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Thursday 23 October 2008

Jeudi 23 octobre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 October 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 octobre 2008

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have a page who is celebrating her birthday today. Chloe, judging from the twinkle in her eye, gets full measure from life. Happy birthday, Chloe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As the member knows, that's not a point of order, but happy birthday, Chloe.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ECONOMY ÉCONOMIE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 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?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I guess today we have all come to the realization that this government's tax-and-spend policies have contributed to a situation where this once great, mighty province, which used to be the economic engine of Canada, now finds itself in a situation where we have not only seen the loss of a quarter of a million jobs but we're now finding ourselves in a deficit situation—a deficit situation which had been predicted, which people did see coming—based on the fact that this province and its leaders, Premier McGuinty and the finance minister, have continued to spend like drunken sailors and have refused to manage in a responsible way the hard-earned taxes that they take from corporations and from the citizens of this province.

I've seen this once before. I saw it when we had Premier Peterson here and when we had Bob Rae. This once great province at that time went from leadership into economic decline despite the efforts of individuals and entrepreneurs. We're certainly heading down that same slippery fiscal slope of decline one more time, simply because this Premier and this government can't say no to the demands. They've never learned to manage taxpayers' money. They've never learned to prioritize. It was disappointing yesterday to see that they hadn't

achieved any savings other than on the back of health care professionals and patients in this province. They decided that they were going to reduce the amount of money that had been allocated to hire 9,000 more nurses. They were going to slow the introduction of the family health teams in the province of Ontario—this at a time when we have an aging and a growing population, a population that is desperately searching for family doctors. There isn't a place you go in the province of Ontario where there aren't people who are looking for access to primary care.

That's why the decision yesterday by this government to make savings on the backs of patients was shocking—shocking to people throughout the province of Ontario, who feel further demoralized about their ability to have the access to care that they've been so desperately looking for. And then, to cut nursing—unbelievable. We have a desperate need for nurses in our long-term-care facilities. In fact, we don't have enough long-term-care beds in the province. We don't have doctors to meet the needs of those residents in the long-term-care beds. We don't have the nurses. Some of the homes simply can't find the staff to help the residents. And we're saying we're going to cut nurses further. Primary care—we need the nurses. Hospitals—we need the nurses. We have overcrowding. We have long wait times in our emergency rooms. Surgeries are being cancelled because we don't have the staff.

This government and its decision yesterday to achieve savings—limited savings, \$53 million worth of savings—on the backs of people, patients in the province of Ontario, is simply unbelievable, at a time when we need the most. You are now increasingly putting patient health and safety at risk. This has widespread consequences. Furthermore, yesterday you came out with a statement that indicated that you had made no effort whatsoever to stop your spending, whether it's for a party at the Windsor casino or whether it's cabinet ministers who choose to have meetings not in the buildings here, where the rent is free, but to go to expensive hotels and pay for food.

So we now find ourselves in a deficit—a deficit, by the way, that you're saying is only \$500 million, but a deficit that you know full well is much, much more than that. It's probably at least \$1.6 billion, and growing. Because you've made commitments; you don't prioritize; you don't manage taxpayers' money well; and unfortunately, you've now added to the debt for each family in the province of Ontario, since you took office in 2003, an additional burden of \$6,500.

You are starting to mortgage the future of my children and your children and your grandchildren. Somebody's going to have to pay for the increasing debt, the increased wild, carefree spending that you have engaged in and the beginning of a deficit that we know, over your term of office, is simply going to grow each and every day. Because you've never learned to govern in tough times. Your plan that you so boldly say is working isn't working. The programs that you've set up in 2005, and in this budget in 2008—people haven't even been able to access them. The money that was made available hasn't been spent, because people can't access the plan. Look at the latest plan to help the almost 250,000 unemployed workers, introduced with great fanfare by your Premier and the minister about six months ago. Only 600 people are accessing that plan. And the list goes on and on. There was no help yesterday for people—no help for the senior citizens who saw the mutual funds decline one more day. Believe me, it's frightening. We all have family members who are seniors on fixed incomes, and there was no hope and there was no plan. People have lost confidence in your government

0910

What about the small business person who has seen the number of regulations increase? There was no hope there. What about the person who's working for the larger business that has now decided that the economic environment in this province is not one that is conducive to growth? We're going to have more and more companies who are simply going to recognize that it's better to move to British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan or south of the border, because this province does not encourage economic growth. They are not creating an environment—

Interjection: You're taxing them out.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: You're taxing them.

Here's BC creating a climate that encourages job creation. The only jobs being created in the province of Ontario are public sector civil service jobs. Those are jobs that the taxpayers are having to pay for. You've got to rein in your spending. You've got to learn that there are priorities, and then what does your priority turn out to be? You cut nurses one more time and you reduce the family health teams. The only cuts that you made yesterday were not to your own spending, they were on the backs of patients and people in the province of Ontario. This once mighty province that led the way in economic growth, that was a magnet for investment, has now been reduced to a point where we simply are trailing. There's not going to be any economic growth. People are fleeing this province. People are being forced to leave, being encouraged by Saskatchewan to move west because that's where the jobs are.

So I would say to this government, you need to focus on the fact that you must come forward in the future with a plan. You need to understand the need to manage the finances with some respect for the taxpayers who are working hard these days, if they have a job, to help pay the taxes.

You have to remember there's a huge difference between this government and the Conservative government that you replaced. We created, with the help of the private sector, one million new jobs. You have contributed, through your policies, to the reduction of at least 230,000 manufacturing jobs, and as Don Drummond from TD Bank said not too long ago, there'll be another loss of 250,000 jobs if you don't come up with an economic plan that is going to stimulate not public sector growth but private sector growth.

So far, if we take a look at what you did yesterday, there is no indication that you've learned your lesson. There is no acknowledgment that your five-point plan isn't working. There's every indication you're going to continue to tax, tax, tax and encourage more businesses to leave or see them go bankrupt. You aren't prepared to change the apprenticeship ratios. You are simply going to go ahead and continue with what you're doing and put this province, this once-great province, in greater jeopardy and in greater risk than it is today.

I would say to you, you need to learn what's meant by prudence and you need to recognize the harm that you've done to people in the province of Ontario. People are hurting today. People expected some answers today. They were looking for hope. You provided no hope for the family that you've now forced to pay, at some point in time, an additional \$6,500 as a result of the increased debt load that you've placed upon them. There was no hope for the small business person who is overburdened by red tape and by taxes. There's no hope for the large businesses that are trying to compete in the global economy; they have no advantage in this province whatsoever. And there's simply no hope for young people who are going to be graduating, looking for jobs. Well, the jobs aren't there; they're fleeing this province. So what you've done thus far has contributed only to the decline of this once-great province.

It's time for you to work with the opposition parties. It's time for you to work with all of the people in the province of Ontario. It's time for you to say more than, "Our five-point plan is working," because it's not. You had the chance to set up a select committee. We are in a time of crisis in this province. There are many people with great ideas, and it's time that this government and Premier McGuinty listened.

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Well, we've just been given quite a lesson by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, but I have some information that might put some doubt in the minds of folks when we get advice from that particular party. First of all, she said that we're spending like drunken sailors. There's no evidence that there are any drunk sailors around; in fact, I think maybe some sailors would challenge that. I don't know why she's picking on sailors in particular, but that's for her to mention to them.

To know where you're going, you have to know where you've been. The advice given to us by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—who in this House would you

think were the greatest deficit spenders in the history of the province of Ontario? The greatest deficits were run up by the NDP. From 1966 to 2008: I have 42 years of financial data here that was put together by the legislative library. The NDP, in their few years in office, ran up deficits that totalled \$47.7 billion. They tried to spend their way out of a recession that we had in the early 1990s. Then we go to the second-largest deficit spenders in the province's history and, lo and behold, that's the great Conservative Party. They have run up deficits, over the years, of \$43.6 billion. Now, that member from the Conservative Party was giving us advice on how to spend money? And by the way, while she was doing that, she said that we don't manage taxpayers' money well. Well, my goodness. It would seem to me that the great Conservative Party hasn't managed taxpayers' money very well. As a matter of fact, the Conservative Party that I remember since I've been here, the eight years of Conservative rule that I was here, I seem to recall that Mike Harris, the then-new Premier, started out by saying the province was bankrupt. That's the way he described the government that they assumed from the NDP. So do you know how he wanted to fix this bankrupt province?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: How?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: "How?" the member from Algoma-Manitoulin says. By giving people a tax cut and borrowing—borrowing—\$20 billion. Now, I don't know of a bankrupt company that would go out and borrow \$20 billion to give to their shareholders. I think that company would try and work its way out of that debt.

