OSAP maximums by 27%—the first time in 12 years. We've limited students' annual repayable debt to \$7,000 through the Ontario student opportunity grant. The Ontario student access guarantee means that no qualified student will be prevented from attending public colleges and universities due to a lack of financial support.

Maybe I should share statistics about their time in power. The NDP cut student aid by nearly 50%. They cut funding to post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, you may remember that they promised to eliminate tuition, then freeze it; instead, they increased tuition fees by 50%.

#### ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. As you are already aware, today at Queen's Park members from the Canadian Hearing Society are here to raise awareness of issues facing the deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing community in Ontario.

As a member of a family that has experienced the difficulties associated with hearing loss, it's important to me that all of us become more educated on the needs of the hearing-impaired and that we as a society can do more to improve and enrich the lives of those suffering difficulties from hearing loss.

For many families in Pickering–Scarborough East, the Canadian Hearing Society has worked hard on their behalf to ensure they have access to the many community services that are there to benefit them. I've heard you speak many times, Minister, of improving the lives of the vulnerable in Ontario—

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

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I would like to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for his excellent question. For over a decade, supports for individuals with disabilities in this province were allowed to languish under previous governments. The McGuinty government has dedicated itself to moving forward and making this province fully accessible. Not only have we passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but we have also increased funding for organizations such as the Canadian Hearing Society. For example, in 2007 we announced that more than \$20 million would be invested to improve services, including agencies providing inter-

preter and intervener services. We have also provided funding for costs that may include wage increases, legal obligations and other cost-of-living increases. In 2006, we gave another \$11 million in additional funding, and it was—

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

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** I know that in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, the needs of the hearing-impaired are forever growing, and this increase in funding is most welcome. Can you tell us what difference this funding has made to the staff and clients of the Canadian Hearing Society?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** What I can tell this House is that our government's funding increases are helping to provide more services to people who need them in both English and French, improve wages to attract and keep people who provide interpreter services, and improve the quality of services. The McGuinty government has continued to support the Canadian Hearing Society and organizations like it because we genuinely believe in an inclusive society. We have committed Ontario to becoming fully accessible by 2025.

Nous travaillons et nous collaborons avec les organismes sur le terrain parce que notre objectif est le même : faire de l'Ontario une province entièrement accessible pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

At the end of the day, a more accessible Ontario is a stronger, healthier and fairer Ontario.

#### TRANSFER PAYMENTS

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, you shared with the media information regarding the fact that promised spending increases or new projects for the MUSH sector would probably be deferred, put on hold, and there would be a further review of spending for the MUSH sector. You can imagine that it has struck some fear in the hearts particularly of the health sector. I just want to ask you today, are you and will you be living up to your commitment to provide each person in a long-term-care residence with the \$6,000 that you promised back in 2003, and in particular, the comfort allowance that you have promised for this year?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm not going to speak to specific details. I'll allow the Minister of Finance to do that. But what I want to draw to your attention are the mixed signals we're getting from the Conservatives. On the one hand, they're saying that we should shun a deficit at all costs, and yet this honourable member is now asking that we ensure that we find a way to make investments in certain kinds of programs.

What we want to do, when it comes to new programs—it's very important that we take the time to find a way to defer it or slow that down, if at all possible. When it comes to existing programs, there's going to be less money for next year than we had originally anticipated. I think Ontarians understand why. We're going to have to

call upon all of our transfer partners to work with us as we manage our way through this. I'm confident, though, given the temporary nature of this global economic downturn, that we can take the interim steps to preserve our fiscal integrity.

1110

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Let me set the record straight. We have made no comments whatsoever about a deficit. It is you, Premier, who has indicated that you are going to be running a deficit.

But I can tell you that people in long-term-care homes are very concerned. They need more personal care. It's not being delivered.

The other sector that is very concerned are the hospitals. Half of them currently have a deficit. They've had to close beds. There is not enough operating time to meet the wait time demands that are placed upon them. I'm asking you today, are you going to be reducing hospital funding and are you going to be putting their capital projects on hold?

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Premier?

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

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I do want to say to the honourable member that she covered quite a bit of ground there. The Premier has already made comment about the way that the Tories have got these issues surounded, being on both sides: restraint on the one hand and more spending on the other.

With respect to capital, I think it's important to note that while we have had to delay very modestly the emergence of some planned capital projects, it's only as a matter of prudence for the taxpayers because we don't have the sufficiency of skilled trades to be actually doing the bidding. We're making sure that we have a competitive process that gets value for the money.

It is, in a certain sense, a complication from having had so much ambition with respect to the rebuilding, the renaissance of the hospital infrastructure in the province of Ontario in Halton, Markham and other communities—small delays that will see the emergence very, very soon of multi-hundred-million-dollar new hospitals as part of our ongoing commitment to health care, which stands in contrast to their plan to—

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

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, the Environmental Commissioner's annual report revealed serious shortcomings in the government's response to water, air quality, biodiversity and other environmental issues. He said the greatest problem with the environmental assessment process was that the process was broken. Environmentally significant projects like Ontario's integrated power supply plan are being excluded—have been excluded—

from environmental assessment. When will you reform the system and ensure that all significant programs, including the integrated power supply plan, go through an environmental assessment?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** First of all, we thank the Environmental Commissioner for his annual report. There are a lot of good suggestions in there and we certainly take everything he says in there very seriously and we're looking into many of these matters.

But let me just remind the member as to some of the other things the Environmental Commissioner said yesterday. For example, he said on page 27 that he "commends the Ontario government for creating this action plan on climate change. Without a plan, governments have no way of measuring achievements, contextualizing their efforts in any given area and reporting progress." Now, this is the plan that this member has always been complaining about over the last year, and the Environmental Commissioner actually compliments us on that.

Let's hear what he says about water management. He says he is "pleased to note a number of recent positive changes to water management policies and practices in Ontario which will aid in adapting to current and future hydrological changes."

There are positive, good suggestions—

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

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Minister, what part of "broken" don't you understand? It's very simple. You have a situation where land purchases and rezoning go ahead before an environmental assessment process is completed, essentially making the process a rubber stamp. You have a situation where since 1996 only two of 64 projects have been rejected. You're telling me that people come forward with perfect projects more than 98% of the time? What are you going to do to correct a broken system? When are you going to bring forward the reforms that we need?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Certainly, any system that has been around for 20 years can always be looked at. I can tell the member right now that we are seriously looking at the whole environmental assessment process and the way it's currently set up. But I can also tell him that when it comes to transit, for example, we've implemented a six-month transit environmental assessment in order to make sure that those 52 projects that are currently on the books and the \$17.2 billion that we're going to invest in transit in Ontario are going to happen because transit is a good thing from an environmental viewpoint. The more people we can get on transit and out of their cars, the better it is.

We are looking at the system, we can always make improvements, and I can assure the members that in the times to come we will have a better, more efficient and more environmentally sound environmental assessment process.

## CHILD POVERTY

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My question is for Minister of Children and Youth Services. For Hamilton and Hamiltonians, community is paramount. We recognize that community is at the heart of our success, and it is something to which we are deeply committed. There are guests with me today who represent that commitment to Hamilton's community and especially to our children who live in poverty. Members of the Rotary Club of Hamilton AM, which I am a proud member of, have come to represent their dedication to community. For example, they played a central role in organizing and raising money for a project to provide barrier-free access to the Jamesville Community Centre.

Could the minister tell us how community groups will be included in the fight against child poverty in Ontario?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** First let me thank the member from Hamilton Mountain and welcome the Rotarians to the Legislature today. Rotarians have a presence here every day. Not only is my colleague from Hamilton Mountain a proud member but also the father of my colleague from Perth-Wellington, Wilf Wilkinson, has just completed his term as president of Rotary International.

We recognize that there are things that we as a government can do and will do to reduce poverty, but to make real progress we need all hands on deck. Many of the very best solutions are found not here at Queen's Park but in the community and in our neighbourhoods. That's why community organizations like Rotary Club are so important. Their work, such as ensuring barrier-free access to community centres and supporting our children's treatment centres, helps ensure that everyone has an opportunity to achieve their full potential. Hamilton is a leader in poverty reduction. Their round table on poverty reduction—

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

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I'm pleased to hear that this government will be engaging in supporting communities to make a crucial contribution to the fight against child poverty in Ontario. Many of the community organizations in my riding are committed to helping give kids the best start in life, including those with special needs and those in need of protection. We know that investments made in our children today will pay dividends to lead to a better Hamilton and a better Ontario.

Could the minister please outline what investments are being made in Hamilton's children today and specifically how they will be part of a poverty reduction strategy?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I commend Hamilton for its goal of being the best place to raise a child. They get it when it comes to creating an environment where every child has the opportunity to succeed. We've been happy to support their vision.

Through our Best Start plan, we've created 1,200 new licensed child care spaces in Hamilton, and just this summer we announced \$920,000 to make child care more

affordable in Hamilton. We also know that children with special needs need help to be their very best, and that's why we've supported them every step of the way. We've doubled the number of kids in Hamilton receiving autism treatment, we've increased children's mental health funding by 25%, and we're serving over 400 more children at the Hamilton Health Sciences children's treatment centre.

We believe that by giving kids the chance to succeed, we can break the cycle of poverty. That's why we're developing a comprehensive poverty-reduction—

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

### TRANSFER PAYMENTS

**Mr. John O'Toole:** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This week in Montreal, Premier McGuinty confirmed that the province is likely heading towards a deficit. Ontario citizens are concerned that municipalities, schools and hospitals will not receive the funding promised by the McGuinty government. In fact, Premier McGuinty even yesterday said that those who are depending on government transfers in funding should lower their expectations—sounds like preparing to break another promise.

Last summer at AMO, they promised \$1.1 billion to municipalities. It appears now that that may be in question, or is it one-time funding? Minister, in light of all this confusion on the economy, could you reassure municipalities that you will keep your commitment to deliver on the provincial-municipal fiscal review that you have promised over the last year?

1120

**Hon. Jim Watson:** Thank you very much for the opportunity to once again boast about our commitment to partnering with the municipal sector, something that the honourable member and his party know little about.

They were the kings and queens of downloading when it came to taking money and programs and thrusting them onto the municipal sector. Our government has a track record of uploading, whether it's the ODP and ODSP, which when fully uploaded will save municipal property taxpayers \$935 million, or whether it's the land ambulance upload, the public health upload and the infrastructure money that the Premier announced, and those dollars will be out the door into communities within the next two to three weeks—\$1.1 billion as a result of the Investing in Ontario Act.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Well, it's all nice to announce that now that you have a deficit, you'll just keep spending. That's clear, what you've just said now.

It's clear there's a problem. You've had five years, and your track record is that you really haven't done anything. Listen to David Miller, listen to the mayor of London, listen to the mayor of Ottawa; they're all planning to have a tax increase. Your planned review of

municipal spending is overdue and long promised, but you have been, once again, unable to deliver.

Minister, would you tell the House today what to expect as municipalities are in the process of planning their municipal budgets?

**Hon. Jim Watson:** This is quite an interesting question. It's a "spend" and a "cut" question at the same time. I understand one of the great oxymorons of our time is "Progressive Conservative" and we're seeing that with the honourable member's question.

Let me quote someone the honourable member knows very well, Roger Anderson, who is your regional chair, talking about the Investing in Ontario Act, the \$1.1-billion investment in infrastructure. By the way, Durham region received \$53 million to help with projects in their community. I quote:

"I think it is a great step forward. Not that I'm a big fan of surpluses, but surpluses do happen and municipalities certainly can use the infrastructure funding.... People see the money at work for them and I think that's a good thing."

We're proud, the McGuinty government is proud, to invest and partner and treat with respect the municipal sector through uploading, through the AMO MOU table, through infrastructure funding—

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

### ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** My question is for the Premier. In the gallery today are visitors from the Canadian Hearing Society. They are here to raise awareness about issues fundamental to oral deaf, culturally deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing communities.

Some 10% of Ontarians—that is 1.3 million Ontarians—are culturally deaf or have a hearing loss. Can the Premier outline for us how his government has addressed these Ontarians' priority accessibility issues: employment services, hearing care, and mental health and addiction?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** The Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I'm very proud of this government. In 2005, we passed unanimously the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. We are the first province to come out with this legislation, and right now we are developing standards in four areas, because we already have one that is law: customer services.

We have four tables working on developing standards in transportation, built environment, information technology and employment. At these tables, 50% represent the disabled community and 50% represent the private and public sector. It's working very well. In the supplementary, I will continue my answer.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Although this is interesting information, my question had to do specifically with the people who are culturally deaf and have hearing loss.

We are happy to welcome our friends from the Canadian Hearing Society and all of our guests in the gallery to an accessible Legislature today. However, we are concerned that this accessibility is provided on a one-off basis.

New Democrats have prepared a resolution that would ensure that the provincial Legislature is accessible each and every day that we sit. We have called for a permanent sign language interpreter for the floor of this Legislature. I would like to know, will the Premier demonstrate this government's commitment to accessibility and adopt our resolution?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Again, I'm very proud to be part of a government that is really dedicated to accessibility. Especially for those who are here in the House, we have been working very closely with them to increase the budget, which no government has done before, for interpreters and—

**Interjection:** Interveners.

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** —interveners to help those who have challenges in understanding because they are deaf or hard-of-hearing. More than that, we have partnered with the Ministry of Education, and now, in the school system, kids will be able to learn about the profession of interpreter and intervener, because there is a lack of interpreters and interveners. That's why we are increasing the salary of these professionals and we're helping them—

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

#### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, I'm very proud of the culture of innovation that has developed throughout my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. For example, 6N Silicon Inc. has found a new way to produce solar-grade silicon, the fundamental element needed to build solar panels.

Solar-grade silicon is projected to be worth \$10.4 billion by 2010. This will not only create jobs, but will lead to a clean, green energy solution for the world. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that companies such as 6N Silicon are able to bring their innovations to market?

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** I want to thank my friend for the question and originally bringing the company 6N Silicon to my personal attention, and for her advocacy of the clean tech sector.

Through the Ministry of Research and Innovation's innovation demonstration fund, we've committed \$1.5 million to help 6N test their technology for commercial applications, and now we've backed it up with an \$8-million investment through our Next Generation of Jobs Fund to support the creation of a new manufacturing plant in Vaughan. I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Economic Development for that wise investment.

This most recent investment supports 6N's \$50-million expansion, which is expected to create 84 new jobs. The expansion will help cement 6N's reputation and Ontario's reputation as a leader in the emerging green economy.

Many of the employees are former auto workers who are now transferring their wonderful skills—

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

**Mrs. Amrit Mangat:** Minister, a key part of our government's five-point economic plan is to invest in innovative technologies that will create the jobs of tomorrow. 6N Silicon is a great example of how the power of innovation can turn challenges, like how to generate clean energy, into solutions that we can sell to the world.

Minister, 6N Silicon and other companies throughout the riding of Mississauga–Brampton South appreciate our government's support of innovation, but they still would like to know what additional steps our government is taking to allow Ontario companies to demonstrate the quality of their products and attract investment on the world market.

**Hon. John Wilkinson:** The McGuinty government has, through the Ministry of Research and Innovation, a \$30-million innovation demonstration fund—\$30 million committed to allow companies that are in the new clean tech sector to actually take their new innovations and show, by way of demonstration, a new product. We know that if our companies are able to show those products, they can then sell them around the world. 6N's innovation is about making ultra-thin silicon wafers, which are required for solar panels. Companies that have been able to do that are improving the efficiency of solar panels.

I think all of us agree that with the challenges that we face in regard to climate change, solar energy has great potential, but it is today quite expensive. What a company here in Ontario has been able to determine is a revolutionary new way of making ultra-thin silicon wafers which improve the efficiency of solar cells and reduce their cost. I am assured that there is a large—

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

1130

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Frank Klees:** To the Premier: There is one thing that we all agree on in this House, and that is that we're facing turbulent economic times. During these times, the people of Ontario want to know that their Premier is on the ground and on the job, looking after the economy of this province.

A number of months ago, the Premier created the Ministry of International Trade and Investment and appointed a minister to deal with international trade issues.

My question to the Premier is this: What is it that the Premier can do that the Minister of International Trade

and Investment cannot do on the trip that he has planned to China?

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. Minister of International Trade, withdraw the comment, please.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** It was a joke. I'll withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Just say, "I withdraw the comment."

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello:** I withdraw.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm not sure if my honourable colleague is suggesting that the Premier should never travel on behalf of Ontarians and, in this particular case, should not join four other Canadian Premiers, each of whom represents a province that is being visited by the same international economic global turbulence. I'm sure he is not suggesting that.

The fact of the matter is that the Premier—I know that my minister would acknowledge this—can sometimes get meetings with higher-level officials than can the minister. The Premier can sometimes open a few more doors for a business that is accompanying him or her than can the minister.

I think there is tremendous value in myself as well as four other Canadian Premiers travelling together to China, and in our case it's all about exploiting opportunities for businesses with environmental technologies.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** The Premier is absolutely right. I'm not suggesting that the Premier shouldn't travel on behalf of the people of Ontario. I'm also not suggesting that this trip to China is not timely. I'm suggesting that the Premier is needed here in Ontario at a time of financial crisis. I am suggesting—and I'm simply offering some advice to the Premier—that he should designate his ministers duly appointed to look after these issues, and if he wants to spend two or three days at key meetings, so be it, but make sure that he is on the ground here in Ontario, looking after the affairs of Ontario, as the Premier should, and demonstrate that kind of leadership.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm always open to advice. I get lots of advice, particularly when it comes to the best use of my time. I understand the member's intention in this, but I think it's a very good use of my time on behalf of Ontarians to go to China. There are 1.3 billion people there. It's the world's fastest-growing economy. There are tremendous economic opportunities to be found, seized and exploited there. I'm being accompanied by a sizable contingent of Ontario businesses that are eager to visit China, eager to make contacts, eager to sign contracts, all with a view to creating jobs back here in Ontario. I think that is a very good use of my time, especially at this time.

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr. Paul Miller:** To the Minister of Community and Social Services: This minister knows very well—we told her in the June meeting—that many grandparents do not

qualify for welfare. They live on very modest pension incomes and own very modest homes, many of which have mortgages to fund their grandchildren's needs. They have had to go into debt.

Will this minister forget defending her temporary care assistance directives, forget punishing grandparents for providing a family home for their grandchildren, recognize that a system that cuts off these grandparents is flawed, and show that she can put her heart in the right place and direct the necessary changes to ensure that all grandparents in this province raising their grandchildren qualify for temporary care assistance?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** On behalf of my colleague here and all the representatives in the House, I want to say thank you to the grandparents who believe that the well-being of their grandchildren is so important to them and they are taking care of them. That's why this government is helping through temporary care assistance. If grandparents have, for example, two of their grandchildren, they can receive up to \$1,000 a month to help them take care of their grandchildren. On top of that, they are entitled to the Ontario child benefit. They are also entitled to the national child benefit supplement. They are entitled to the assistance for children with severe disabilities. So we're helping grandparents help their grandchildren.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

*The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd just like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of students who will be visiting us today from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. They are going to be here for their media day at Queen's Park, and they've had the enjoyable job of shadowing the press gallery.

I'd also welcome all of our guests who are here and just remind all the guests who are visiting today that we certainly welcome your presence, but as much as you may wish or desire to participate in the debate, you are not allowed to participate, and no clapping, no cheering, no heckling. Thank you.

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I would again like to welcome to the House today the Canadian Hearing Society. The society was founded in 1940 and has since become the leading provider of services, products and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing

health and promote equity for people who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing.

The Canadian Hearing Society's members work hard day after day to advocate on behalf of their clients to facilitate fair and equal access to all aspects of life, including employment, education, recreation, housing, health care and social services. They are able to do this by offering a wide range of services across the country that support equality and inclusion for the deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing. These services include audiology, hearing aid fitting and dispensing, seniors' outreach, mental health and addiction counselling, language development programs for children, employment services, literacy and basic skills development, sign language interpreting and instruction, speech language pathology, speech-reading training and a wealth of communication and safety assistance devices.

The Canadian Hearing Society is poised to continue to break down barriers on behalf of their deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing clients, and I absolutely commend them for the important work they do.

#### ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I'm also very happy to welcome our guests from the Canadian Hearing Society here at Queen's Park. They're certainly welcome visitors. We are especially happy to welcome Gary Malkowski, who was an NDP MPP, who has made great contributions to this House, as well as the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

The Canadian Hearing Society is here today to raise awareness about issues fundamental to all oral deaf, culturally deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing communities, including matters of communication, accessibility and employment.

Ten per cent of Ontarians are culturally deaf, oral deaf or hard-of-hearing. That means 1.3 million Ontarians are affected. We are proud to support the invaluable work that happens at the Canadian Hearing Society.

In the House today, we had an ASL interpreter on the floor of the Legislature, ensuring that our democratic proceedings were accessible to hearing-impaired persons. The New Democrats want to ensure that this accessibility is a common occurrence and not an annual event.

The New Democrats have tabled a private member's resolution to ensure that our provincial Legislature is accessible each and every day. We are awaiting the McGuinty government's decision to demonstrate this government's commitment to accessibility by adopting our resolution.

#### STORMONT, DUNDAS AND GLENGARRY HIGHLANDERS

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** Recently, I was fortunate to accompany a group of constituents and friends from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, including three veterans of World War II, on a European tour of the

battlefields where members of the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry highland regiment fought and died and of the cemeteries where they are laid to rest.

The Glens, as this regiment is called, is one of the oldest military regiments in Canada, and they have been proudly serving our country since the War of 1812. They are known for their bravery, their dependability and their skill in battle.

This commemorative "Following the Glens" tour encompassed 17 days through Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and recognized the sacrifices these soldiers made during the two world wars. Their names are commemorated at battle sites such as Normandy, Passchendaele and Vimy Ridge.

It was very moving to visit a place where someone had died for liberation and freedom. It was especially touching to experience this with someone who may be a family member, who may have been personally connected to these men, or is a current soldier carrying on the Glens' tradition. Perhaps these fallen Glens, so honoured on this tour, were neighbours to my parents and grandparents. They might have lived right down the street from me if things had been different and they had not gone to war. They were our brothers, fathers, grandfathers, neighbours and friends.

Also extremely moving was the gratitude shown to our fallen soldiers, and to those who fought, by the citizens of the European nations. These people experienced the courage of the Glens and other Canadian units first-hand and they understand the sacrifices made to ensure their freedom.

I really understand the phrase, "They did not die in vain." It is with gratitude that I say the battle cry, "Up the Glens."

#### POVERTY

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** Poverty concerns every member in this House, but the solution is not to increase the minimum wage. In uncertain economic times, raising the minimum wage will cut jobs and impose greater costs on already beleaguered employers. It is time for the government to start thinking smart and taking the actions necessary to reduce poverty in Ontario.

Dr. Roger Martin has identified six specific groups at high risk of poverty. These six groups are high school dropouts, recent immigrants, lone parents, the disabled, unattached individuals between 45 and 64 and aboriginals.

Jim Flaherty recognized the need to target specific groups in the last federal budget. The federal budget will invest more than \$550 million a year to establish a working income tax benefit. They will spend \$140 million over the next two years to establish a registered disabilities savings plan, similar to an RESP.

It is time for the McGuinty government to follow the lead of the federal Conservatives and start targeting specific programs to reduce poverty. Many of the initiatives

necessary can only be carried out by provincial action. We are waiting for you to start.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** It's a real pleasure to see so many members here in the House for the members' statements. I would just ask that they listen to the statements, and if they want to engage in a conversation, that's what the galleries on the east and west are for.

1510

#### ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

**Mr. Frank Klees:** On that point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have visiting with us today people from the Canadian Hearing Society. In my meeting earlier today with representatives from the society, a point was made to me that it's ironic that this House passed unanimously the accessibility act but that so little attention is given in this place to accessibility. What was stated very clearly to me was that for individuals who are hard-of-hearing, what is happening in this House is that it's very, very inconsiderate of them to be heckling while they are here, because it's virtually impossible for them to understand.

My point and appeal is this: that perhaps at least for today, out of consideration for our visitors, we would heed their respect.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** The member, I think, is speaking to decorum as much as anything else. I appreciate his acknowledgment of the passage by this government of the disability act, and I do look forward to decorum following and during the economic statement.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I thank the government House leader and the member from Newmarket–Aurora. That was not a point of order, but I do very much appreciate the comments that were made, because I think it is something we all need to be conscious of day in and day out—the importance of maintaining decorum in this chamber and having respect for one another. I would ask each member to heed the words of the honourable member, and the words that this Speaker and previous Speakers have presented to this chamber over the years, on the importance of maintaining decorum.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is the exact reason that the NDP has introduced a motion today, so that we will have sign language interpreters in this House on a daily basis, and that we behave in a way so as to make the House more accessible to the hard-of-hearing and the culturally deaf.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you, and I recognize that that motion has been placed on the order paper and I would encourage the discussion to take place amongst the House leaders to see if it can be moved forward for discussion by all members of the House.

#### GREG KAZMIERSKI AND ELLEN GOODMAN

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** Ottawa residents are very proud to have two of their own recognized by the government of Ontario. This past week, Greg Kazmierski and Ellen Goodman were awarded the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship by the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley.

Greg is a very busy community activist in Orléans and someone I am very proud to call a friend. A member of the local baseball team, the dart league and the Knights of Columbus, he is also an altar server at the Notre-Dame Cathedral Basilica and a very prominent figure during the Blackburn hamlet community fun fair.

In 1990, Greg became the first person with Down's syndrome to graduate from Lester B. Pearson high school in my riding. Three years later, he was honoured with a Canada 125 award for his numerous contributions to the community. You can't find a door in Blackburn hamlet that doesn't know Greg on a first-name basis.

He has had more challenges than many of us here could imagine struggling with, and he has created positive change and tolerance in the face of discrimination and prejudice.

The second person, Ellen Goodman, is an exceptional teacher committed to helping children achieve their personal best. For 28 years, Ms. Goodman worked as a teacher for children with visual impairment, developmental and physical disabilities. She was also a leading force behind Ontario's new blind-low vision early intervention program launched in 2007.

Now retired from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, she continues to be a respected and tremendous advocate, both locally and provincially, for children with disabilities and their families.

To Greg and Ellen on behalf of myself and my colleague the honourable member for Ottawa–Vanier, I say well done. We can hardly wait to see what you both do next. Keep up the great work.

#### TRANSFER PAYMENTS

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Today, we have an economic update by the Minister of Finance, and next week, I think, the Premier leaves for two weeks in China.

The question then becomes, how could a Premier a month ago tell municipal leaders, "Here's a billion dollars from a surplus fund," as he announced at the AMO conference? Did the Premier not foresee that a month later we would have the economic conditions we have today? Even the Minister of Finance, when asked a month ago, said that we have contingencies like the \$800-million fund and the surplus.

Today, we already know, thanks to the Premier's pre-announcement, that we have spent the \$800-million contingency, we've spent the billion-dollar surplus, and now we're short another billion dollars.

Did the Premier not know that he had made a promise? He made a promise to the municipalities to sort

things out—to the poverty groups of Ontario, to the elementary teachers, to the hospitals, to the long-term care community, a list of promises.

As the leader of Ontario, you would have to wonder that if he did not know, why did he make the promises? And if he did know, then he shouldn't have made the promises.

I can tell you today that I'm waiting for these statements to be more excuses from the McGuinty government of why they didn't do what they said they would do.

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's commitment to improving the access and quality of health care received by Ontarians.