So we have this Conservative government prior to ours that's giving us the advice. They probably had eight years of the best economic growth in this country, and I will admit that. But what did they do? At the end of their reign, they leave a \$5.6-billion debt. Now, the previous speaker said, "You're just piling debt onto our children." Well, listen to yourselves. You piled debt onto our children.

0920

Then they'll say—and you know, I haven't been able to add it up, because it's just too much—"What you have to do is cut taxes." That's the secret to everything. We know Ronald Reagan had that secret; it was supposed to be trickle-down economics. We know George Bush has run his country into ruin that way. But anyway, that's what they say: tax cuts; that's the secret to it. We have ourselves targeted some tax cuts, some \$3 billion when they're fully implemented. It's somewhat near \$2 billion to this point. So we have had targeted tax cuts. But if you listen to them—and here's where I can't keep up with the numbers—day after day after day, they will stand up and want us to spend more money.

Just as an example, the speaker before started out by saying, "You're spending money like drunken sailors," and then turned right around and started to give us advice on areas where we would have to spend money. "Don't delay any spending. That will put our health at risk." It won't put our health at risk. We've got a good health system. We've got a health system that needs funding in

various areas, and when the time comes, it will get that funding.

That's the kind of advice we get from them over there: "Reduce taxes, cut spending, but, oh, wait, no—don't cut spending. I'm going to ask for more money." That's the rhetoric we get from the other side, time after time. You really should have taken some of your own advice. If you didn't, in the past, then you'd better be very cautious about how you give us advice for the future.

Let's see. This financial information I have: In 36 years, the Progressive Conservatives had seven balanced budgets. It's not much of a record to be giving advice to somebody else. The NDP, of course, in the recession of the early 1990s, went through five years where they didn't have a single balanced budget. How many have we had? We've had four balanced budgets out of nine. I don't think that's too bad a record, quite frankly. In fact, once we eliminated the \$5.6-billion deficit that was left to us by the Conservatives, why, we have had three balanced budgets.

Where are we today? Well, Finance Minister Duncan yesterday gave the fall economic update. In that update, we're looking at a possible half-billion-dollar deficit in the short term. Again, we get advice that we shouldn't look at deficits. Do you know what? I'm willing to bet that the federal finance minister is himself looking at the possibility of a deficit in Canada this year. I don't know why we should be criticized so strongly for having a possible deficit when the great Conservative Party that's leading Canada at the current time is even considering one themselves.

Let's be realistic, folks. We're in some very, very tough times. Ontario isn't in this alone, and you know, the people back in Essex who are suffering along with everybody else—in fact, some would say even more so in the Windsor-Essex area—understand that Ontario is not in this alone; they understand that we're in a world economic crisis right now. Governments all over this world—provincial, state and country—are going to have to take some measures and some steps that they've never had to take before.

You criticized our five-point plan, and that's your right. I was in opposition for 10 years and I know now that it's much easier to criticize than it is to govern, because there's no accountability in criticizing. You don't have to be concerned about what you say, because it really matters little.

When I say, "You don't have to worry what you say," let's see. We're speaking to the amendment to the amendment to the motion, I think, at the present time. So I will just go through some of the highlights of what it is that the third party's motion to our debate is. They want an industrial hydro rate so that Ontario's manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable competitive hydro policies. Well, that may be something that would appeal to certain sections of manufacturing in Ontario, but then, again, how do I explain to my constituents in Essex that the NDP wants them to pay higher hydro rates so that this particular policy might be implemented? I

think that might be kind of difficult to explain to my folks.

A jobs protection commissioner: Well, well. We have a Minister of International Trade and Investment; we have a Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I suspect that a trade commissioner could not do a great deal more than those two ministers, and in fact, I think, would do a great deal less.

A Buy Ontario policy: Well, the Minister of Government Services explained just a week or so ago that, essentially, what we have in the province of Ontario is a Buy Ontario policy.

Tougher plant closure legislation: I don't know what that means. I guess it means we have tough legislation now, but they want it tougher. The problem I see in that is that it may be unfriendly to business. In other words, depending on what they mean by tougher and to what extent they want to get tough, would that send a signal to companies—"Gee, we don't even think we want to go to Ontario, because we don't like that tougher plant closure legislation."

Pension and wage protection: I agree there. I think that hard-working employees shouldn't have the risk of losing their pensions and that they should have their wages protected. I don't know just how Mr. Miller, who is shouting out over there—Speaker, if I were shouting out like that, he would be asking—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just remind the honourable member that we refer to each other by our riding names.

Interjections.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Thank you, Speaker.

Anyway, I guess they would want this either in addition to the five-point plan or to replace it. They have not said.

Then we'll go to the amendment to the motion and see what suggestions are contained in that. One is, "That the taxpayers of Ontario deserve an immediate and comprehensive financial statement...." Well, the public accounts were reported in September. That certainly is a comprehensive look at the spending of the province. The finance minister gave an economic update just yesterday. I think that that's an open and comprehensive look at what the state of our finances is. So I guess we're either taking their advice here or they are merely repeating what it is we do on a daily basis anyway.

0930

Even the next sentence says, "That people who have lost their jobs or are worried about their future deserve a comprehensive and realistic economic action plan designed to save existing jobs, attract new jobs and investment and help the unemployed find new work here in Ontario." I agree with that totally. The point is, you haven't said, in your suggestion, how you'd do it; we have. We have a five-point plan that addresses some of the very issues you mention in that particular sentence.

Let's look at the plan. Now that we've had advice from the biggest deficit spenders in the province's history and the second-biggest deficit spenders in the province's

history, let's look at what we're trying to do in these difficult economic times.

I mentioned earlier that we're cutting business taxes. Over time, to 2012, there will have been \$3 billion of cuts and rebates.

We've eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers and the resource sector. That was retroactive to January 2007, and that, so far, has meant \$190 million in rebates to business. We've cut the business education tax and accelerated that tax cut for northern businesses.

In the infrastructure spending area, we introduced a plan that over 10 years will put \$60 billion into building hospitals and schools. We were criticized a little earlier for jeopardizing the health care system. There are 100 hospital projects under way in the province of Ontario at the present time. I think that's pretty aggressive.

In just a matter of a week or two, we'll be going to the municipalities in the province with \$1.1 billion in stimulus for our economy. That translates into about 11,000 jobs.

There is the \$6.2-billion Building Canada fund that we participate in, there's a \$450-million municipal infrastructure program and there's been over \$700 million for colleges and university building projects.

Those are initiatives which stimulate the economy that we have been involved in over the several years we have had the privilege of being the government in the province of Ontario.

We're supporting innovation. The finance minister said yesterday that we are in transition, that we have an economy in Ontario that, when we come out of this slowdown, will perhaps not look exactly the way it did before. There are new businesses; there are areas of our economy that we will invest in that we haven't known before. We're having a greening economy; there are all kinds of opportunities. In fact the Premier, with a delegation of four other Premiers and a number of business people, is going to China with the idea of developing green industry. That's good.

They, over there, were criticizing that the top salesman in our province shouldn't be out getting new business. Well, if the economy is slowing, why wouldn't you go out and get new business? What's wrong with that?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's prudent.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I think so. He's the top salesperson, and there are four other Premiers going. These folks would have him sit at home and not look for new opportunities in this world. That way, we're supporting innovation; we're putting funding into innovation.

We are partnering with business. Our auto strategy, which the federal government decided to get into way late in the game, by the way, has been working. It was only several days before the federal election that the federal government decided to come to the assistance of Ford Motor Co. in Windsor-Essex, and then it was with a loan. Now, they accepted that and it's going to save some jobs, but it followed the \$17 million we gave to Ford to begin to solve that problem in the first place. So the federal government was a little Johnny-come-lately when it came to that.

I guess, in conclusion, what I'm really saying is that it's rather rich for them—those folks over there—to give us advice. When they had that opportunity, they didn't even heed the advice that they are giving to us today. That's why I say it's a lot easier to sit there and criticize and then not really put anything concrete on the table—a concrete suggestion. It's easy to criticize, a little more difficult to govern, and that's what we're doing now.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join this debate here this morning. I'm going to have to take some time to correct the selective history that the member from Essex seems to have with regards to government here in Ontario, and in particular managing deficits in the province of Ontario. He seems to have this opinion about the previous Conservative government and how they had all of these deficits.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Yeah. They did.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. Well, let's just tell the correct history. You see, when the Conservatives won election in 1995, it didn't follow a circumstantial deficit in the province, as you people inherited. It followed four consecutive deficits of \$10 billion or more—four consecutive deficits of \$10 billion or more. So what we had here was a serious structural deficit in the province of Ontario when the previous Conservative government took office. That was partly to blame on the failed government of Bob Rae, who now wants to be the Prime Minister of this country—heaven forbid that that should ever be the case. Part of the reason was Bob Rae's mismanagement and inability to handle a government when the economy was in difficult times. But it started with the previous government under David Peterson, who came into power under very similar circumstances that the McGuinty government came into power: in good economic times when the revenues were growing rapidly.