On Saturday, October 18, the members of the Ontario Medical Association ratified a new four-year agreement with the McGuinty government. Part of that new agreement includes a new program to help 500,000 Ontarians without a family physician to find one.

The program, called health care connect, will connect patients with health care providers who are taking on new patients. To be launched in February 2009, the program will have teams of health care professionals in each of the 14 LHINs to assist in connecting people with the appropriate health care providers in their local communities.

Other key aspects of the agreement include reducing congestion in hospital emergency rooms; providing funding for 500 nurses to join group practices; helping patients who have chronic diseases such as diabetes to better manage their condition and reduce their need for emergency health service; ensuring Ontario remains the jurisdiction of choice for future physicians with a new program that will defer interest on medical resident debt; and improving access to community mental health services provided by physicians.

This agreement reflects the vision shared between the McGuinty government—

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Thank you. Members' statements.

#### CITY OF TORONTO

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I rise in the House today to remind all Ontarians that the city of Toronto is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. One rarely takes the time to celebrate the diversity, culture and sense of community that the hard-working citizens of Toronto live every day. In fact, Toronto is home to people from every part of Ontario and every part of the world. This diversity and sense of community is celebrated in unique neighbourhoods from the Humber to the Don, from the Lakeshore to the Rouge.

The size and scope of such a large city also present unique challenges. Our government has responded to

these challenges with great investments in our city. They include: Move Ontario 2020, which invests \$17.5 billion in infrastructure to build our subway and our transit lines across the GTA; another investment of \$870 million to build a subway to York University; and \$161 million in provincial gas tax funds to go to the city. Toronto also just received an additional \$238 million to invest in retrofitting our public housing.

These investments are a symbol of the Ontario government's commitment to the cities and towns around the province, and will ensure that Toronto can continue to welcome people from all over the world, and be a city where people work, where they respect their neighbours and where they can help other parts of this province by being prosperous here in Toronto. Hats off to Toronto.

#### CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

**Mr. Wayne Arthurs:** Today is the Canadian Hearing Society's day at Queen's Park. I have the honour of speaking to the work that the Canadian Hearing Society undertakes on behalf of the deaf, deafened or hard-of-hearing.

Founded in 1940, the Canadian Hearing Society is the leading provider of services, products and information that remove barriers to communication, advance hearing health, and promote equity for people who are culturally deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing in Ontario.

Unique in North America, the Canadian Hearing Society offers an integrated roster of essential services, including a number of health and social services, through 26 offices in Ontario.

This day is important for all of us as it is a day to break down barriers to communication and accessibility and enable employment opportunities for those who suffer from hearing disorders.

Canadian families from coast to coast have been affected by hearing losses, and my family has been no exception. I know first-hand the difficulties that individuals and families face because of hearing loss. Without the work of many organizations like the Canadian Hearing Society, families and individuals would have a much more difficult time in overcoming the communication barriers that are faced by the hearing-impaired.

Through its support programs, the society serves working-aged individuals, families, children and seniors, assisting them with housing, employment, life skills, citizenship and counselling as needed. These programs play an essential role in supporting deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing Ontarians, enabling them to lead a full and enriched life, for the benefit of all Ontarians.

#### VISITOR

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a former member, the member from Windsor-Walkerville in the 34th Parliament, in the

east members' gallery, Michael Ray. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT, 2008 (NO. 2)

#### LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS (NO 2)

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters, to amend the Ottawa Congress Centre Act and to enact the Ontario Capital Growth Corporation Act, 2008 / Projet de loi 114, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions, modifiant la Loi sur le Centre des congrès d'Ottawa et édictant la Loi de 2008 sur la Société ontarienne de financement de la croissance.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The minister for a short statement.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** During ministerial statements.  
1520

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** I rise today to present the 2008 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review.

Je suis heureux de présenter aujourd'hui le document Perspectives économiques et revue financière de l'Ontario 2008.

I do so at a time when we are experiencing a global economic crisis that was not imagined even a few short weeks ago. The liquidity crisis in financial markets has undermined business and consumer confidence around the world. This in turn is spilling over into the real economy. The impacts of this are real, present, and directly affect individuals, families, businesses and governments. Ontario families are worried. Ontario busi-

nesses are already feeling it. Ontarians are understandably anxious and concerned for their future.

That's why the McGuinty government has a plan to address these concerns.

Let me say at the outset that we are equipped, we are prepared and we are determined to get through these challenging economic times. Today I will update you on our plan to help get Ontario through the times. In addition, I will detail the steps, some of which have already been taken, that will help manage the province's finances through the remainder of this fiscal year. The principles that have guided our economic policies to date remain the right ones to help us navigate through the current economic storm.

Economists have been forced by unprecedented economic volatility to dramatically alter their growth projections for the United States, for Canada, for Ontario and for the world.

Throughout our mandate, the government's economic policies have been guided by three principles:

First, through our five-point economic plan, we will continue to build confidence in Ontario's economy.

Second, we have been prudent and cautious but have moved quickly to respond to changing economic circumstances.

Third, we have always taken a balanced, comprehensive approach to expenditure and tax policy. We have worked hard to protect the services that Ontarians value while enhancing Ontario's global competitiveness.

These principles will continue to inform our decisions. Above all else, we will be guided by sound judgment and informed by the best possible advice.

Here in Canada, around the world and in Ontario, it is not business as usual; ici-même au Canada, dans le monde et en Ontario, le cours normal des affaires n'a plus cours. It cannot be, given the speed and scale of global economic events.

Based on the best available advice, we project economic growth of 0.1% for this fiscal year, compared to the 1.1% forecast in the 2008 budget. The average private sector forecast is 0.7% growth for next year. Based on these figures, we expect Ontario's revenues to decline this year. Therefore, we must make a number of changes as we adjust to these new and unforeseen challenges.

As a result, our government is projecting a deficit of \$500 million for the fiscal year 2008-09. En conséquence, le gouvernement prévoit un déficit de 500 \$ millions pour l'exercice 2008-2009.

Underneath all of these statistics and underneath all of the uncertainty, there are real people with real fears, real concerns and real needs, and in these uncertain times, Ontario families count more than ever on the vital services that their government provides, and we will continue to provide them.

These investments in health and education have an important stimulative impact on the provincial economy. Many of our important public services and stimulative investments are delivered through our transfer partners,

so we will need their help to protect the quality of public services while continuing to invest in economic growth.

Eighty percent of government spending in 2008-09 flows directly to transfer payment recipients. Growth in transfer funding is related to growth in the economy. Therefore, growth in funding to transfer payment recipients will not be increasing in 2009-10 according to what was projected in the last budget. We are confident that our transfer partners will work together with us to rise to the challenge of the current fiscal situation.

As we manage our finances in a prudent and responsible fashion, the government will delay the implementation of, and slow down, some new spending. At the same time, we will restrain internal government expenditures.

Ensemble, ces mesures de restriction permettront de réaliser des économies de plus de 100 \$ millions dans les cinq derniers mois de l'exercice 2008-2009.

Together, these restraint measures will result in more than \$100 million in savings in the five months remaining in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

We will continue to implement our agenda, and we will continue to do so in a responsible and prudent manner, given the challenges of our times. We will continue to hire more nurses, only not as quickly as we would have liked. We will move forward with repairing schools and establishing more family health teams, only we will do so more slowly. But make no mistake: We will continue to move Ontario forward.

It has been said that the best time to fix the roof is while the sun is shining, and we have done that and more. Over the past five years, we have placed Ontario's economy on a new, stronger foundation. Ontario is in far better shape to respond to today's challenges than it would otherwise have been.

Our economy continues to show strength in key areas. During the past five years, Ontario has created more than half a million net new jobs, unemployment is lower than when we took office, the labour force has grown, and real income has risen. We have made these gains in the face of a strong dollar, the high cost of oil and a slowing US economy.

At the same time, like many other places in the world, we have experienced job losses in manufacturing and forestry over several years. It has been estimated that about 200,000 manufacturing and forestry jobs have been lost since 2002, and our government's five-point plan is responding to that. These challenges, past and present, impact directly on Ontario individuals, families and businesses.

That is why we developed the five-point plan, and that's why we will continue to work to grow our economy.

We knew that to compete against the rest of the world and win, we needed a sound economic plan. Our five-point plan invests in skills, infrastructure and innovation, while lowering business costs and building partnerships.

Our investments in skills and knowledge, including Reaching Higher, has resulted in 100,000 more Ontarians

being trained in colleges and universities. Our skills training initiatives mean that more than 50,000 more Ontarians are learning a skilled trade. Our \$2-billion skills-to-jobs action plan helps to retrain laid-off workers for jobs in the new economy.

Investments in infrastructure are a major part of our five-point economic plan to stimulate the economy, and they will continue.

#### 1530

Three years ago, we launched ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion infrastructure investment that is building new roads, new schools, new hospitals, new bridges and transit right across Ontario today, as we speak. Today, more than 100 major construction projects have been initiated, and our investments are creating more than 100,000 jobs.

We have also supported innovation and proposed a tax incentive to commercialize Canadian ideas, so that home-grown ideas turn into hometown jobs. Our government is well aware of the impact that taxes have on Ontario businesses, and we know that lowering business costs helps them succeed and create more jobs. Since 2004, we've cut business taxes by more than \$1.5 billion. Fully phased in, our targeted tax cuts will save businesses \$3 billion annually.

For several years now, we've been partnering with the key sectors of the Ontario economy and other jurisdictions to encourage economic growth. That's why, three years ago, we implemented our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. So far, 18 projects have generated \$880 million in investment and created or maintained 4,000 jobs.

This is significant progress, but there's more to do. We're going to keep working hard so that Ontario workers and their families have what they need to find opportunity. For Ontario, finding that opportunity means looking for new trading partners beyond the United States. That's why we've opened up seven new international trade offices and have a minister dedicated to enhancing international trade and investment.

We have moved aggressively to obtain fairness for Ontarians in Canada. If we were treated fairly by Ottawa, we could keep more of our taxpayer dollars in Ontario. We could move further and we could move faster with our five-point plan. In particular, we could better support Ontarians who are losing their jobs, and we could build more infrastructure and create still more jobs. Finally, we could provide more assistance to help businesses create those jobs. As proud Canadians, Ontarians want to build a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada, and fairness will give us the tools to get the job done.

We will continue to build business and consumer confidence regardless of the turbulence in today's economy. Building confidence means that we have to take a comprehensive view of all the levers available to us; a single-minded agenda that calls exclusively for tax cuts and deregulation has not worked anywhere. We also reject the notion that we can spend our way out of difficult times. Building confidence means moving

forward with a plan, but at the same time, being prepared to make tough decisions. Building confidence means working with our partners to help them respond to today's pressing needs. Building confidence means taking a balanced approach. Building confidence means responding to real problems in an open-minded and transparent fashion and working with all Ontarians. Above all, building confidence means doing our part: making difficult and responsible decisions to help families and businesses succeed.

Ontario possesses enduring strengths. We possess a shared commitment to look after one another and a sound plan to grow stronger. Today's economic reality is forcing governments around the world to re-examine their expenditures, adjust their assumptions and respond to an environment where the only constant is uncertainty. The McGuinty government's five-point economic plan has been, and continues to be, the right plan for the times. The investments we have made over the past five years will help Ontario weather today's economic storm and better prepare us for the new economy of the 21st century.

Today, we are called upon to rise to these unprecedented challenges in the global economy, these challenges which are real, present and being felt by our families and businesses. That's why I urge the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to begin its pre-budget consultations earlier this year than they did last year.

Moving forward, the McGuinty government will continue its prudent and responsible approach to the management of Ontario's finances. This year's projected deficit will allow us to maintain our important investments in Ontario's economic future as we work through the real challenges that confront the world today. Having eliminated the previous government's \$5.5-billion deficit and having delivered three consecutive surplus budgets, we don't take this decision lightly. We recognize the importance of a strong balance sheet in the formation of future prosperity. In taking this approach, we also acknowledge the importance of infrastructure investments, which create jobs now and improve competitiveness tomorrow.

We also appreciate the value of training opportunities for men and women who, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. We also see very clearly the potential economic growth associated with research and innovation, and understand the positive impact of targeted tax cuts.

Having said this, we will bring even greater focus to the management of our expenses, and we are compelled to temporarily delay and slow down some new spending. As Premier McGuinty has said, "While we can't do everything, we will do everything we can."

Though the confidence of Ontarians has been shaken by recent world events, we can be certain that we will all get through this.

Nous serons à la hauteur des défis qui se présentent à nous. We will rise to the challenges before us, we will

find new ways to grow, and we will grow stronger together.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

## ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Absolutely incredible—the Ontario Liberals get a standing ovation for a return to deficit spending in the province of Ontario. Today, Ontario, along with PEI, stands as the only province in Confederation to be back in deficit. Shame on you for running a deficit again in the province of Ontario.

Surely the minister must have been embarrassed to have made such an incredible admission. Just eight months ago in this very place, he had a \$5.6-billion surplus and bragged about an \$800-million reserve fund. Just four weeks ago, he stood in this very place and said that everything was under control and that the budget would still be balanced. Today, he had to admit that this was all nonsense. He had to admit that Dalton McGuinty's plan is not working. What he has not done is explained how they managed to go from \$6.4 billion in the black to \$500 million in the red, nor will he take any responsibility for the bad decisions that got us here.

Dalton McGuinty says the first role of government is to do no harm. By failing in his responsibility to manage the public finances and the economy, he has done harm to every family and business in the province of Ontario. By avoiding the difficult but necessary decisions to balance the books, Dalton McGuinty is laying a heavier burden on our children and our grandchildren, and limiting economic opportunities for Ontario families today.

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With this deficit today, Dalton McGuinty has added on some \$31 billion in new provincial debt. That translates to, for every household in the province, another \$6,500 that they owe, plus interest. Working families know what that means. That means higher taxes for already strapped middle-class families and seniors to pay down that debt. It also means higher interest payments instead of investments in front-line services like health care or education. It is unnecessary, irresponsible and harmful to run a deficit in the province of Ontario today.