You people have done exactly what David Peterson did—live like the prodigal son. Do you know the biblical story of the prodigal son, where he wanted all of the inheritance, he wanted everything, so he could go out and spend it? That's exactly what David Peterson did, and that's what actually saddled Bob Rae and the New Democrats when they came into power in 1990. The mismanagement and the spending habits of the Peterson government saddled Bob Rae with a problem. Bob Rae didn't handle it very well because in the midst of a recession he still wanted to raise taxes. So he just drove more and more businesses out of the province of Ontario, which is exactly what this government wants to do today. It inherited a very sound economy in the province of Ontario. It inherited a province that had the ability to give the government very, very increased revenues over the five years that this government has been in power. In fact, it's increased the revenue at an unprecedented time. But unfortunately, it's increased spending at an even higher unprecedented rate.

The member from Essex talks about how opposition members want the government to spend on this and

spend on that. That is correct. It is our job to see where this government is deficient in its spending and bringing frontline services to the people of Ontario. The problem is that this government still spends; it just doesn't know how to spend. Like I said about that biblical story of the prodigal son, these guys get a hold of money and, as my dad used to say, it burns a hole in their pocket. They get a hold of the revenue from the taxpayers and the businesses and the corporations in this province, and it burns a hole in their pocket. They can't manage it. They see that cash and they have to spend it. That is why we've got such a problem in this province with regard to deficits—because they can't handle prosperity. When they get their hands on some money, they have to spend it on all kinds of programs that they think are good but do not bring benefit to the people of Ontario.

0940

They talk about having created jobs in this province. The only jobs they create are more government jobs. The government can't hire everybody. Governments don't create wealth; they simply take revenue and distribute it as expenditures. They don't create wealth. This government, this party, has the wrong-headed opinion that if they just keep hiring people at the government level, somehow Ontario's economy is going to continue to grow. The exact opposite is the truth. You have to create wealth by allowing business to create wealth. When you look at the \$96-billion budget that this government has, that's an unbelievable amount of money—almost a 50% increase since they took power—yet we're talking about a deficit today. But that \$96 billion pales in comparison to what the actual value of the Ontario economy is, which is somewhere up close to \$700 billion—because you allow the people who know how to make money and the people who know how to distribute wealth to do their job.

This government wants to hire everybody in Toronto to work in the bureaucracy. That doesn't work, because when the revenues do drop, you still have these spending commitments. This government has the spending commitments: They're committed to these workers. So now they're talking about, "Oh, we have a \$96-billion budget." That's \$96 billion, and this is their austerity plan: "We're going to cut about \$100 million." Can you imagine if a business was in trouble—and what is that in percentages? That's one tenth of 1% per cent, approximately, and this is the adjustment that you're going to make to spending in the province of Ontario, one tenth of 1%, because you guys don't know how to cut spending.

And what are you going to do? You're going to cut it on front-line services. You're going to cut it on the nurses we need in hospitals. Are you going to cut it from the bureaucracy? Are you going to cut it from the ministers' offices? Are you going to cut it from those people who are trading reports day by day to see how busy they are, wondering what they're writing about—a study on this and a study on that? The problem with this government who wants to do studies—you should be cutting some of those studies and putting money into

front-line services. That's what you should be doing in this province, but no, you choose to cut front-line services.

I was just going to ask myself—the former Minister of Health is here today; he would have had a hell of a time, a hell of a time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I just ask the honourable member to modify his language slightly.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Pardon me?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Modify your language slightly?

Mr. John Yakabuski: “Hell” is unparliamentary? Did that change while I was away?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Yes, I find it unparliamentary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'm hopeful I don't go there, but anyway, if I do go there, I hope I don't go in a handbasket like this party wants to send this province.

Anyway, the former Minister of Health would have fought like heck to see those changes in front-line health care spending, but now, you see, he has a new gig. He's the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Now he wants to just put everything on hold in the energy and infrastructure portfolio. He wants to wait until next year to even decide what we're going to do about power in this province, but I'm not going to talk about that today because I haven't got time, because there's so much to talk about in this economy.

Let's get back to this government that talks about the records of the past. They challenged and chastised the former Progressive Conservative government under Mike Harris, who took a real structural deficit and wrestled it to the ground, in spite of the fact that your Liberal cousins in Ottawa were trying to eliminate their deficit on the backs of provinces. Now, today this government talks about the federal government and how it's hurting the province. In the period from 1995 to 2003, did you ever hear this party once talk about or chastise or challenge the Chrétien Liberals for what they did to the provinces as a federal government? Did you ever hear the current Premier, Dalton McGuinty, challenge his party in Ottawa about what they did to the provinces? No. They only chastised and challenged the provincial government under Mike Harris as to what they were doing. They have the ability to criticize Conservatives, but when they were in opposition they couldn't even challenge the Liberal government that was in power in Ottawa, and there were real structural deficits in this province.

They talked about the deficit under the Conservative government here in its last year of power. Let's talk about that. A \$5.6-billion deficit is what Erik Peters came up with. However, \$2.9 billion of that could be directly related to the associated costs and the revenue reductions as a result of SARS and the blackout in the province of Ontario. You add \$771 million of health care transfers that had yet to come to the province but came to this government, and you find that we can deal with over \$4 billion of that deficit—over \$4 billion of a deficit at a

time when catastrophic things were happening in Ontario. Has this government ever once recognized or acknowledged the unusual and unprecedented challenges that faced the previous government that year? Not once. All they talk about is the \$5.6-billion deficit and claim that as financial mismanagement.

I'll tell you what financial mismanagement is: It's when you have a \$5.6-billion surplus, like this government had last year, and only a year later we're talking about a deficit, because, as I've said before, these people can't govern in tough times. They only want it when the piggy bank is full and they feel that their job and their just inheritance in this province is to come in and govern when the bank account is full, and spend all the money, because they're Liberals and that's what they love to do. It makes them happy when they go home at night and say, “Did you see what we spent?” They're either going to say, “You guys are asking us to spend money”—yes, we are, but we are asking you to spend money on the right things. You spend money on creating government jobs. The Premier talks about—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe that a previous speaker, the member from Essex, got up and was upset that I was making comments while he was speaking. Well, the member just did it to my colleague in the Conservative Party. Being a Deputy Speaker, he knows the rules. He reminded us how long he's been in the House. I'm relatively new to the House. He knows the rules, yet he breaks them when it suits him. I have a real problem with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you for your comment. It's not a point of order. The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor, and I would ask all members to respect the fact that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor.

Honourable member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As I said, this government feels it's their ordained privilege to come into Ontario and spend money when Ontario has it. And now, when Ontario, like other jurisdictions, is finding money in scarce supply, they don't quite know how to handle it.

The Premier talks about his five-point plan—and we've talked about working in a non-partisan way to try to help bring Ontario out of this malaise that this government has taken it under. We're prepared to work with them. The Premier talks about his five-point plan. The five-point plan for business in this province under Dalton McGuinty—I would say he should retitle it: It should be called “layoff, refinance, restructure, close, and move to Saskatchewan.” That's the five-point plan that we've got from this government, because they have offered nothing. They talk about a five-point plan, but what concrete and real proposals have they brought to business in this province since the downturn has hit? What new has been brought to business in this province to try to help turn around the economic situation? Absolutely nothing. They continue to stand in the way of business because they

would rather act as an impediment than a partner; they would rather burden businesses than work as a partner.

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I'm going to switch a little bit here to the one particular business that I'm concerned about in my riding: the forestry business. When I talk about how they would rather burden than partner, well, the forestry business has been suffering tough times ever since this government was elected, as a matter of fact. What is this government's approach to forestry? "Let's continue to bring in more and more new regulation and exert more and more burden on people who work in the business of harvesting forest products. Let's make it more difficult for them to operate and more difficult for them to compete in a globe market where the regulatory process and the regulatory burden on people from other jurisdictions is so much less than it is here in Ontario." That is one of the primary reasons that we are seeing shutdowns, closures, and layoffs in the forestry business.

Just last week, the Smurfit-Stone mill in Portage-du-Fort, Quebec, shut down. That's in the province of Quebec, but the reality is that the shutdown of the Smurfit-Stone pulp mill in Portage-du-Fort, Quebec, has more impact on the forestry business in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—my riding—than any business shutting down in the riding could, because that is the number one market for the pulp and chips that come out of the forest operators in Renfrew county. If you can't sell pulp, you can't sell logs. It's as simple as that. Your business, your forestry operations will shut down. You have to be able to get value out of every part of every tree in the forestry business today. It's no longer a business where you can simply high-grade things, take the best and leave the rest of it in the bush to rot; you've got to take everything. You've got to get money out of everything or you can't compete. It's akin to, if you're a beef farmer and you can't get somebody to buy the hamburger, I can assure you that you won't be able to sell your steak because it will be too expensive. You can't high-grade. The problem that the forestry industry is faced with when they lose a place to sell their pulp is that they shut down because nobody is going to buy their logs at the price that they would have to charge them to cover the cost of extraction when they can't get some money for the pulp.

We need this government—and I must say that I had the opportunity to speak to the Minister of Natural Resources yesterday, and I expect that she is going to stick to her commitment to try to find solutions to this. But I caution her and ask her and her government to stop standing as a barrier with its regulatory regime when it comes to the forestry industry, and start standing as a partner so that we can actually improve the situation that our forestry operators are working under here in the province of Ontario today. Of course, I speak more particularly about the forest operators in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke who are under such stress as a result of the closure of Smurfit-Stone in Portage-du-Fort, Quebec.

Some of them have been able to find some temporary markets for some of those products, but they are, in fact,

very temporary. The closure of Smurfit-Stone could affect one out of every seven jobs in Renfrew county. That is huge. Can you imagine, if one out of seven jobs in the city of Toronto was threatened, what that would do to the economy of this city, of this province, of this country? That's what it could do in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. If this minister doesn't partner with the industry and try to work with them to find solutions to allow them to compete in a global market where, as a result of the regulatory burden foisted upon them by this government, they are simply not able to compete at this time.

The member for Essex talked about how we were questioning the government with regard to hydro rates. One of the things that the industries in this province will tell you is that one of the most difficult things for them to deal with is the high cost of electricity, and this government wants to continue to increase that cost to those manufacturers. Well, it's not rocket science. If your revenues are declining, as a business, and your expenses are increasing, it's just like a vise; it just keeps coming closer and closer and closer until there is no room anymore. It is the responsibility of the government to try to understand the reality of what it is like to do business in the province of Ontario. This government works in their own world, where they just kind of come up with these ideas about, "We'll figure out what's best for everybody, because we're Liberals and therefore we're smarter than everybody."

You need to sit down with the real business people in this province, the people who really make the economy work, the people who really create the jobs in this province, not the jobs you people try to pad your record with, saying there are this many more people working in the province of Ontario this month because you hired them all in Toronto to flip paper around in an office. No, you need to create real jobs by working with business in this province, and we are prepared to work with you. Don't shut out the opposition, as you've been doing so far. Let us work together to bring better times to the province of Ontario.

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

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de pouvoir participer à ce débat ce matin, sur une résolution déposée le 7 octobre dernier par notre premier ministre, Dalton McGuinty.

Since the tabling of the motion on October 7, a lot of changes have occurred in the markets, as we know. On October 7, the dollar was at 90.31 cents and oil was at \$90.27 a barrel. Today the dollar is at 79.2 cents and oil is at \$66.79. We recognize that the markets all over the world have taken a deep drop. But we have to remember something: Do we still have the market?

I hear people on the other side say that we should cut the corporate tax. I don't know if everyone here knows that we are the lowest in corporate tax in North America. At the present time, the current one is 31.5 with the federal government corporate tax. Ours is only at 12.9, I

believe, and within a 10-year period—the Premier announced it—we will eliminate the corporate tax. But I hear from the other side that we have to do something.

When I say the market isn't there, we look at our number one employer in Ontario. It's the auto parts and car industry. That industry employs over 132,000 people in Ontario, 75,000 of them in the parts industry. We do produce approximately 2.5 million cars a year, but in the parts industry, there are parts going back and forth to the States about six times. At the present time, we have to realize, when I say that the market isn't there in the States, that 80% of our product GDP is exported, and 93% of that goes to the States. But ever since this started in the States, we haven't got the market. Are we going to continue producing and sending everything to landfill sites? Definitely not.

Every level of government—the federal government, us and the municipal governments—has a job to do. But at the present time, our Premier has taken the initiative. As he was mentioning before, we could see that coming; I could see it coming. Way back six months ago, I produced a report; I could see those things coming. I keep saying that every one of us has a role to play.

In French we say, « On doit se regarder dans le miroir. » When I say that, qu'avons-nous fait pour garder nos emplois? Qu'avons-nous fait pour être plus compétitifs? Qu'avons-nous fait pour être capables de continuer à exporter notre produit aux États-Unis?

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On July 10, we decided to open up a marketing office in Paris. Why? Because we could see this coming. Our Premier could see it coming, and immediately he said we have to work towards that to face a big challenge that is coming to us, and we have done it. He has done it. How? By looking at the infrastructure program that we have in place today. We have a five-point plan, and we also started to look at the infrastructure. We know that the previous government downloaded a lot of services that the municipalities had to pay for. We know that in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell we had a shortfall with this downloading of over \$26 million a year. And when I hear my friends from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke saying that we should spend more money to be able to keep our jobs—how can we do it? We have to be competitive and we are not competitive at the present time.

When he referred to hydro rates, way back in 2002, I remember my good friend John Baird, who at that time was Minister of Energy. I met with him at the Royal York Hotel, I'll never forget that, and he said “Jean-Marc, I'm going to bring down the hydro rates to 4.3 cents and you can take the credit for it.” I said “John, do we have the money for that?” “Oh yes, we have a surplus of over \$300 million a month.” You know what that means to us? We took over with over \$18 billion of debt at Hydro. How? Because the people that had signed contracts with retail salespeople at 6.89 cents and 7.69 cents, we had to pay them back—the company. We were charging the customers 4.3 cents, as Premier Harris had done, and then those people who signed contracts at 7.69

cents and 7.89 cents, we had to give them the difference. This is why we ended up with this. To the point, no one in the world was ready to invest in the hydro industry in Ontario because at 4.3 cents they couldn't make a buck. Anybody who wants to invest money, it's because they want to make money, but they couldn't at 4.3 cents. At one point, we purchased the hydro that we were selling at 4.3 cents—we purchased the electricity at \$1.33 a kilowatt hour. Is that good administration? We purchased it at \$1.33 a kilowatt hour and we were selling it at 4.3 cents. Is this good administration? Not at all.

When I looked at the story on the auto industry from the CBC News on October 21, just three days ago, they were giving the whole story from 2005 about what's happening in the auto industry. I have the whole list here: 400 jobs lost at Magna; Toyota is cutting down production; in Renault, in France, they're cutting down the number of employees by 6,000 people; the auto industry in the States is down by 27%. You just have to look at the CBC News report. Just go on the Internet and you will see all that.

Just in 2008, BMW—you might say BMW is not a product that we do. Yes, we do products for BMW—parts here in Ontario. Mercedes is also affected. We produce windshields for Mercedes here in Ontario. On April 28, General Motors cut 3,500 jobs by scaling back shifts at four North American assembly plants. In Windsor, we're cutting 1,400 people; at General Motors in Oshawa, 2,600 people. So everything is there. We don't have the market anymore. Why? Because people are down from, let's say, \$50 an hour to probably making, today, \$10 an hour. Can they afford to buy a car? No. This is definitely affecting our market, so we have to be very careful.

Also what our Premier has done is, as I said, he took the initiative of looking at what is going to happen here in the next year or two. Immediately he says that we have to invest in the infrastructure program. Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has received over \$10 million in one year from the McGuinty government. The Cambridge people that were criticizing yesterday, who said that we have gone on a spending spree—I cannot understand. Are we going to go back and tell the people in Cambridge, “Should we take back the money from you people? According to your MPP, it shouldn't have been spent.” They got \$9,086,000. When I look at Halton Hills and Halton region, do you know how much they got? You got \$32 million. Are you going to criticize the McGuinty government for looking after the infrastructure that the previous government hadn't done a thing about? This is why today all the municipalities are trying to get money to fix up the water mains, the sewage system, the roads and bridges, but we said, “If we put this program in place, that will create 11,000 jobs.” Instead of having those people that don't have a job probably going back from \$30 an hour to \$10 an hour, today the construction industry is becoming the number one industry.

In Ontario, the industrial sector is employing 950,000 people and, again, 93% of our exports are to the States. As I said, we have to be competitive. We have to look at every angle that we could look at.