Let's put this into perspective. Since forming government, the McGuinty Liberals have raked in some \$28 billion in increased revenues, chiefly from higher taxes and increased transfers from the federal government: \$28 billion is greater than the entire budgets of Manitoba and Saskatchewan combined, yet the Premier still comes here today and says he is going to run a deficit in the province of Ontario.

While working families struggle with the decision to fill their grocery cart or pay their electricity bill, this government has proved today that they are unwilling to make the tough decisions and that they are willing to mortgage our province's future after the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history, because they lack the courage to set

priorities and make the tough decisions to put this province back on track.

Worst of all, Ontario has been in a manufacturing recession for years. Working families in my riding in Niagara and Hamilton, sadly, know this all too well. But Dalton McGuinty seems oblivious to the reality experienced by Ontario families and has no plan whatsoever to create well-paying jobs in this province.

There's nothing in this economic update to indicate that Dalton McGuinty understands what Ontario families and seniors are going through, nor any indication that he's willing to give them any kind of relief.

John Tory and the Ontario PC caucus—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** —will continue to call on the Premier to set priorities, to stop trying to be all things to all people; to open the books all the way and account for how every precious tax dollar is spent; to implement public spending restraint; and to create a private sector job creation plan involving tax and regulatory relief. Do not add a penny more onto Ontario's massive debt load. Do what every Ontario family and small business does each and every day, and live within your means.

All we saw today from Dalton McGuinty was more of the same: the same old and failed high-tax, high-spending, no-jobs policy that is causing Ontario to fall further and further behind. We saw the same old blame game of refusing to set priorities, make decisions or take any responsibility.

The tax-and-spend policies that got us into the mess are certainly not going to get us out of it. It's time that Dalton McGuinty finally admitted that he is failing the test of leadership, and it's time for this Liberal government to change its course.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I ask all members—for the most part, as the finance minister was delivering his statement, there was not a great deal of banter across the floor; there was some—to just give the opportunity to the members to respond.

#### ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I hope that people at home have a chance to watch some of this, because what's unfolding in Ontario over the last three years is the loss of an incredible number of good jobs: 240,000 good jobs that would support families and support communities.

What's also unfolding, at a time when the McGuinty government was boasting about surpluses, is that more Ontarians have fallen into poverty. We know that the world is facing difficult economic times. I don't think people across Ontario need to be told that over and over again. I think people can read the news and figure out what is happening here. I think what people were hoping for today was to see a meaningful response from the McGuinty government. There were a lot more words—and the McGuinty government seems to be very capable

of putting out a lot more words—but when you look at this, there is nothing new here.

What's the McGuinty government's response to the increasing loss of jobs? The same old five-point plan that they announced a couple of years ago, and since they announced it, thousands more good jobs have disappeared; nothing more. While other provinces are implementing buy-domestic policies, while other provinces are implementing a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to keep manufacturing jobs in place, while other provinces are implementing reasonable industrial hydro rates to keep manufacturing jobs in place, what did the McGuinty government do today? Nothing; absolutely nothing. At a time when private forecasters are forecasting that Ontario will lose another quarter-million good manufacturing jobs, what is the response of the McGuinty government? Nothing.

What is equally frustrating about this is that many of the things that are part of this so-called five-point plan are already failures. Two hundred and forty thousand workers, hard-working people, in this province have lost their jobs. The government's response? Their so-called Second Career strategy. Only 1,000 workers have signed up for Second Career, despite the fact that 240,000 lost their jobs. To any reasonable person, there is a message there: This Second Career strategy isn't working. What's the response of the government? More of the same old, same old.

The OECD told us earlier this week that more people are falling into poverty in the province of Ontario. What is the response of the McGuinty government today? In this economic statement, they don't even mention the word "poverty." It is as if the 1.8 million people in Ontario who are living in poverty don't even exist for the McGuinty government, except every once in a while to make another promise.

The dental program, which would not only help people who were losing their teeth and suffering general overall ill health as a result—not a penny. The fact of the matter is, someone living on Ontario Works today is over \$6,000 below the poverty line. Anything about that? Nothing. The government boasts about its Ontario child benefit, but nothing meaningful is going to happen from that until 2012. Meanwhile, more kids in Ontario are falling into poverty.

What is so clear about this is that the McGuinty government, that really did not have a plan to sustain jobs and help the poor during good times, now in bad times doesn't have a plan either; no plan for poverty—you can't mention the word—and no plan to sustain jobs.

People in tough times need leadership from the government. This is when people who are facing tough times need to see bold action from the government. What is the bold action from the McGuinty government? Same old, same old. Policies that led to the loss of 240,000 manufacturing jobs are going to continue in place; policies which led to an increase in poverty in Ontario are going to continue in place.

I think that most Ontarians, when they hear about this today, are going to be terribly let down. A government that announces and reannounces that it's an activist government, that it cares about the less fortunate, that it cares about people struggling in poverty, comes up and says, "Gee, folks, times are tough, and you're on your own." That's the message here today, and it's shameful.

## PETITIONS

### HOSPITAL SERVICES

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** There is no help for the people of Oakville and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital today.

"To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the current Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital is fully utilized; and

"Whereas Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was sized to serve a town of Oakville population of 130,000" people, "and the current population is now ... over 170,000" people; "and

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"Whereas the population of Oakville continues to grow as mandated by 'Places to Grow,' an act of the Ontario Legislature, and is projected to be 187,000 people in 2012, the completion date for a new facility in the original time frame; and

"Whereas residents of the town of Oakville are entitled to the same quality of health care as all Ontarians; and

"Whereas hospital facilities in the surrounding area do not have capacity to absorb Oakville's overflow needs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure take the necessary steps to ensure the new Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital be completed under its original timelines without further delay."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and pass it to my page, Jenna.

### TUITION

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I have thousands of petitions presented to me this morning by the Canadian Federation of Students, and this is but a fraction of what I was given by them. There were approximately 670,000 names.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Can you please read the petition?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** "To 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

"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 we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a framework that:

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

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

"(3) Increases per-student funding above the national average."

I support this petition and I will be signing it.

### CHILD CUSTODY

**Mr. Kim Craiton:** I'm pleased to introduce this petition, a grandparents' petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, 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(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact

between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

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

I’m pleased to sign my name in support of this petition.

#### SEXUAL REASSIGNMENT SURGERY

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and I’ve signed it.

#### PROTECTION FOR MINERS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition here from the people of Ottawa.

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

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

“Section R-60 (page 60 of Mining Regulations), paragraph 74 states that, ‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded. RRO 1990, Reg. 854s 75(1).’ The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle’s body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### CHILD CUSTODY

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition from a number constituents in my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

#### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr. John O’Toole:** On this day of the financial statement, I have an important petition from my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas high gasoline prices are now unaffordable for the average person; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s tax on a litre of gasoline is 14.7 cents; and

“Whereas the federal government’s tax on a litre of gasoline is 10 cents plus the GST;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the McGuinty government immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period until world prices moderate.

“(2) That the McGuinty government and the federal government immediately lower or eliminate their tax on gas for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate.

“(3) That the McGuinty government immediately initiate a royal commission” or a select committee “to investigate the predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario.”

I’m pleased to present this to one of the new pages, Elise.

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#### FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** This petition speaks to fairness for people of Ontario. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign my name to it.

#### DRINKING AND DRIVING

**Mr. Frank Klees:** “Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Tyler Mulcahy and his friends lost their lives in a tragic accident that could have been avoided; and

“Whereas young people must learn zero tolerance for drinking and driving to protect themselves from enduring tragedy that will severely impact them, their families and their friends; and

“Whereas, towards this end, young people need to acquire safe and responsible driving habits from as early an age as possible; and

“Whereas improved provincial driving laws can effectively contribute to the process of enhanced driver training and responsible habits among youth in this respect;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to enact laws to revoke the licence of drivers 21 years of age and younger with alcohol in their bloodstream, and to also revoke their licence for speeding, for a period of from three months to one year, based upon the determined amount of alcohol or the level of speed involved.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature as a sign of support for this petition.

#### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I have a petition here from the patients of Dr. Uzma Ahmed, who practises on Meadowvale Town Centre Circle in north Mississauga. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Kevin to carry it for me.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### APOLOGY ACT, 2008 LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PRÉSENTATION D'EXCUSES

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies / Projet de loi 108, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Further debate.

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** At the outset, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, David Zimmer, the MPP for Willowdale, and the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, David Orazietti.

I just want to take a few minutes at the very outset of this proceeding to speak to the fundamental purpose of this piece of legislation. If passed, what we will have in legislation is something that will reflect our natural human emotion and tendency. When we have caused some harm to another—or even think we might have caused some harm to another—it is natural for us to say, “I’m sorry,” maybe to give an explanation accompanying the bare words “I’m sorry.” It helps to restore relations with the individual we might have harmed; it helps the acknowledgement on the part of the person who might have been harmed; it helps the healing and reconciliation process. But oh, no, the law has got in the way of that natural human emotion, and over time the law has said to individuals, to organizations: “No, you cannot apologize, because if you do, that apology can be used in civil legal proceedings that might be brought against you. You cannot apologize, because if you do, any policy of insurance that might cover you will be null and void.” The laws got in the way of a good human reaction. This legislation is being brought to address that.

I want to say to all members of the House that this is not an idea that originated with me or my ministry. In fact, the members of this House have heard about this very good proposal before, because my colleague David Orazietti, the MPP for Sault Ste. Marie, introduced it as a private member’s bill. We are here today to speak to this because of his good work, his good research, his very convincing arguments, and I am delighted that it has now become part of the government-proposed legislation.

This will protect apologies that are made. They can still be used in criminal prosecutions, they’ll still be able to be used in Provincial Offences Act prosecutions, but it will protect those apologies that are made by individuals and organizations. They won’t be able to be used in future civil legal proceedings, and any contract of insurance will still be of full force and effect if individuals do what they want to do and acknowledge any responsibility they either have or believe they have.

I have outlined, in very sparse detail, what my colleagues are going to speak to in greater detail and that I hope will find the approval of all members of the House.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, and I know I’m sharing my time with my colleague David Zimmer.

**Mr. David Orazietti:** It’s a pleasure to be here today to speak to this bill, and I want to thank very much our Attorney General and the Premier for their support—and, in fact, all of my colleagues and members of the House who have already made comments on this potential legislation, if passed, and have thrown, I think, their overwhelming support behind this. I am looking forward to hearing what the opposition benches are going to say on this particular bill. We have heard some of the comments to date, and I think, so far, they have been supportive.

I want to talk just briefly about where the proposal really came from, and I think I will be reflecting, perhaps, what many of the members in this House have experienced in their own constituency offices with individuals who have come to them with various circumstances. I will use some health care examples to be relevant, because I think this has, obviously, a larger relevance and significance in the health care field. We’ve all had individuals come to our office and express to us their concerns around various medical procedures and health procedures. In my conversations with a former senior person at our local Sault Area Hospital, Brady Irwin, we talked about the process for remedying and dealing with an individual who may have been adversely affected by something that has taken place in the health care system. We began talking about the apology framework and the apology premise and how this plays such an important role in our health care system, both for closure and to allow people to move on, as well as to ensure that the lines of communication remain open so that the individual can continue to receive all of the necessary information and access the appropriate health care remedies as are suited for their particular circumstance.

#### 1610

To put that in context, the research began some time ago, but I should say that there are other jurisdictions in Canada and in the United States that have moved forward with various types of apology legislation. Some are comprehensive—in other words, they cover all areas beyond health care—and some are particular to the health care sector and health care field.

On May 18, 2006, British Columbia became the first province in the country to pass apology legislation, and it was a comprehensive piece of legislation. Saskatchewan introduced an amendment to their Evidence Act on May 17, 2007, so about a year later it was passed in Saskatchewan. Manitoba followed the BC model more closely, introducing a more comprehensive apology bill that was passed in the fall of 2007. So here we are, as the fourth jurisdiction in Canada looking at this proposed legislation, and I’m very hopeful that it passes.

In the United States, Massachusetts was the first state to have comprehensive apology legislation, and they actually passed that in 1986. The more recent experiences in the US are in areas limited to health care—and there are far more states that have a health care apology type of

exemption—and there are about 35 US states that have some form of apology legislation, either specific to health care or in a comprehensive framework.

So I think there is ample evidence to support moving forward with this. This has been tried in other jurisdictions; it has been supported.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the individuals here in our province who have supported it, because I need to recognize and thank some of the individuals who came forward to do so.

First, I want to recognize Phil Hassen. Some of you may know his name, as he was a former Deputy Minister of Health in the province of Ontario. He's now the CEO of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute. He came here from Alberta, as his office is in Edmonton, to support this when we introduced it. He made the following remarks: "An Apology Act is an important step forward for the people of Ontario and it is consistent with our recently released Canadian Disclosure Guidelines, which aim to increase honest and open communication among health care professionals, patients and the public. The proposed Apology Act and the guidelines are proof of a cultural shift underway in society recognizing that offering a sincere apology or expression of regret is simply the right thing to do in often very difficult and emotional circumstances. It is a sign of caring, compassion and empathy—not blame or guilt."

Dr. Janice Willett, who was the president of the Ontario Medical Association and who actually practises medicine in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie—we're very fortunate to have her in our community; she's a fantastic physician—made the following comment at the same event: "Ontario doctors support apology legislation because it will enable health care professionals to focus on patient needs during difficult times. This will put Ontario in line with other provinces and enhance the ability of doctors and nurses to communicate with their patients."

Doris Grinspun, who, as you know, is the executive director of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, also indicated her support and was very interested in seeing this legislation move forward and encouraged all parties to support the legislation.

Tom Closson, who is the president and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, welcomes the apology legislation as the next critical step in further opening up disclosure initiatives and improving patient safety in the province. We have the RNAO, Preston Zuliani from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and Greg Goulin, who is the president of the Ontario Bar Association. I'm very pleased to see the legal community embracing this particular legislation. The Ontario Bar Association has said that they support the legislation and they have advised the Attorney General of their desire to see this legislation pass in the Legislature.

Those are just some of the individuals who have come forward representing various groups in our province that, in particular, deal daily with the challenges in our health care field. They have supported this openness that we have the opportunity to create, and a barrier, frankly, that

we have the opportunity to knock down between patients and their providers. I think we know, and I heard certainly some of the health care professionals speak about this, that if something adverse happens in the health care field, happens to the patient, they are not given perhaps the information that they should have following that, because the lines of communication are essentially cut off, in many ways. In part, that's a reality simply because of the insurance practices that are currently in place in the province of Ontario, where the insurance provider will say to the physician or the nurse or the other health care professional, "If you take any responsibility for this, if you admit any blame or guilt, we're not going to cover you. If you're sued civilly, we're simply not going to provide the legal resources that you will need to mount a defence to this."

So it really creates a problem with health care providers, with patients, and with the people of Ontario. This is a really important barrier that we are potentially removing in the province, which allows us to move forward. Certainly, as the nurses and doctors have told me, they want to have this communication with the patients that they see. They don't want this barrier any more than anyone else wants this in the province of Ontario.

One of the other aspects of the bill that I would like to speak about that supports the legislation moving forward is the research that has been done that substantiates the importance of the bill. Our experience in this country is a bit more limited. British Columbia was the first province to pass this bill, but it was in 2006, so we're only a couple of years into the experience of this legislation in this country and there is not a substantial amount of evidence to refer to. But the American experience, which is much longer, really gives us more of a base for moving forward in some of these regards.

I'm going to just make reference to the other benefits that, really, passing this type of legislation helps us with.

Since 2002, the hospitals at the University of Michigan Health System have encouraged physicians to apologize for mistakes. Malpractice lawsuits and notices of intent to sue have fallen from 262 filed in 2001 to about 130 a year, and legal fees have dropped from about \$3 million to \$1 million. That's really being driven by the fact that the individuals who feel that they may have been wronged want an apology. We all know of individuals who perhaps have brought cases to a civil court who simply say "Well, I want an apology, and if somebody would simply apologize to me for what's happened, take the responsibility, we could move on."

I'll give you a specific example in Lexington, Kentucky, a veterans' administration hospital, from the Physician's News Digest, 2005. After adopting a program of disclosure and compensation, they saw the average malpractice award drop from about \$100,000 to \$15,000. Less than 10% of the malpractice claims were filed in court; most of them were resolved prior. So it indicates that this isn't something that is simply a financial benefit to our hospital sector or our health care

sector, although we know that will be a benefit. The reality is, it's important to move forward because this is the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do for patients; it's the right thing to do for physicians and nurses as well.

I'll leave with you one other example—perhaps two.

The American Bar Association Journal in 1999 indicated that 30% of all plaintiffs claimed that they would not have launched a civil action had an apology been provided.

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I know that there are others who want to speak to this bill and share some time with my colleagues on this as well, and the research very clearly indicates that it's important to move forward with this.

The other point we need to acknowledge is that while some people might say that moving forward with apologies is a convenient way for certain people who might want to avoid the legal repercussions of having a civil suit launched against them, I think it's important to remember that this bill does not preclude anybody in any way from moving forward with a legal case before a civil court and won't take one penny from anyone who is legally entitled to compensation. That's really important. Some people will say, "What if we get these pseudo apologies, these apologies that are not really sincere, and people will make these comments that they don't mean because they know it might help avoid a legal case?" We can't legislate sincerity, and only the individual who's receiving the apology will know whether or not that apology was given genuinely, and with the intent and in a way that it should be, and they'll have to assess that. Again, it doesn't preclude anybody from moving forward with a case.

I want to thank the Attorney General and members of our government supporting this. I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Willowdale.

**Mr. David Zimmer:** I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 108, the Apology Act, 2008, introduced by the Attorney General on October 7. I do want to recognize the tremendous piece of work that the member for Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. David Oraziotti, has done to bring this bill forward to our caucus, to the Attorney General's attention and to the attention of this Legislature.

I'm sure all members will recognize that in life a sincere apology for wrongdoing or a mistake is part of one's natural human interaction, their natural reaction to a tragedy, to a mistake, to an error. We're all taught at an early age to say, "I'm sorry," when we make a mistake or cause harm, whether it's intentional or unintentional. Most of us keep that habit as we grow into adults. It helps maintain civil relations, whether in a crowded society or indeed in a small household or in a one-on-one personal relationship. But the problem is that the law often gets in the way of these honest and heartfelt apologies. People are reluctant to apologize when they've caused a harm, a problem or a mistake especially when, and particularly

when, they're facing the pressure that somehow the apology is going to come back to haunt them in the context of a lawsuit. In fact, I'm a lawyer. There are lots of lawyers in this Legislature. Lawyers have often advised clients not to apologize when they're in a situation of mistake, error or wrongdoing. Professional organizations and associations, insurance companies, insurance adjusters, often advise their clients not to apologize and not to recognize errors that may have been made, because later on down that road, in a liability suit, that apology, that expression of regret, that heartfelt reaction to a mistake or an error comes back to haunt you. Add to this the fact that often insurance companies have provisions in their coverage to say something to the effect that coverage for damages arising out of a mistake, an error or an accident are revoked if the policyholder jeopardizes the insurance company's position on liability by virtue of an apology that that individual has felt in their heart of hearts they want to make.

The law should not stand between the harmed and someone causing the harm from providing an apology and for setting up the context in which that apology and expression of common decency will often go a long, long way to resolve the anguish felt between the person who has committed the error, committed the wrong, made the mistake, and the person who has suffered as a result of it.

This proposed bill will change the law to allow people to freely apologize. The legislation, if passed, will allow people to apologize for a mistake or wrongdoing without fear that the apology could be used in lawsuits against them. But you must keep in mind: It would not, however, allow an apology to get in the way of a victim's ability to seek compensation for any harm that's done. Under this proposed bill, an apology would not be an admission of fault and could not be used as evidence to prove fault or liability relating to the matter for which someone apologizes. It would also prohibit an insurance company, for instance, from denying coverage to policyholders who apologize. Indeed, in an environment where an apology is inadmissible as proof of liability, insurance companies would no longer have any reason to deny coverage.

This legislation, if passed, will go a long way to restore a level of human compassion to relationships in times of pain. For example, when a medical procedure has gone wrong or someone has hurt someone else, it'll take away that gut-wrenching fear that people have and organizations feel that if they apologize under the current rules in the system, somehow that's going to come back to haunt them later in a civil lawsuit. People don't have to be worried anymore that if they make that heartfelt apology, that heartfelt expression of regret, that expression of compassion will be used as evidence of liability in a lawsuit and other civil proceedings. The legislation is going to remove the legal barriers that stand in the way of a human's natural instinct to express regret, to share someone's pain, to share someone's feelings by way of an apology. It's going to allow and create a context in which these very important, sincere and, many times, just instantaneous expressions of regret are offered. It's the

right thing to do to set a context where people can offer a sincere apology or an expression of regret without fear of the consequences of making that expression.

Many studies show that timely and sincere apologies often reduce the anger of the victims of the error, mistake or harm. Rather than feeling neglected and uncared-for, they are seeing that their hurt has been recognized. This can be a very, very powerful moment on the path to recovery and reconciliation of the harm that has arisen as a result of the error or the mistake, especially when you compare it to what the victim feels in the absence of an expression of apology, especially in those situations where any person of a normal moral compass would expect an apology or an expression of regret.

We are changing the context so that that natural instinct, that natural moral compass that you have to apologize for an error or a wrong, can be made without fear of later liabilities in a civil action. We want to give people who have been harmed the tools so that they can move on beyond the harm or the error or the tragedy. It actually gives both parties, the party who has perhaps made the error and the party who's the victim of the error—it enables both of them, the apologizer and the recipient of the apology, to reconcile, to put this tragedy and the consequences of this mistake behind them.

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, David Caplan, in a statement to the House when this bill was first introduced, emphasized the importance of communicating information to patients when harm occurs as a result of errors in health care that has been provided. Minister Caplan said that, in his view, the apology would help to build and re-establish rapport and trust between patients and their families and the health care provider, and support open and honest communication. To the extent that we can restore and keep those lines of honest communication open and keep that relationship alive and healthy and in a state of well-being, that's a desirable result, and this Apology Act will again create the context in which that relationship can be maintained through the expression of regret, apology and sympathy.

**1630**

By removing legal barriers to the offering of apologies, organizations like hospitals and other public institutions can now apologize, can now make an expression of regret for an accident or a wrongdoing, including admitting a fault. Absent concern that an apology would necessarily lead to a costly lawsuit, much-needed openness and communication can occur. An apology can support healing in many ways—emotionally, psychologically and physically—by opening communication and providing information that can support the caring that's going to be needed to restore that relationship.

I just want to wrap up and say that, as a former practising lawyer in the civil bar for many years and in the criminal bar for some years, I often saw these situations where, in my judgment, an expression of sincere regret, an apology with sincere regret for an error or harm, would have gone a long way to repair the relationship, to enable the parties to settle into a context

where they could resolve and get beyond the harm that was caused.

This legislation will enhance that kind of a reciprocal, caring, constructive relationship. That's why it's important to support this legislation.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I certainly was listening to the comments on Bill 108. Our major speaker will be Christine Elliott, and as a lawyer, she knows the issues around the Apology Act.

Today, we had a more interesting comment from the Minister of Finance announcing that we are going into deficit in the province of Ontario. So here's what I think. We're talking about the Apology Act, Bill 108, and I think the Premier and the Minister of Finance should have apologized to the people of Ontario.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, here's the point. There's a \$500-million deficit that you can see, that's admitted to, but it's about \$1.1 billion shown as what they're going to save sometime over the balance of the fiscal year. Now, \$500 million is less than half—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Durham, I'm really trying, but—

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Well—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** I know, but I think you're really stretching it. This isn't part of that bill, so I would ask you to speak to the comments that were made by the previous speakers.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I did listen. The member from Willowdale is a lawyer, I know that, and he's a fair-minded person. I'd ask him, in his two-minute response, to address whether or not it's appropriate for the McGuinty government to promise one thing and do another. It's sort of like promising the victim that you're going to resolve the issue and then not resolving the issue.

This is what an apology is about to the public, but if you give and forgive, I think that's important. In civility in our society, it's important to extend the hand. And I say that in the Maher Arar case, which started prior to the Stephen Harper government. They actually tried to solve that problem, and the truth and reconciliation committee of the Stephen Harper government is extending that olive branch of apology, making it right. I don't see that conciliatory approach from Dalton McGuinty in the times of trouble for the families of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon to speak on Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies, better known as the Apology Act.

I first of all want to commend and tell this House how much I appreciate the work of the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who first brought it to the attention of this House and—

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** A real leader.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** A real leader, for sure.

It certainly shows the interest of this government in taking up on the ideas that are presented in the Legislature, and I have to say, with this and others, the member from Sault Ste. Marie has done very well.

This afternoon, as I listened to this, I thought of my own life and apologizing for mistakes and wrongdoings and always being told that it was the right thing to do. I grew up in a family of 12 kids, and my high school years were years when 14 of us lived under one roof. I remember many times throughout those years living at that farm that I was asked to apologize.

This goes a step further. Certainly, if this is passed, it would help to remove the legal barriers to our natural instincts and allow that very important and sincere expression of apology to happen. We heard that this afternoon in the words from the member from Willowdale, and we certainly heard it from the Attorney General. It would contribute to a stronger, healthier and more civil society for all Ontarians. As I think we heard this afternoon, the act would allow individuals and organizations to apologize for an accident or wrongdoing without fear that the apology would be used as evidence of liability in a legal proceeding, and this is exactly what we need here in Ontario. So I want to thank those who made contributions this afternoon.

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

**Ms. Laurel C. Broten:** I'm very pleased to have a chance to join in this debate this afternoon, and in particular to recognize the work that's been done by our colleague on this side of the House, David Oraziotti, who brought forward a bill by working with stakeholders and really brought a new and innovative idea to the floor of the Legislature.

I join with my colleague across the way, and also as a lawyer do acknowledge the importance of an opportunity for clients to be able to do what is the human and desirous thing to do, to say that you're sorry when something transpires. Our laws should not discourage people from apologizing for the harm that they do. They are integral to healing and they are integral to helping a community do well and to continue.

What is accidental or unintentional is the critical element here. As has been said, there's nothing in this legislation that prevents legitimate claims from being brought forward, and they should be. I have had the privilege to represent many clients who needed to bring those lawsuits forward because, in fact, they needed the financial assistance to be able to live out their lives; they needed to have redress brought forward for something that had taken place. But at the heart of it, if you had an opportunity to speak to those individuals, in many instances they also wished that many years before the litigation reached its ultimate time in a courtroom, someone had said they were sorry.

That's what this Apology Act allows. I'm very pleased that the Attorney General has brought it forward, and I'm pleased to stand in support of it today and also to

recognize the work done by my colleague from Sault Ste. Marie.

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

**Mr. David Zimmer:** We've heard from members of the Legislature here, and, in my judgment, they all appear to be on board in support of this legislation. That's not surprising, that they are in support of this legislation; because of the legislation that I've seen in the last five and a half years that I have been here, this is one that really cries out from the heart to do. If there's anything that any of us can do to resolve and to quiet the acrimony, the depression, the anger, the disappointment, the frustration that develops in the context of resolving a dispute over how a harm happened, in the context particularly of a civil litigation or another administrative proceeding, any of the members here—and I suppose a few have been involved in litigation from time to time—can realize how stressful and how heart-rending it can be. If this legislation is passed, we will have gone a long, long way to restore relationships, to provide that context, that stage in which people can repair a relationship that has been temporarily and unsuspectingly, perhaps, fractured because of a harm.