C'est pour ça que nous devons tous regarder dans le miroir : « Est-ce que j'ai vraiment fait ma part? Est-ce que je suis prêt à accepter de conserver mon emploi? »

When I look at what our Premier has done—we have some problems in the town of Alexandria in North Gengarry. I went up to see the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade at the time, and I said that to save companies like Alexandria Moulding and Altec we have to come up with some changes within the municipality. They need some money to save those jobs. They were looking at transferring only the shipping sector—the distribution sector—to the States. That would have meant about 135 people, plus the trucking companies, plus the mechanics for those companies. That is not counting the indirect jobs.

But I sat down with them, and I got the union to sit down with me and the employees. We looked at every angle. They were saying that in the States the electricity was cheaper. I analyzed everything and I turned around and said, “Even though they're giving you municipal tax free for the next five years, you still pay more in the States when you calculate everything.” We needed something. We needed to change the water mains to make sure that they were able to get instruments in their plants so the sprinklers would work, because in the system they have in place the pressure was not strong enough. And we said to the union, “What can you do to save those jobs?” Alexandria is only a small town of 3,400 people in the east end of my riding. We looked at it. We gave them \$3.65 million to fix up the water main. We did save the jobs, but with the good part, the good role, that the union has played. They looked at it. Their average salary was probably only \$23 an hour; it's better than \$10 an hour. If they had been laid off, they would have probably made \$8 or \$10 an hour over there. We saved those jobs. The union said, “Yes, we'll reopen the collective agreement. We will cut down the salary by 90 cents an hour. There won't be any more bonuses if you want to keep the jobs here.”

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The 135 jobs meant, at the end, 534 jobs, because that was the first section of Alexandria Moulding. Altec, a Cleveland company that is down there too—probably only 60 people. We sat down with them. I remember being at a council meeting, and I asked the mayor, “Can I use your kitchen to meet those people before they make the decision on moving out?” I sat down with them in the kitchen, and they said, “Yes, Mr. Lalonde, you are our MPP. We depend on you.” So I went back over here, and we negotiated. Today, they are expanding. Alexandria Moulding is about five times bigger than it was at the time that we negotiated that. That is number one.

When I look at all the services or the money that we have given to the municipalities—unbelievable. When I look at the city of Ottawa, for example—we have a member from Nepean here who criticizes us quite often, let me tell you—they got \$111 million from the two programs that we have in place. Is that because—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're doing their job. What's the point?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: What's the point? It's because the infrastructure has to be fixed up, so we did it.

There are a lot of points that we could discuss. Like my colleague from Essex said, we look to help out the small business people.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sure you do.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Yes.

I have the figures here, which I couldn't believe; I have the charts. Surprisingly enough, I never heard the member from Leeds–Grenville criticizing the provincial business industrial education property tax for \$500,000. In Parry Sound, industrial, it was \$4,770 per 500; in Brockville, it was \$22,170, a difference of \$18,000 per 500. That was done by the previous government. The downloading wasn't fair for everyone. Today, what we have done—the Premier says, “We want to level this off across the province, so we will invest \$750 million to make sure that everybody gets the same level of services in Ontario.

In Cornwall, \$21,187—444% more than what they are paying in Parry Sound.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Shame, yes, you could say that.

There are a lot of points that we could discuss here, but let me tell you that the McGuinty government has taken the initiative. Just last Friday, I was in Montreal, for example. There was a forum on the economy, and the chief economist from the National Bank of Canada made a presentation—and the same thing for France, African countries. I was happy to be there to represent our minister.

Let me tell you what the chief economist, Mr. Clément Gignac, said: “To face the challenge that we have, one thing that everyone has to do is invest in the infrastructure.” Was I ever glad when I heard that from Mr. Gignac, the chief economist. I said, “This is exactly what the Premier has done in Ontario.” If the federal government had done the same thing, we could have saved a lot of employment. As I said, our program has created over 11,000 jobs. But when we announced on August 25 that we had \$1.1 billion for the infrastructure program for our municipalities, the federal government, the day after—the member for Nepean, who was Minister of the Environment, was proud to say we got \$6.2 billion for the province of Ontario over a period of six years. But do you know how much we got for this year? We got \$100 million for over 400 municipalities. That's peanuts. It's a shame. And to get that \$100 million, the municipalities have to match it. Prior to the last federal campaign we had, we had the member going around announcing \$2.6 million to Hawkesbury, \$600,000 to Bourget, but there was no program, so they never got the money. That was the political role they were playing.

But this is great—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. It being just past 10:15, the debate is adjourned.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This House stands recessed till 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like to introduce the parents of Andrew Walker, the page from Scarborough–Rouge River: Jennifer and Bob Walker, and they're with us in the east gallery today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'd like to welcome the grade 5 students from St. Bernard Catholic church in my riding of York South–Weston, who are here today visiting the Legislature.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to welcome members of the Tibetan community and members of Students for a Free Tibet here today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce my wife, Carole Paikin-Miller, in the west gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust the member will be on his best behaviour today, with his wife present.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park two young Australian professionals, part of a Rotary International exchange team hosted by the Rotarians of Mississauga: Pieter Kool and Jack Smith.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier and it deals with yesterday's economic statement. I think one word that summarizes that statement, Premier, is "disappointing." People have been looking for leadership and inspiration and hope, and I think they were let down.

Two hundred and thirty thousand jobs have been lost in this province in the past two years. Communities like Goderich, Smiths Falls, Chatham and many others are facing economic uncertainty. They heard nothing to indicate a recognition of their challenges in yesterday's statement.

Premier, why was your economic statement silent on the impact that job losses are having on so many communities and so many families in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's been said that a budget or an economic update is more than just a financial statement. It's a statement of our values. What we worked hard to do is to ensure that statement is informed by Ontarians' values.

It is with some regret that we've got to come to grips with a global economic challenge, but our resolve is stronger than ever to do what Ontarians are asking us to do. They want us to protect their public services. They want us to protect their schools and their hospitals and other public protections, to make sure we're continuing

to fund police on our streets, for example. So we won't shy away from that. But at the same time, we want to take into account the fact of our economic reality. The economy is going to grow more slowly and we're going to have to make some more difficult decisions. We have made some that will help us get to this year-end but there are more to come. We will always do that, in keeping with Ontario values.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again, more rhetoric from the Premier. In the statement yesterday, his government was still suggesting that their five-point plan is working, as jobs bleed out of this province and families are suffering. The five-point plan clearly isn't working, and you can't seem to recognize and accept that.

Premier, if you want to stop the erosion of jobs and help struggling communities and families in this province, why didn't you announce tax cuts that businesses have asked for? Why didn't you announce a frontal assault on red tape that businesses have asked for? Why didn't you address these critical issues in your economic statement yesterday?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: From time to time, we come to stare into the face of the Conservative ideology. They're unhappy with the results of our decisions. We're going to have a modest deficit. We've chosen to do that rather than gut public services. They're saying that they're unhappy with the deficit, that we shouldn't have a deficit, but they're also saying that we should cut taxes dramatically. You can't have it both ways. You can't maintain public services and dramatically cut. We had that experience. They cut their taxes and they left us with deficits. We've had that experience. They were in power for eight years and they ran five deficits.

We've tried that; we're not going back there. We're going to look after public services, we're going to run a modest deficit and we're going to bring reality to bear when—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier talks about our suggestions in terms of improving the situation for communities, families and people looking for work as "Conservative ideology." I guess he wasn't talking to his Liberal counterpart Gordon Campbell yesterday, who made an economic statement announcing tax cuts for families and businesses. Here, we get nothing but more rhetoric from this Premier. We know communities, families, seniors and businesses in this province are facing real challenges, yet they saw no relief from you in yesterday's statement, no relief from 20% increases in property tax assessments and no relief from 10% increases in hydro rates.

The Premier is living in a bubble in his taxpayer-funded Toronto accommodation. There's no recognition of reality in the failings of his five-point plan. Premier, when can the people of this province expect some real action to address real problems?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: At the beginning of my honourable colleague's last question, he talked about BC.

They have different circumstances there. They have a different makeup to their economy, and they introduced a new tax just a short time ago. I don't think that's what my friend is suggesting that we should do here.

With respect to our five-point plan, let me tell you about some of the things that we've been able to accomplish through that plan. We've got 100,000 more young people now in our colleges and universities. We have 100,000 people working in jobs today as a result of infrastructure projects totalling more than 100 in number. We've invested dramatically in innovation, turning home-grown ideas into hometown jobs. Those are the kinds of things that take some time, they take some perseverance and they take some continuing application.

We've made some real progress in that regard. We will continue to make progress together, working with Ontarians.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier: This morning on CFRB radio, he described the province's economy as a train wreck. Well, guess who was driving the train? Not only has this government ignored hard-hit Ontarians, but you're not being straight with them about why you won't help.