A sincere apology, a regret which flows from deep within us and points in the direction that our moral compass, in all circumstances, directs us to move in—in the direction of reconciliation, in the direction of apology, in the direction of shared regret—is good for the citizens of Ontario. That's why all members of this Legislature, in my judgment, would appear to be supporting this legislation.

1640

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment briefly on Bill 108, the Apology Act, but before I make my specific comments with respect to the bill, I'd appreciate, with your indulgence, a few moments just by way of preamble to set the backdrop for my comments. I really feel compelled to comment today on the irony of a second reading debate on this bill being brought forward today, immediately following the Minister of Finance's economic statement. In the face of global economic difficulties, in the face of record surpluses in the last number of years here in the province of Ontario, and knowing that there have been economic storm clouds on the horizon for at least the last year, what do we have—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Member, take your seat for a minute. It really puts me in a difficult position, because my responsibility is to see that speakers speak to the bill that's before us. So I would appreciate it if you speak to the particular bill, Bill 108.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** Very well, Mr. Speaker, I will do that, and I will get to the point directly because after the devastation of our manufacturing sector, after all of the difficult situations with hundreds of thousands of people left out of work in this province—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Perhaps you didn't understand me. I really don't want to move on to another speaker, but it puts me in a difficult position, because I could be criticized for not having members speak to the bill that's before us. So please do.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** Very well, Mr. Speaker. I will do that, and I will comment, if I may, that after everything we've heard today, what have we got before us but the Apology Act? I must comment that I have not heard about the need for an Apology Act from any of my constituents at all: not this month, not this year, not since I was elected to this place in March 2006. And yet, here we are: We're debating this piece of legislation when we've got this situation.

I've commented on this bill two times before, once when it was brought forward as a private member's bill in May this year by the member from Sault Ste. Marie, and I've already commented that I agree with it in principle. I also commented on it when it was first brought before this Legislature several weeks ago for first reading, and I understand what the comments are. But I really have to say that I understand there has been apology legislation brought before British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and most recently in the Yukon. I'd also like to quote, if I may, from the comments that were made in the Yukon Legislature, which turned down apology legislation on April 30, 2008, at second reading, where it said:

"The fact that the Official Opposition has once again brought this forward demonstrates that they have placed a higher priority on an apology act that has huge questions related to it nationally here and in the Yukon. They have placed that as a priority over and above education. They've placed that as a priority over and above health care. They have placed that as a priority over and above investing in infrastructure. They've placed that as a priority over and above the continuing growth of investments and in diversifying our private sector economy. They've placed that over and above good governance in this territory. They've placed that over and above the public's business. I think it is a demonstration of how disconnected and out of touch the Official Opposition is with the Yukon of today.

"The government will now stand down on this bill and when comes time to vote, we will vote against it, because at this time there is far too much important business before this House yet to be dealt with on behalf of the Yukon public." And so I would say I agree: There are far more important things that we should be dealing with in this Legislature at this time, with the economy being in the situation it is.

Having said that, I will comment specifically with respect to the bill. There are still many questions that are unanswered with respect to this bill. There are some issues that I can understand, that there is a value being placed in an honest and sincere apology, but I think, as legislators, and particularly for those of us who are lawyers in this place, we also need to recognize that there are other considerations that need to be brought forward,

and that is the protection of our clients. My fear is that in some of these cases there will be situations where there are going to be plaintiffs who are not going to feel that they will have the ability to bring forward their cases because of a fear that an apology has been rendered, and therefore all is well. That may not be the case in certain parts of the province of Ontario, and I am concerned about that, because I have heard from very many people in my constituency office about the serious problems they have in bringing forward litigation in the first place due to the high cost of access to justice here in the province of Ontario, due to the fact that it's very difficult to succeed in almost any case, as it is with a medical malpractice claim, however meritorious it may be. We need to weigh that against the value of a simple apology because there are concerns about that, and I think we need to hear from other people who are far more expert than I am on this.

The other issue that I have a concern about is that it may be seen as a boilerplate kind of action that may lack any real significance in the course of litigation, and there are also several technical issues that I think we need to get some legal advice on with respect to admissions of liability in both criminal and civil cases. So there are some significant concerns. Again, I do support in it principle, although I think there are other issues that are far more pressing that we should be dealing with here in this Legislature. But I look forward to this matter going to committee. I would urge the government to give this full debate and full opportunity for all who are interested in presenting in committee, including health care professionals and lawyers who are going to be dealing with it. I do look forward to hearing from members of the Ontario Bar Association, an organization that I have great regard for. We have heard from the alternative dispute resolution section of the ADR, who is in support of this bill. But we need to hear from the other sections of the bar association, the litigation section, the health care section and many others, so that we get a full, completely rounded picture of exactly where we're going to go with this legislation. Most importantly, we need to hear from Ontarians across this province about their concerns and issues with this legislation as we move forward.

I think there are a lot of unanswered questions, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate your allowing me to continue to participate in this debate, and I look forward to hearing from the presenters in committee as we move forward.

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

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'll be speaking to this bill on behalf of New Democrats in around 10 minutes' time, but I want to thank the member from Whitby-Oshawa for her comments on this legislation. I recall her comments when the bill was introduced as a private member's bill. That was back in May 2008. There was second reading of the bill on that occasion.

I think the member has some very important things to say about the bill. Its promoters would like it to be as simple as the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney

General would want it to appear to be, but with respect, I don't think it's that simple. I think Mrs Elliott, during the course of what I hope are thorough committee hearings—because it really does warrant thorough committee hearings. The public could care less, I suspect, about the debate around this bill. Nonetheless—it's not unlike a whole lot of things that tend to get discussed here—there are some very important implications in this legislation for innocent victims. I want to speak to that in a few minutes' time. I know Mrs. Elliott, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, with her personal background and the research she has done in this matter, has a great deal to contribute. It's my hope and expectation, and perhaps the government members would be prepared to indicate now that this bill—and I'm confident it's going pass second reading. I don't think the Attorney General has to worry. He's got the numbers. I don't support the bill—New Democrats don't support the bill—but I'm confident it's going to get passed.

1650

It's important that it go out to committee hearings, and that's where the member from Whitby–Durham will be even more valuable than here in the course of this debate: in the querying that's going to have to be done around people who are going to be directly impacted and, most specifically, innocent victims of some of the most nefarious conduct.

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

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Just reflecting on what the member from Whitby–Oshawa was saying: After being around here for a number of years, I never underestimate the amount of things we still have to learn, nor to undervalue any initiative that comes from a private member.

I remember, as a member in opposition, that I put forward a bill asking for the province of Ontario to introduce portable heart defibrillators in public places—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** And I supported it.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I know, but do you remember what the response was of the government party of the time? They said, “This is not important.” In fact, when the bill went to committee, they even voted against the title of the bill. That's how angry—and they said, “This bill is from a member of the opposition. Nobody's asking for portable heart defibrillators.” So the government of the day—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** No, it's not. Today's the day for lessons, I guess. Questions and comments are intended for you to have the opportunity to speak to the comments made by the member. I think we're getting a bit away from that.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** The member stood up in this House and said, “This bill is not worth debating; we've got better things to do.” I was saying, that was the same thing that happened when I brought forward a private member's bill. So I'm saying that whether it's this bill or other bills, I don't want to be the judge of what we should be discussing or debating in this House, because everything

has some merit and we're here to listen; we're not here to judge. We're not all judges and lawyers. We're representing ordinary people who sometimes have ideas that are of concern to them but may not be a concern to us. Let's give it a hearing. That's what the government is saying: Let's debate it.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I just want to get up and respond, as our critic, Ms. Elliott, who's from Whitby–Oshawa, has all of the qualifications as our critic as a person who has practised law. I looked at her response when Mr. Bentley introduced this bill on October 7, and she made a very good point which I believe she was trying to make today, and with your indulgence I'll read her remarks.

She referred to a paper written by Benjamin Bathgate and Joseph C. D'Angelo called “Better Safe Than Sorry? The Role of Apologies in Litigation.” What it went on to say is that there's a potential for trivialization of the apology. It would presuppose that people are moving on with life. That's a valid concern that she has raised.

At the same time, if you look at the legislation, in all due respect, I don't think there's—the sentiment of it, most of us would agree with. But when you look at this idea, it would have unintended consequences without a thorough examination. At the very least, we would be calling for public hearings. She has outlined some of the stakeholders in the legal community. Certainly we'd like to hear from the experts. I think that's the point she was trying to make.

She also, in her remarks today, pointed out that in other Legislatures this idea that it can be trivialized—the legitimate, legal rights of petitioners or persons who are plaintiffs in a class action or whatever—may feel that the general public might say, “Oh, look; we've said we're sorry,” and think that the judge or the jury or the process may dismiss the plaintiff's case for their being injured or harmed.

I think it's worth listening and being convinced that we are interested. Yet the bill itself is less than half a page and we've already spent considerable time on a bill that needs to go to public hearings—

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I'd be the first person to recognize that from time to time there are pieces of legislation that come forward in this House—Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies, gives me an opportunity to learn a whole new dimension about things.

I'd be the first guy to recognize that the member from Whitby–Oshawa is a very distinguished lawyer in the province of Ontario, a very learned person. I believe that this bill will go to committee and there will be an opportunity for a whole series of witnesses to come forward. They will certainly bring forward a variety of views on this issue, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa will probably be a committee member and certainly will facilitate the opportunity of going forward with these witnesses to elicit a variety of opinions.

I want to congratulate my colleague the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who I think showed a great deal of leadership in bringing this initiative forward as a private member's bill. Indeed, he heard from constituents in his riding of Sault Ste. Marie that this was important to them, and being the good member that he is, he brought forward those concerns, enshrined them in a private member's bill, introduced it into the House. It had a wide and extensive debate where a variety of opinions were put on the record, and now the government, under the leadership of the Attorney General, has decided to bring it forward as a piece of legislation. It will go to a committee, an opportunity to hear a lot of views on this issue. I've read a number of articles in the newspaper that say there is a wide variety of people who think this would be a very positive step forward in the province of Ontario. I look forward to those committee hearings and an opportunity to have a very thorough debate on Bill 108.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** The member for Whitby–Oshawa, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I do appreciate the comments from the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Durham and Peterborough.

I would just like to clarify that, in my comments, in no way did I mean to suggest that Bill 108, the Apology Act, was unimportant. I merely was suggesting that there were other priorities that we could be dealing with at this very difficult economic time.

However, I do recognize that the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the Attorney General are sincere in bringing this legislation forward. I have tried to make comments that I hope will be helpful in stressing the need to get this bill into committee, because I really don't know that there's much more to be gained from further debate at this point. I think all parties recognize that there is a need to get further information from people who are truly experts in this field. I certainly don't claim to be one of them. I know that we need to hear from all parties who are involved in these types of litigation, litigation that can be prevented.

My biggest concern is that we don't try to save on litigation. I heard the member from Sault Ste. Marie indicate that up to 30% of all malpractice claims could be prevented if an apology had been rendered. That may be true, but if they were meritorious claims, they should be brought forward; it shouldn't be a simple matter of an apology that prevents people. So I am concerned that people who have claims do get their day in court. It's not just a question of saving money and saving court time, although that's important where it should be done. In cases where you're cutting out litigation by simply having an apology, I am very concerned about that, and I think we do really need to hear from the experts in the field to tell us whether that is a well-founded fear or not.

I do look forward to hearing the able submissions that I'm sure we'll be hearing in committee on this issue.

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

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'm pleased to be doing the lead, if you will, on behalf of the NDP.

I indicated a few minutes ago and I repeat, just so people understand very clearly, that the NDP, myself included, do not support this legislation. I will, over the course of the next short while, make every effort to explain why.

I do, however, want to commend the parliamentary assistant. There's a tradition here that goes back a long time, especially on lead speeches and ideally throughout the course of second reading debate or third reading debate, that either the minister who sponsors the bill or his or her parliamentary assistant remain in the chamber. Mr. Zimmer, the member for Willowdale, has consistently, as a PA for the Attorney General, fulfilled that responsibility.

Of course, that means he does all the heavy lifting—he does. It means that when a bill blows up in the government's face, he takes the blame, and when a bill—a rare one—is successful, the Attorney General takes the credit and Mr. Zimmer is pushed off to the sidelines. It takes a person of character to tolerate that, especially when it happens over and over again.

**1700**

I recall the first reading introduction by the member when it was a private member's bill. I recall at the time, before having read the bill, indicating very clearly that I found the proposition of interest. I was familiar with the apology legislation that had been passed in the United States and Australia, and that was beginning to be passed in Canada. Let's put this in perspective.

On March 25, 2008, the Ontario Bar Association wrote to the Attorney General and requested him to introduce for passage apology legislation very much of the type we've got before us for second reading today, which reflected the proposed Uniform Apology Act that had just been discussed at the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. In fact, that's what we've got here; that's what we had in the private member's bill.

I indicated, during the course of the brief debate—you only have an hour to debate private members' public business—around the private member's bill that I was concerned about the exclusion of admissions of liability that this bill provides for. Let's not confuse this with apologies. There are apologies and there are admissions of liability. I indicated then that I could understand the rationale for the exclusion of apologies—expressions of regret. But I was hard pressed to understand why, for an innocent accident victim—the victim of a drunk driver, the victim of a negligent doctor, the victim of a negligent hospital, the victim of a dangerous spouse who beats his wife, I suppose, or its spouse, to be hyper-politically correct, into a crippled state—an admission of liability should not be capable of being introduced as evidence against the perpetrator of the harm.

You've got a constituency office, like everybody else here, and you know, like I'm sure everybody else here, that people come into your office, victims of harm who talk about a system that is, more often than not, un-

favourable to the innocent victim and far more favourable to the insurance company with the deep pockets and the high-priced law firms, and the frustration they encounter and feel in getting justice arrived at.

Let me put it this way, as I did back in May. Take a look at the act. Take a look at section 1. Take a look at what “apology” means in this legislation. I know the parliamentary assistant will be doing this very carefully, because he’s a person of conscience. “‘Apology’ means an expression of sympathy or regret.” We understand that. “I’m sorry that you’re lying in this intersection with both of your legs broken and your pelvis shattered.” That’s an expression of sympathy or regret. “I’m sorry that you’re lying in this intersection in a pool of blood with both legs broken and your pelvis shattered.”

I agree, as I indicated back in May, that there’s sound, good reason to prevent that expression of regret from being used as an indicator or evidence of liability. In fact, a big chunk—the biggest chunk, so far as I’m aware—of the American jurisdictions that have apology legislation exclude that apology, the apology of regret, because people recognize that one can express regret, and we do every day, about other people’s misfortune without in any way acknowledging, never mind admitting, our liability, our role as the party causing that misfortune.

We send sympathy notes every day to our friends and colleagues and so on, expressions of regret about the death of a loved one, but we’re by no means indicating, by doing that, that we’re responsible or even have any connection whatsoever with the death of that loved one. I can be sorry that your dog died, but expressing that, even in clear and unequivocal terms—or usually in unclear and equivocal terms—shouldn’t be taken as an expression of admission of liability.

But let’s go back to the person lying in the intersection of the roadway, both legs broken, pelvis shattered, in a pool of blood and body fluids. To say “I’m sorry” is one thing. To say “I’m sorry; I shouldn’t have been drinking while I was driving my car because it caused me to go through the red light and mow you down while you were but a pedestrian and an innocent victim”—that, you see, is an apology and an admission of liability. And there’s an effort on the part of the proponents of this legislation to somehow suggest that it’s the mere expression of regret that’s going to be excluded from admissibility, excluded from being used as evidence. No. It is the hard, absolute admission of liability. As I say, innocent accident victims, and innocent victims, have a difficult enough time without having yet another burden in terms of the evidentiary burden.

There’s somehow the suggestion that an apology heals. Tell that to the paraplegic who has lost the use of half of his or her body, or the quadriplegic who can’t move from the neck down. Tell that to the 19-year-old first-year university student who is the victim of a drunk driver and who will never finish the year because he or she has head injury, brain injury—that an apology by the wrongdoer is going to heal them. Horse feathers. What

absolute bunkum. It is repugnant to suggest that. It’s not just inaccurate or unfair; it’s downright repugnant.

Let’s take a look. There are any number of ways, when you look at legislation—and that goes for any member here—of saying, “Hmm, how am I as an MPP, as a member of this assembly, going to respond to this particular legislation?” One of the ways you do it is by looking at who supports it. Let’s take a look at who supports this bill. The insurance companies—oh, under the guise of the physicians, because they have their own self-insurance operation, huh? Hospitals. Other people in the medical profession.

Let’s put this in perspective. This is about minimizing exposure—not minimizing de facto liability but minimizing exposure—the amount that would have to be paid to an innocent victim of negligence or, even worse, beyond negligence, outright attacks on the body.

Heck, this legislation would—because don’t forget, O.J. Simpson was never found criminally guilty, was he? He was found not guilty: the old glove and all that stuff. But in the civil court he was found liable. If this legislation were in effect, O.J. Simpson could have waited until after his criminal trial and then gone on the Jay Leno show, or whatever he wanted to go on, and apologized for the vicious slaughter of his wife. The family could not have used that admission in the civil action against O.J. Simpson, which is the only place the family ever got justice. I don’t think there’s a single person who’s familiar with that notorious case who doesn’t believe that the civil finding of liability was appropriate and that he escaped criminal justice because of the nature of the criminal justice system: proof beyond a reasonable doubt, I suppose; the ability of the jury to find what? A perverse verdict?

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This is very scary stuff. I understand the interest in wanting people to sit down and apologize to one another and be happy forever and ever. Again, reference has been made to the fact that we grow up apologizing and that when you’re grown up, when you have a relationship, you apologize even more frequently, especially if you want to keep the relationship. But you see, there is no real relationship that is expected to be ongoing and permanent between the paraplegic, the quadriplegic mowed down by a drunk driver, and that drunk driver’s insurance company. The quadriplegic could care less what the insurance company is, who its CEO is, who its president is. I don’t for a minute doubt the potency of an apology to some victims, especially when a victim has been waiting and waiting and waiting, especially when the insurance company’s lawyers have been dragging the case through discovery and all sorts of—what do they call them?—interlocutory motions. And when the innocent victim’s lawyer has had to leave the case because of lack of funds, and then the person has to look for another lawyer, and the person may need to get legal aid or persuade legal aid to give them a certificate and get a lawyer on whatever it is that legal aid pays now—\$70 an hour or \$80 an hour—you’re hard-pressed to find counsel

prepared to work on a serious personal injury case for that kind of fee. They just can't afford to. It won't support the support staff; it won't pay the rent. The insurance company: I hate to put it this way, but the insurance companies are not nice people. They're not well known for their heart or their soul. Insurance companies are all about making money.

This bill is very interesting because it resurrected for me—it was as if David Peterson were the Premier again—some of the very same feelings as well as the language that was used during the no-fault debate back in 1989 and 1990, where again innocent accident victims were under attack. Interestingly, it was by a Liberal government as well.

Do you want to give an accident victim closure? Compensate them. You want to make them feel healed? Use, to whatever extent you can, monetary compensation to return their life to as close as it was before their brain was bashed into senselessness or before their legs or their legs and arms were rendered useless because of a spinal cord injury. Apology? Good grief. The proponents of this legislation are people who want to use the apology to lure or lull the long-suffering innocent victim who's the plaintiff in a civil action into settling. They want the opportunity to add some humanness.

Mrs. Elliott, the member for Whitby—Oshawa, has had occasion to talk about the phenomenon of the insincere apology—if you will, the fraudulent apology. Good grief. Political leaders have been making those kinds of apologies for a couple of decades now, haven't they? Bill Clinton, remember that one? Heck, Jimmy Swaggart, the televangelist from Baton Rouge, Louisiana: I remember watching that particular broadcast—remember?—where he apologized. He did it good, too. Remember that apology? It was the Lincoln Town Car he was driving on the airport strip in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when he picked up a prostitute and got caught. He apologized and, by God, he cried. And the remarkable thing is that it worked. There was a little gap in cash flow, but by and large the money kept flowing. Do you think for a minute that that was a spontaneous apology? We're talking about a multi-million-dollar televangelist operation. Do you think for a minute that there weren't lawyers and spin doctors and damage control people and all those kinds of folks sitting there not only scripting it, but rehearsing it as well? You bet your boots there were. Is that what the government is talking about when it wants to encourage apologies?

Let's take it one further. Exactly what are they talking about? What do you mean, you can't apologize? Of course you can. What do you mean, you can't apologize and admit liability? Of course you can. Who is spreading that inaccuracy? It's certainly not the parliamentary assistant, because he knows better. He knows that there's a thing—and people like Mrs. Elliott know far more about this stuff than I do—called “settlement privilege” in this province, in this country, in the common law of civil procedure. Right, Mrs. Elliott? Any communication made in the course of settling a dispute is privileged. It

can't be introduced by either party. Again, Mrs. Elliott can correct me if I'm wrong, but the way I read it is that that privilege is the privilege of both parties, so it's not that one can relinquish it. Any communication is privileged. In other words, it can't be introduced in court. I'm surprised, I'm shocked, I'm awed, I'm amazed, my toes have curled, at having listened to the parliamentary assistant and not having heard him refer to settlement privilege. He has been around a long time. Maybe he forgot about it. Maybe it slipped his mind—because he has been here working diligently; he's not double-dipping. He has been here—well, he has. He's not operating a law office in addition to being a member of the Legislature and a parliamentary assistant.

Not only is there the common law of settlement privilege, but in Ontario—and again, if the parliamentary assistant's failure to mention settlement privilege curled my toes, this one rotted my socks. In Ontario, the rules of civil procedure—and by God, it's rule 24.1.14. Remember that one? In 24.1.14, “All communications at a mediation session and the mediator's notes and records shall be deemed to be without prejudice settlement discussions.”

“‘Humph,’ Kormos said in response to that revelation.” So not only is there the common law rule of settlement privilege, but efforts in mediation to resolve a dispute—because of course the parliamentary assistant knows this: Up here in Toronto, you've got to take these disputes to mediators.

So the rules specifically provide for exchanges to and from and via a mediator or with each other in the course of mediation—and I'm talking about the parties: plaintiff and defence. The rules go beyond simply relying upon the common law of settlement privilege, even though the common law clearly applies. The provincial drafters of those rules wanted to make sure that those parties were protected by codification. So whether it's communication between two lawyers or even between, say, Mr. Zimmer and me—let's say Mr. Zimmer ran over my dog and killed him, and I was pretty upset about it. My dog is already dead, so he couldn't do that. But if he did run over my live dog and killed him, and if I said, “Mr. Zimmer, I don't think you were paying proper attention, and I want you to compensate me for the loss of Charlie,” the beagle, and I say, “because I'm going to sue you”—because as I understand it, and correct me if I'm wrong, Parliamentary Assistant, there has to be at least contemplation of litigation.

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Look, I just know what I can scan in a little bit of reading about this stuff and what folks tell me, but settlement efforts on our part, if there's litigation pending, are privileged. There's a good reason for that: because the courts historically have encouraged people to settle matters. There's a public policy. Mind you, hidden underneath that public policy of encouraging people to settle is, of course, the fact that we have a justice system that's so grossly underfunded and has become so horribly expensive for litigants that every effort is being used to

steer people away from the University Avenue courthouse into any number of alternatives, including settlement discussions and mediated settlements.

But I just happen to know—I think I read it in a book by those negotiation experts, Roger Fisher and William Ury. It seems to me that they identify the apology as a very potent tool in persuading the other party to come to the table, in breaking down the barriers. Oh, very clever people, Messrs. Fisher and Ury; very clever people, because they don't ask that the apology be authentic or sincere, just that it sound to be authentic or sincere.

I remember hearing a story about George Burns, that Hollywood comedian. Back in the 1950s, he and Gracie Allen were on radio and then on—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Mrs. Elliott is nodding her head. She's too young; she doesn't know. But I remember George Burns and Gracie Allen. George Burns once, in the twilight of his career—he lived to be 100 or plus—was asked, “What's the secret of your great success?” George Burns—and he had this huge cigar that was a prop—replied to this interview: “The secret to my success is sincerity.” He said, “And once you're able to fake sincerity, you've got it made.”

So you see, the people who write the books don't expect the apology to be sincere; it's just got to appear sincere. If that means that a lawyer has to woodshed his or her client—sit down with them and go through the exercise more than a few times until that person has it down pat—and I'm talking about the feigned sincerity, lawyers do that. It's amazing.

The defence lawyers, the insurance company lawyers, are big fans of this legislation. These are the people who work for insurance companies. These are the lawyers who work for insurance companies, and I tell you, they're the ones who give credibility to the observation that lawyering is indeed the world's second-oldest profession. Defence lawyers love this proposal because it allows those defence lawyers, acting for the insurance companies, to lull a beleaguered victim into—because there are some huge dynamics that go on in these kinds of discussions. We're talking about somebody who's a victim; who, let's say, has been waiting five years and the case still hasn't gone to trial and he or she is still waiting to get on the trial list or, even worse, has been on the trial list more than once but then has been knocked off the list because another trial took too long. It's an incredible—you know the anguish that these people go through. They reach the point where they're incredibly vulnerable. The insurance companies will starve them into settlement because the insurance companies can outspend them in terms of lawyers, can outspend them in terms of those interlocutory motions and simply delay the matter, can outspend the innocent victims in terms of doing things that will delay.

Meanwhile, that innocent victim is going without any income, without any compensation, without the ramp she or he needs to get access to their folks' home, because if they're in a wheelchair and a paraplegic—worse, if

they're a quad—it means they probably move back in with their folks.

The ruse here is the apology, because an innocent victim who has been waiting for five years, whose body has been crippled, whose life has been stolen from him, will take anything after five or six or seven years. The apparent sincerity of a feigned apology can have a huge emotional impact, to the point where that person says, “Okay, what more can I expect? At least there's been an acknowledgment of the wrongdoing to me,” and says to his or her lawyer or paralegal, “Look, I want to get out of here. I'm finished. It's over. I want out.” But the remarkable thing is that in the course of settlement and mediation, the apology, including an admission of liability, is privileged anyway.

Now, some of the commentators on this legislation said, “The legislation is about protecting people's relationships with their insurers and not violating the contract of insurance.” For Pete's sake, why don't you just pass legislation to that effect? That's silly. That's a silly comment, a silly observation, and it really doesn't do any credit to the people making that proposal.

Let's get down to what an apology is, anyway. This bill creates its own definition of “apology.” There's been a whole lot of work done about what constitutes an apology.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** All that stuff going on behind the chair is distracting, isn't it, Speaker?

What is interesting is what, in fact, constitutes an apology. I had an interesting conversation at the London Conservative mini-convention when John Tory had the vote of confidence. That was, what, a year ago now? I was there. I had occasion to talk to Graham Murray, from Inside Queen's Park. I pointed out that my reading on the matter had indicated that a real apology has five characteristics: (1) It should be prompt, although remarkably there's some research that says that depending upon the type of case, don't make it too prompt, because then it seems just like a knee-jerk reaction. It's like when you're with your spouse in the car and she says something to you and you don't even listen to her; you just say, “Okay, I apologize.” Your spouse knows that that's not a real apology, because you didn't even bother to think about what she was saying. I know you've never done that, but others have—a prompt apology.

As a matter of fact, one of the authors—and I know that Mrs. Elliott has read this particular paper as well—lists most of the five characteristics.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** That's right; that's the article.

(1) Speedy, prompt.