In response to repeated questions and requests that we've made over the past few weeks for a full accounting, we were told that all would be revealed in yesterday's statement. Today, we're still waiting. Premier, where is the detailed breakdown of the \$1 billion in savings, which is now listed as a \$1.1-billion figure in the statement? That's what you promised. Where is it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The background documents that were detailed yesterday, as well as the online sites, outline in great detail where those changes are happening. But let me tell you what we won't do as we confront the challenges in our economy. We won't fire 6,200 nurses, the way you did while you were doing tax cuts, or 15,000 teachers. We won't let meat inspectors go; we won't let water inspectors go; we won't cut 1,400 people from the Ministry of the Environment staff.

I noted with great interest what Conservative economist Diane Francis said last evening to your colleague Mr. Hudak—that this modest deficit is the right approach to go. We're taking a balanced, fulsome approach to the challenges in the economy. We reject their tax cuts—

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

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Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I asked the Premier a specific question, and we get the Minister of Finance puffing out his chest, as he's wont to do, and more and more blarney, instead of addressing a specific issue and a specific concern.

This is a government that has already overspent its budget by millions of dollars, while it's asking Ontarians to tighten their belts. Ontarians can have no confidence

that this so-called billion dollars in savings is anything more than creative accounting.

Once again, Premier and your minister, will you confirm that this year's deficit will in fact be \$1.6 billion? Is that what next spring's budget will reveal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We outlined that our view, based on current projections, is the deficit will be \$500 million.

I'll tell you what's blarney: trying to suggest, as they did five years ago, that they had a balanced budget when they left a deficit of \$5.5 billion. I'll tell you what's blarney: trying to imply that our five-point plan isn't working—the infrastructure money is in the ground, creating 100,000 jobs. I'll tell you what's blarney: standing at your seat and criticizing us for not doing business tax cuts, when we've done \$3 billion and you voted against every one of them. I'll tell you what else is blarney: It's blarney to suggest that our valuable investments in public services, education, health care, environment and infrastructure—those jobs give people paycheques, and those people spend their cheques and their money in grocery stores, in restaurants.

We've laid out the right plan in difficult times, and we reject your failed ideology which is being—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: “Blarney” wouldn't be an adequate word to describe that load of you know what.

Perhaps the Premier and his colleague are being dismissive about the real amount of the deficit because, really, it's not their debt; it's a debt of almost \$20,000 that he's passed on to every single household in Ontario. That's a debt that's going to have to be paid by our kids and our grandkids going forward, through increased taxes. It's a debt they wouldn't have to pay if this government knew how to set aside a rainy day fund, because they've had \$27 billion in increased revenue over the life of this government. It's a debt they wouldn't have to pay if the Attorney General and the Minister of Education didn't spend \$7 million on hotels last year, if you didn't have a \$2.3-million party in Windsor just a few weeks ago.

Premier, Minister, Ontarians deserve to know why they should have—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to remind the House that when the Canadian dollar was weak relative to the US, when the US economy was running on all eight cylinders, when oil prices were down around \$20 to \$30, that member and his party ran five deficits. In the last four years of their administration, expenses went up more than 10%, while revenues went up 5%. Their expenditures grew faster than their revenues.

The debt-to-GDP ratio has gone from 25% when we took office to 17% this year, because in addition to making these sound and prudent investments in our schools, in our hospitals, we've been paying down debt. We've been investing in infrastructure. We will continue to make those prudent investments.

Again, I say, we reject the one-trick pony of tax cuts and deregulation that's in disrepute today right around the world.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt, but I didn't see the individual here earlier. Join me in welcoming the member for Markham from the 34th and 35th Parliaments and the member for York from the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, Mr. Don Cousens. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

New question. The member from Toronto–Danforth.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Yesterday's economic statement demonstrates that this government has no plan to deal with the economic crisis. Ontarians are asking one simple thing: Will you be there for them at a time of unprecedented economic insecurity? You didn't introduce a single new measure to respond to the economic crisis. The government gave a very simple response: "You are on your own when you need us the most."

Will you admit that in yesterday's economic statement, this government failed to announce a single new measure to create jobs? This government has absolutely no idea what to do about Ontario's economic crisis.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague, but obviously I take issue with the question itself.

The Conservatives are asking us to dramatically reduce taxes, which would lead to a gutting of our public services. I want to say to my honourable colleague: We've said no to that. We're standing up for public services in Ontario. We're standing up for maintaining the health and vigour and vitality of our schools, our health care and our protections for the public in general. We're standing up for that. That's what we said yesterday through our fall economic statement.

At the same time, we said that we can't be blind to economic realities, and we need to find ways to demonstrate restraint. That's why we found an additional \$500 million in savings for this year-end—not an easy thing to do, because the year is mostly over. So I would disagree with my friend. We have said yes to public services, we've said yes to restraint, and we rejected suggestions that come from the extremes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, you had a choice yesterday. You could have announced bold new jobs initiatives; you could have looked at the levers that are in use in Manitoba and Quebec, where they're standing up for their populations; you could have taken on the responsibility of looking after Ontarians in difficult economic times. Why won't you take the tools that are in use in Quebec and Manitoba and are being used to protect working people and use those here in Ontario to

show people that you're on their side and are not saying to them simply, "You're on your own"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we see things differently. Over on this side of the House we've been working hard to help Ontarians to grow stronger—and manufacturing in particular. That's what our five-point plan is all about. When you invest dramatically, as we have, in post-secondary education, for example, creating more opportunities for more Ontarians to take advantage of upgrading themselves and retraining themselves, that's a good thing for those individuals and it's a good thing for the economy. When you invest dramatically in infrastructure, as we have—we've got over 100 construction projects under way, over 100,000 jobs that we're creating at present. That's all about helping people right now and creating jobs right now. Ontarians sense that. They're actually experiencing that. Again, I disagree with my friend.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Notwithstanding what the Premier has cited, the simple reality is that people are losing their jobs, are losing their incomes and are facing desperate times, and you are saying to them, "You're on your own." Now is the wrong time for government to retreat. Now is the time for government to step in and protect the population of this province. Will you not stand in your place, admit you don't have a plan to deal with this economic crisis, and will you, in fact, rethink your position, come back to Ontarians and tell them they're not on their own?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: While we come to grips with this global economic challenge and the consequences being felt here in Ontario, I don't want us to lose perspective. Since 2003, we've created a net 500,000-plus jobs. In the last year alone, we've created 104,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario. We're creating one third of all new jobs in Canada. Unemployment is down today in comparison to when the Tories finished up their time in government. Wages, in fact, are up. This year, 83% of all the new jobs created in Ontario were created in the private sector. So there is some good news out there, and we shouldn't lose perspective.

There is no better place on this planet in which to seek shelter from this global economic storm than here in Canada. We're part of that. We're making some difficult decisions, but I argue that they are the responsible decisions.

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Tell that to people in Windsor.

To the Premier: Yesterday's economic statement was a failure that will be felt hardest by the province's cash-strapped municipalities. The government is now in deficit, so its Investing in Ontario Act won't provide new infrastructure money this year. Municipalities are taking it on the chin. The economic downturn is forcing them to spend more on downloaded social services and they'll be

getting much less for crumbling infrastructure. How much longer will you leave municipalities in an untenable position?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me just correct the record. This government, through the Premier at the AMO conference in August, announced that we are investing \$1.1 billion from the Investing in Ontario Act. We had a choice when that piece of legislation was passed; that money could have gone to a wide variety of partners, but this government showed its commitment to the municipal sector and provided those surplus funds of \$1.1 billion. They will be in the hands of the municipal sector to create jobs, to build infrastructure, within the next two to three weeks, and it's something we're very proud of.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yesterday's statement fails municipalities. Two years after the provincial-municipal fiscal review, this government still has nothing to show for it. The economic downturn is going to hit all communities. Municipalities that are in the resource heartland have been hit hard. That will spread. Those costs for Ontario works will stay on the backs of municipal property taxpayers. Will the Premier admit that by not making an immediate down payment on provincially mandated services and not committing to assuming full responsibility for Ontario works by fall 2011, that sends the wrong message and fails municipalities?

Hon. Jim Watson: I hate to correct the member for a second time, but the fact of the matter is that in 2003, the municipal sector received approximately \$1.1 billion in transfer payments from the Ontario government. Today, in 2008, \$2.2 billion is going to the municipal sector: That's a doubling of funding that's gone from the province of Ontario to those municipalities. Let me just quote mayor David Miller, who said, "What the funding announcement will do for the city of Toronto for the first time since amalgamation is give us a viable operating budget before the budget process starts ... we're extremely pleased with the provincial economic statement." That was David Miller, December 2007. We're proud of the partnership we've developed with the municipal sector. We're not going down the route the NDP went down with social contracts, with meddling in the collective agreement—

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Not only did that statement fail municipalities, it failed the health care system. In 2007, the government promised to hire 9,000 additional nurses. Ontarians are told to wait. "Wait," is what the Premier is telling Ontarians in terms of delivering on his promises. "Wait," is what he's telling people in emergency rooms and in their hospital beds. How will the Premier explain this broken promise?

Hon. Jim Watson: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, what's happened in the past five years is an over-\$11-billion increase in health

care spending—a 37% increase. That has funded 8,000 new full-time nurses in our hospitals, in our long-term-care homes. In fact, my predecessor—a brand new and insightful, exciting program to provide off-load nurses into emergency rooms to be able to handle some of those pressures. I'm very proud of the work we've accomplished in reducing wait times, and I'd like to share with the member some of the results of those investments: angiography, down 53%; angioplasty, down 50%; cataract surgery, down 63%; hip replacement, down 52%; knee replacement, down 51%; CT scans, down 46%; cancer surgeries, down 19%; MRI scans, down 18%, bypass surgeries, a 26%—

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

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would point out to the Minister of Finance that our government went from an \$11.3-billion deficit in 1995 and ended our career with five consecutive balanced budgets. Not four: five.

My question is to the Premier. Ontario, once the point of destination for global business, is now a point of departure. Companies are leaving at an incredible rate, taking jobs and capital with them, but also they're taking away tax revenue, forcing Ontario into deficit. Premier, I warned you about this many times. If you tax them too much, they will leave. Your total revenues will shrink. If you offer a competitive jurisdiction, more businesses will come and revenues will increase. It's called the Laffer curve. It's basic economics. Premier, will you reduce your tax rates, your corporate—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind my colleague opposite that not only did they run consecutive deficits, they borrowed money to cut taxes. They raised the province's debt. They left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit. We were able to deal with that and delivered three consecutive surplus budgets. We have paid down the province's debt. We have rehired the environment inspectors you fired, the meat inspectors you fired, the nurses you fired.

The tax-cut, deregulation, slash-and-burn ideology has been rejected around the world. Even Mr. Flaherty today acknowledges that a deficit could in fact be a reality for Canada and may in fact be a prudent and appropriate policy. I'd welcome the member to—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That's exactly the attitude that has put us in a deficit. The current deficit is largely because almost \$900 million less revenue has been received from Ontario corporate taxes. Where did the money go? It went to Mexico, it went to China, Brazil, to states like Pennsylvania, where the costs are lower than they are in Ontario. Businesses like Volvo, John Deere,

Henniges Automotive, Interforest, PPG, General Motors and Campbell Soup haven't gone out of business. They've simply moved out of Ontario and consolidated elsewhere, taking their tax dollars and tax revenues with them.

Minister, I ask you again, will you learn from your mistakes? Will you save Ontario jobs? Will you safeguard essential services and implement a comprehensive shift in economic policy that includes making corporations more competitive in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did that in our throne speech and in our budget. We have introduced the largest infrastructure spending initiative in the province's history, and that member voted against it. We've provided \$1.5 billion for skills training and training initiatives. That member voted against it. We eliminated the capital tax for manufacturers. We are equalizing and reducing the business education tax right across Ontario. That member and his party voted against it. We are building partnerships with our municipalities by increasing funding, by uploading ODB, ODSP. That member voted against it.

That ideology has been discredited around the world. We will continue—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —and we won't do a carbon tax, like you're advocating, I say to the member opposite. What I'll say—

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

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday neither the finance minister's economic statement nor the background papers mentioned the word "poverty" once. Ontarians can only conclude one thing and that is that poverty obviously has fallen off the government's radar. At a time when more people are falling into poverty every day, there was nothing in the government's economic statement to assuage the fears of the poor—no plan, no strategy, nothing.

Why are the McGuinty Liberals choosing to ride out the economic storm on the backs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that we take a step back and look at some of the things that we are already doing, that we will continue to do to support people living in poverty in this province. Let's talk for a minute about the Ontario child benefit that you voted against. The Ontario child benefit is now putting money in the hands of families of low income in this province. That money has flowed, it's going monthly, and we have a scheduled plan to increase the amount until it reaches \$1,100 per child per year.

The minimum wage has gone up from \$6.85 to \$8.75. It's going up to \$9.50 next March. There is absolutely no

plan to change that. Social assistance rates have gone up and continue to go up. Affordable housing: \$100 million in our last budget that you voted against to repair the infrastructure.

We are making great progress—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The honourable minister speaks of the Ontario child benefit and all the other things as if they're actually doing something. They amount to about a dollar a day and that's all that you have done in your term in government.

The government repeated yesterday that it would "delay" or "slow down" the implementation of some new spending initiatives; those are your words, not mine. After one year, not one red cent has been put forward for a dental program for low-income people. Can the Premier promise Ontarians that no poverty initiative—for instance, the low-income dental plan in the 2008 budget—will be delayed or cut?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are at a really interesting moment in Ontario's history when we have a government that is committed to actually tackling poverty. We're committed to measuring poverty, we're committed to making progress.

As the member opposite well knows, we are on track to release our poverty reduction strategy by the end of the year. That hasn't changed. We're full steam ahead. We are going to make the changes we need to make so that every child in this province has the opportunity to be the very, very best they can be.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Transportation, Minister, affects every single resident of Ontario, whether it's driving, catching a bus or taking a plane. This is an area government cannot neglect. Not only does a sound transportation system ensure the smooth flow of goods, it also ensures that Ontarians are able to get from point A to point B as quickly and safely as possible.

In my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, we have three public transit systems: Port Hope, Cobourg, and the city of Quinte West is just embarking on one. I'm hoping the minister can share with the House and with all Ontarians what his ministry is doing to ensure that the importance of a solid, well-funded transportation system is understood here in Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for Northumberland for his excellent question. He's also from Quinte West, I might add.

The emphasis we have on transportation has recently been recognized in a Fraser Institute study, which states as follows: "Ontario has the best transportation system in all of Canada." The study shows that Ontario received the highest overall rating in the country for passenger transportation modes. The study looked at highway

systems, transit systems, and air and marine transportation, an assessment that followed a detailed and thorough analysis of the wide range of transportation factors.

The government agrees with the study's lead author, who says a province's transportation system is a critical factor in fostering a positive investment climate and facilitating economic growth and prosperity. I will, in the supplementary, indicate some of the things that we've been doing, if I get that question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm pleased to hear that our great province has been recognized by the Fraser Institute to have the best transportation system in Canada, although I must admit I'm not surprised.

It is my understanding that since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested over \$1.5 billion for transit, highway infrastructure, and municipal roads and bridges in eastern Ontario alone. Ridings across the east have benefited from these investments, including my riding. I'm hoping the Minister of Transportation is able to share with this House details of those investments.

Hon. James J. Bradley: We are investing, as the member would know, record amounts in transportation, and there are benefits. For example, the \$17.5-billion Move Ontario 2020 initiative will not only bring 156,000 jobs to Ontario, but it will also see \$14.5 billion, or 82% of the total dollar amount, at a minimum spent in Canada. This money will be spent on engineering, design construction and rolling stock.

This is why we continue to invest in transportation in this province. We delivered on our commitment to provide 2 cents per litre of provincial gas tax revenues to municipalities as a source of long-term sustainable funding for public transit. At the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa, Premier McGuinty announced a \$1.1-billion investment in municipal infrastructure under the Investing in Ontario Act. In 2006, \$1.2 billion—

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

NURSES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Premier, there was shock in health care circles yesterday when, at a time when we have a growing and an aging population and at a time when we have a serious shortage of doctors and nurses, you chose to cut health care on the backs of patients. I'm asking you, why are you not hiring the 9,000 nurses that you promised patients?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I note that we're into the last half of question period, so now the spend questions kick in. The first half was all about cutting taxes, with the logical consequence of that being gutting public services, but now they're asking us to spend more. The reality is that we've been proud to hire on 8,000 more nurses. We're looking forward to hiring more, but we can't do it

as quickly as we originally planned. That's all we've said. I think that's a very responsible approach to dealing with new investments. We're going to first and foremost protect existing programs. We have to be very careful about taking on new financial responsibilities. So we said to our nurses that we won't be able to hire them as quickly as we'd originally planned. Again, I think that's responsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, it's unbelievable that here we have a Premier who said there would be no more increases in taxes and the first thing you did was to impose a health tax on Ontarians. You've taken \$12.2 billion out of their pockets and now your priority is to cut health care funding and reduce front-line services. Do you not realize that nurses are the backbone of the health system? We're reading today that it's going to have an impact on further overcrowding in emergency rooms. Long-term-care homes can't hire enough nurses right now. You are putting patient health and safety at risk by the decision that you have made. Are you prepared to put patient lives and safety at risk?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just by way of review, I think it is helpful if we take a look at what happened to nurses in Ontario in the last several years. Under the NDP, the number of registered nurses in Ontario fell by 3,000. Under the Conservatives, they fired 6,200. We've created 8,000 new nursing jobs. The percentage of nurses working full-time fell by 3% under the NDP, to 50.8%. They've now increased by more than 10% on our watch, and for the first time in the history of Canada we have a guarantee—a job guarantee—for nurses graduating in the province of Ontario, one of the very few jurisdictions in the world. That's what we think of our nurses: We've got more of them working full-time, and we have a job guarantee in place.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We hired 12,000 nurses.