(2) Acknowledge the harm done to the victim. Whether it's the victim of an insult or a slight, or the victim of a drunk driver speeding his or her car through a lit intersection and a crosswalk, acknowledge the harm.

(3) Express sorrow for harm done to the victim. It's called contrition, remorse.

(4) Offer reparation that addresses the victim's needs.

If the government was really interested in encouraging apologies, they would insist that an apology have accompanying it reparation, because an apology just to minimize the amount that's going to have to be paid out in the course of a settlement, or an apology that's designed to short-circuit the process of an innocent victim seeking compensation—because that's what the government is contemplating: without reparation—according to some, really isn't an apology or much of an apology. It isn't an apology at all.

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And then, of course, in my view, the fifth element—I'm up to five now? Yeah. The fifth element is acknowledging not only the harm done—regret, sorrow, contrition, remorse, reparation—but then acknowledging that you're going to do something to make sure it doesn't happen again. That's not rocket science. Again, people do it in their homes on a daily basis when they're relating to the people that they have relationships with.

I'm concerned with the fact that there will be mediators advocating for this bill. I'm concerned because mediators are already covered, by virtue of the Ontario Rules of Civil Procedure—that was rule 24.1.14—and also because mediators know that the key to a logjam can often be that apology. A mediator will sit in a room—in this instance, with the insurance company's lawyers or the actual wrongdoer—and say, “You know, I think if you go back in there and apologize, we can get this process going.”

Oh, and I suspect there are going to be some mediators reading about what I've said—my comment about lawyers being the world's second-oldest profession—the defence bar, the insurance company lawyers. And, okay, I'll get the e-mails. Yeah, I'll get the e-mails, and I'll get the mail, God bless them. And I suspect there will be mediators as well who will give me a call or write me letters or send me e-mails, saying, “Oh, come on now.” Well, no, you come on now.

Nuts. I was close to wrapping up, but Ms. Smith caused me to look at the clock. She was tapping her watch and I thought she meant to look and note that I have 26 minutes left. So thank you very much, I say to the minister, Ms. Smith, for drawing my attention to the time that I still had, 26 minutes, because I was ready to fold this.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** No, I appreciate—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Sister, I appreciate it very much. I thank you, because I thought I'd exhausted my time. But she tapped her wristwatch and I looked and I've got 26 minutes.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** You've exhausted our time.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Look, there are some libertarian mediators out there for whom the scorecard is not the quality of the settlement but the fact that they have achieved a settlement. I say this legislation is designed to meet their interests as well, which isn't, as I say, to

ensure that there's a quality settlement but to assure a settlement. Because even though the mediation community says, “Oh, no, we don't count settlements as part of our success rate”—horse feathers—of course they do. Some mediators will bully and cajole, and, heck, I observed one where I swear that the Geneva rules regarding prisoners of war were being violated.

**Interjection:** In terms of what?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** In terms of what? You know what I'm talking about, don't you, Mrs. Elliott? If I'm wrong, stand up on a point of order and say I'm wrong. You're not standing up. I understand. You've seen those same mediators. They'll do everything but slap people upside the head, and the problem is, the parties are afraid of that happening. So again—again—this is what's interesting about this legislation.

Now, what hasn't been acknowledged, the reference to these jurisdictions, these other jurisdictions, is that—oh, nuts. I'm sorry. I was distracted for a minute, Speaker.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** You know what, Mrs. Elliott? If we do 10 minutes of questions and comments, we'll take this into the next day, so I think we should. I hope you're here, because here we are at 24—it looks like it will take us into 6-o'clock-plus.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I've been taken off track now by the parliamentary assistant and his colleague, his sidekick, Zorro and Pancho or whatever, the who's who—speaking of 1950s entertainment.

Look, the government hasn't explained the real motive in seeking this legislation. Nor has the government been candid about the fact that those American jurisdictions that it refers to exclude simply the simple apology, the expression of regret, from being used as evidence of liability. Nor has it explained how it's in the public interest that a clear admission of liability that isn't done because the only ones we've got left—you see, the common law settlement privilege and the rules of procedure protect and make privileged any communications that involve expressions of regret, apologies or admissions of liability—the whole gang already exclude them from being used as evidence.

Why shouldn't an innocent victim be allowed to use an admission of liability? If we're going to talk about a new moral climate, Mr. Zimmer, shouldn't we talk about people being prepared to accept responsibility for the harm they inflict? It seems to me that it's tit-for-tat, quid pro quo, here that a party who admits liability or, more importantly, causes harm, should be prepared to accept responsibility for that harm, and it seems to me that what the government is doing with this legislation is protecting the wrongdoer. I, for the life of me, don't see how that's part of some new moral order that the government says Bill 108 could lead us to—not in any way, shape or form.

Having said all of that, this is what I propose, and what I proposed to the Attorney General and his parliamentary assistant earlier: I'm quite satisfied if this debate wraps up this afternoon, and I want to remain focused on

that proposition. I'm quite satisfied that this debate for second reading wrap up this afternoon. We're going to have a vote, and I'm going to be voting against this bill. I suspect that that vote will be deferred until tomorrow, and then, when the Speaker asks, "Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?" I'm going to say no. I've got to prevent it from being called for third reading because I'm going to insist that it go to committee. What I dearly want—because I think the public is to a certain extent bored with the issue even though they haven't been exposed to it a whole lot. There's some charm to the fact that, "Oh, we can all apologize. We'll all sit down, burn incense and be happy."

A couple of weeks ago I was upset with Ed Greenspan because he wrote a column in the Sun about how we didn't have any need for trade unions anymore, so I wasn't happy with Mr. Greenspan on that day. But then, just a couple of days ago, I got to the Sun because I'm on the Internet first thing in the morning and pull up the Sun along with the Star, the Globe and the whole works, and here's Ed Greenspan with a critique of Bill 108. So I've forgotten all about my disappointment in him for criticizing trade unions, and I read his article thoroughly and carefully. So far, Ed Greenspan is the only lawyer I'm aware of who has spoken out against Bill 108.

Look, innocent accident victims aren't going to—because this bill just doesn't have enough immediateness, enough cogency, if you will, for those people. I want to hear from those plaintiffs' lawyers why they might support this legislation, because I, for the life of me, can't understand why a competent plaintiff's lawyer would ever support this legislation, knowing that apologies and admissions of liability that are done in the course of settlement or mediation are already protected. What do we need this for, then? Why would a plaintiff's lawyer deny his or her client the evidentiary value of a clear admission of liability? It seems to me that there's a strong public interest in making that happen.

Greenspan's column is interesting. He talks about some of the history of apologies. He writes, "In 2007, Harper apologized to Maher Arar, and bought his forgiveness for \$9 million.

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"And in 2008 he apologized to aboriginal groups, following a \$2 billion settlement.

"In 2009, who knows what else Harper will apologize for. Personally, I'd like him to apologize for the Maple Leafs."

There are elements of humour in the column.

He then goes on to talk about the insincerity of contrived apologies and how we are doing—in my view; I infer this from what he writes, and he'll correct the record if he disagrees seriously enough with me or has any interest in disagreeing. Mrs. Elliott has already referred to this in her earlier comments, and I recall making mention of it as well. Greenspan writes about the impact of insincere apologies, contrived apologies, forced apologies, fake apologies, phony apologies, that have as their only purpose luring an innocent victim into

a settlement that is less than what that innocent victim deserves, or in fact causing them because they don't pursue a claim at all.

Greenspan writes, "We tell children to 'say you're sorry' and most kids begrudgingly do so.... But you and I know the kids don't really mean it. If my doctor harms me and then apologizes just because he doesn't want me to sue, that's not going to mean much to me."

I'm going to wrap up.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** No.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Mike Colle wants me to carry on, and I've got more references here, but I'm going to wrap this up, because the forum now is committee. I'm never going to reconcile with this proposal, with this legislation. I told you before that I could very much live, and I said in May that I could very much live, with legislation that barred the regret apology only, with no admission of liability, from being used as evidence.

The other interesting thing you've got to note is that the inadmissibility of the apology is only for the purpose of proving liability. It's not for the purpose of, let's say, reducing monetary damages. Interesting, ain't it, Mrs. Elliott? It isn't absolutely barred from being introduced. It's only barred from being introduced to prove liability. But it can be introduced as evidence for any other number of reasons, and we know what those are. It's going to be introduced by the defence itself to demonstrate—again, there are lawyers who know more about this than I do that I'm going to look forward to hearing from; I know Mrs. Elliott does. But the whole business of offers to settle—you know that little game of chicken that plaintiffs and defence lawyers play with each other on the issue of costs? It comes pretty close to that, because this bill will prevent the plaintiff from using the admission of liability, but will allow the defence to introduce it in mitigation of damages. I put that to you. Is that fair?

For that matter, what the heck, if a drunk driver can escape liability because his admission of liability, after he runs down your kid, is accompanied by an "I'm sorry, I was drunk as a skunk and mowed your kid down and left him or her crippled"—if that can't be used as evidence in a civil action, then what the heck, why doesn't this government say, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander. We'll prevent that from being used in a criminal action, because after all, he apologized, and we want to encourage apologies." What about that kid who B and E's some old lady's house who tells the cops, "I'm really sorry I B and E'd that house and stole all the family photographs, and I apologize." What the heck. If we're encouraging people to make amends, to heal—"heal," Mr. Zimmer said. It sounds like one of those tent preachers. If we're talking about healing, then why shouldn't the criminal, why shouldn't the break and enter artist, why shouldn't the mugger, be allowed to heal with an apology? Why is it only the drunk driver who can heal with an apology that won't be used as evidence? Why is it only the person who carelessly fires off a firearm into a crowd of people and cripples somebody, when he's sued

for civil liability, who can heal? Let's let criminals heal too. Let them apologize and admit liability and not have that admission of liability used against them. Silliness, ain't it, Speaker? Silliness.

I look forward to this going to a vote this afternoon and I will, of course, be joined by others in calling for a recorded vote, and I expect the vote will be deferred. That means that it will probably be tomorrow at around 11:30 a.m., and at that point I'll be taking the steps that have to be taken to ensure that this bill goes to committee. Thank you kindly.

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

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to provide comments on the member for Welland's comments on Bill 108. I just want to say from the outset that I will be supporting Bill 108.

I do want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for all the work he has done in bringing this bill to today. I feel that it is an important bill. It does give the ability for people to heal. I know the member for Welland said that if someone is seriously hurt in an accident, how could this be part of the healing process? But it's not the whole healing process; it's the beginning of a healing process.

It is a natural instinct to say that you are sorry, and I do believe that it is—I sincerely believe—a part and a beginning of the healing process. I believe that people need forgiveness and they need the peace of mind so they can begin to heal within themselves, for both the party that was hurt and the party that caused the harm. But it's just a beginning and that's all it is. That's what this bill speaks to.

I really do think that after the many comments from the member for Welland—I just wish I had as long as he did so that I could respond. I'll look for that opportunity down the road and I will seize the time if I have the ability. This act would not allow wrongdoers to escape the consequences of their wrongdoing since it would not affect a victim's right to sue or the right to compensation for harm done. The act would not apply to any criminal or provincial offences prosecutions.

There's much more; I look forward to it. I did want to be on the record thanking the member for Sault Ste. Marie as well as stating that I will be supporting Bill 108.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Thank you. Questions and comments? Response?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. Look, saying "I'm sorry" doesn't heal a quadriplegic. Saying "I'm sorry" as you deliver a cheque so that the

quadriplegic can hire attendant care, so that the quadriplegic can replace lost income, that starts to heal.

This bill will allow for express admissions of liability to be excluded as evidence when sometimes that may be the only evidence an innocent victim has against a wrongdoer. What that means is that the victim can sue until he or she is blue in the face. You need evidence to win a suit, to win an action, and there are cases where the admission of the wrongdoer is the only evidence. I tell you that this legislation is a grave, grave injustice to innocent victims and it is a great service to the insurance companies and their lawyers. It is a great service to those who want innocent victims to pay instead of being compensated.

As I said, it's like the Peterson days. I remember reflecting on the Peterson days with Jim Bradley, who was here—the member for St. Catharines. I remember reflecting on the Peterson days. That Liberal government was so deep in the back pockets of the insurance industry that it was spitting out lint. It's now in the other back pocket and continues to spit out lint. The Liberals and the insurance industry are tied together at the hip. By gosh, surely they could seek more sympathetic friends than that.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak on this bill?

There being none, Mr. Bentley has moved second reading of Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received the appropriate document. Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on the motion will be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, October 23.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** I move adjournment of the House.

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

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday, October 23.

*The House adjourned at 1751.*

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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
<b>Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)</b>	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
<b>Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)</b>	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
<b>Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)</b>	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)</b>	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (LIB)</b>	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)</b>	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

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
<b>Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)</b>	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Horwath, Andrea (NDP)</b>	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)</b>	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
<b>McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)</b>	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
<b>Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)</b>	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)</b>	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
<b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)</b>	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)</b>	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
<b>Wilson, Jim (PC)</b>	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
<b>Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)</b>	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop  
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craitor  
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop  
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat  
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole  
Lou Rinaldi  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /  
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde  
Sophia Ageloni, Ted Arnott  
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett  
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde  
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue  
Charles Sousa  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Linda Jeffrey  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Oraziotti  
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell  
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular  
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro  
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti  
Joyce Savoline  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro  
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod  
Michael A. Brown, Kevin Daniel Flynn  
France Gélinas, Randy Hillier  
Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro  
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals  
Maria Van Bommel  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal  
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott  
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal  
Reza Moridi, Yasir Naqvi  
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski  
David Zimmer  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn  
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon  
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson  
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones  
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette  
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman  
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely  
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals  
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel  
David Zimmer  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller  
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle  
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk  
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch  
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht  
Mario Sergio  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon  
Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon  
Cheri DiNovo, Helena Jaczek  
Dave Levac, Shafiq Qaadri  
Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott  
Peter Shurman  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections**

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara  
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara  
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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