Hon. David Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: According to the College of Nurses, they fired 6,200 nurses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: Here comes the nice guy.

To the Minister of Community and Social Services. On October 7, the minister acknowledged new written rules for the temporary care assistance program which now deny financial support to thousands of grandparents raising their grandkids. On October 16, the minister attempted to rewrite history, claiming there was never a directive on rule changes. There's no argument that there was a rule change. To help the minister understand this, on Monday I gave her a copy of the new written rules. Now that she has had ample time to personally review them, can she finally explain why her ministry changed

the rules to ensure that all grandparents raising their at-risk grandkids will not be cut off from temporary assistance?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I know that the member of the third party is very interested about this question. I just want to let him know that in 2003 and 2004 there was a monthly average of 4,332 children for which grandparents were receiving temporary care assistance. In 2007 and 2008 there are 5,195 children. Our budget went from \$11 million to almost \$13 million last year. So we are increasing. I can guarantee that every grandparent or adult—because it's not only for grandparents; other adults are taking care on a temporary basis—if they are eligible, will continue to receive temporary assistance.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know what that question was answered by; I'm not sure. I was shocked that the minister hasn't even bothered to understand her own policy, especially a policy that affects so many vulnerable grandparents and grandkids.

Yesterday, the minister stated that a grandparent raising two grandkids can receive up to \$1,000 a month. Grandparents from each corner of this province are saying, "Show me the money." Erlene Weaver from Hamilton, a grandmother of three, used to receive a total of \$562 a month for three kids in temporary care assistance; now she receives nothing. Why? Minister, remember that most of these grandparents do not qualify for your other programs, so please tell us how they can get this \$1,000 a month—and, Minister, don't tell them to go on welfare.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This program, temporary care assistance, is not income-tested. This member would like to have this program income-tested. When I review it, if it was income-tested, 75% of the grandparents would not receive this temporary care assistance. You review it—we're not going to do it, and we're not going to follow the member's advice.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member from Hamilton East to withdraw his comment, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll withdraw the lie part. She's not telling the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member again to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: This is unacceptable. This is total nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm sorry; she's not telling the truth. I cannot withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Will you withdraw?

Mr. Paul Miller: No, I won't.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will have to then name the member Paul Miller from the riding of Hamilton East.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, last Thursday, EPCOR announced that the company would not go forward with the second phase of the Kingsbridge wind farm near Goderich in my riding. This is certainly disappointing news for my community. My constituents believe in the importance of renewable energy, and we have three wind farms in that area alone. Kingsbridge 1 and Ripley wind farm are both in operation, and Enbridge A and B, with a total of a 182-megawatt capacity, is under construction and is expected to go online in the next few weeks.

We are concerned. Would the minister tell us what EPCOR's announcement means for our province's commitment to increasing renewable energy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to say, with respect to EPCOR's decision, that we share the disappointment, and we're very, very determined to learn all lessons which are available from it. The good news, in a sense, I suppose, is that they had had success with a 40-megawatt project earlier, and 16 of the 19 big projects related to RFPs are under construction or online.

In the next few weeks, Ontario will experience three big, new wind projects coming online in the riding of Dufferin-Caledon: Melancthon II, with 132 megawatts; Kruger Energy's project in Chatham-Kent comes online soon, with 101 kilowatts; and in the very member's riding, as she mentioned, Enbridge Ontario A and B, with 182 megawatts. Contrast that with just a few years ago: we had 15 megawatts; today, we have 531, and by the end of the year, we'll be up to 950 megawatts.

We think that we can do more, and that's why the changes that I've asked for in the integrated power system plan will influence even more greatly Ontario's desire for renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I am very supportive of renewable energy projects, and I think it's very important that we move towards more renewable energy. It must be a part of the energy supply mix, and these changes will contribute to cleaner air and also support our local economy. However, one of the reasons that EPCOR used to explain why their second phase did not go through was a delay in municipal and provincial approvals.

We need the minister to tell us what he is going to do in order to help companies overcome potential problems like these.

Hon. George Smitherman: As I mentioned in my earlier answer, we recognize that EPCOR had some very distinct criticisms of the way the process worked, and we take those to heart. We've made good progress for sure. We've gone from 15 megawatts to 530 in a few years, and we're going to add almost 400 more megawatts by the end of this year. But we know that we can do better. I'm going to be working very closely with government ministries—municipal affairs and environment—to see

what enhancements we can bring, and also with the various energy agencies.

I think that good progress is reflected in the OEB's support for the transmission improvement from Bruce to Milton. That's very, very necessary. We'll certainly unlock more of the best wind potential that we have in the whole province of Ontario. We're going to lead to greater investments. We know that we can bring even further investment and green jobs with respect to renewable energy in the province of Ontario.

We've made great progress, we have a good foundation, and we're going to build on that and make even greater progress towards cleaner, greener energy.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Minister, there was nothing in your economic statement yesterday to help the very people who drive the economy of Ontario: small business.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has a plan that won't cost anything and it will help small businesses. It's a three-point plan. They suggest that you waive fines and penalties for first-time non-compliance with government regulations, they suggest that you set up a single point of contact to inform small business, and they ask that you train provincial inspectors to help, rather than hurt, small business—now, that would be a novel concept. Will you agree to implement a program today based on these simple steps?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I'm very proud of the fact that we have taken very good steps to encourage and create an environment for small business in this province.

Let me just outline, for the consideration of this member and maybe for his information, some of the things that we have done. First, we have made a very concerted effort to reduce the paper burden for small business in this province. We reduced it by 24%, as I said last week in this House, in seven key ministries. Then we did it, in the second phase, in eight key ministries.

We are also moving ahead to harmonize the tax structure with our federal partners. That should also reduce the paperwork burden for small businesses.

We have reduced the capital cost allowance for small manufacturers, going back a year, and we are also working very closely with them to create—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, according to the legislative library, you've created 437 new regulations and removed 85. That's a five-fold increase.

In yesterday's economic statement, you did nothing to help small business. Not only that; despite Mr. McGuinty's claims that you're not raising taxes, you're actually bringing in an \$11,000 tax for construction companies with your mandatory WSIB coverage for owners and leaders of companies, so you're actually hurting business at this challenging time.

Minister, that's why the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is here at Queen's Park today to meet with your colleague the Minister of Labour, to present some 25,000 letters from concerned businesses.

Minister, you know that this has nothing to do with safety, as all employees are already covered by the WSIB. Will you listen to these businesses, go to the meeting with your colleague and demand that the minister stop this foolish move?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Minister of Labour, please.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the opportunity to speak to this initiative, this proposed legislation on mandatory coverage for those who are in the construction sector.

I would think that the member would not want to have an industry out there that does not have an even playing field. I would think that the member would want to protect the health and safety of all those workers. I would think that the member would want to reduce the underground economic activity that takes place in construction.

We're working with small business. We are working with the construction sector to make sure that we can address these things, to make sure that we level the playing field, to make sure that we can have stronger companies for a stronger Ontario out there.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Deputy Premier. In the gallery are Tibetan Canadians and their supporters. They believe, and we in the New Democratic Party believe, that the Premier's trip to China provides a unique opportunity to send a strong message on human rights, on how the world ought to be, to the government of China.

The message is that the situation in Tibet right now is wrong, that running roughshod over human rights is not acceptable to the people of Ontario, not acceptable to the people of Canada and not acceptable to the international community.

Will the Premier send that message? Will he tell the government of China in no uncertain terms that Ontarians expect their trading partners to respect internationally accepted standards of human rights?

Hon. George Smitherman: We welcome, again, the symbolic recognition of the people of Tibet and those people from the member's riding on this point.

I think it's a very appropriate opportunity to remind members that this House did unanimously pass a motion on the issue of Tibet, a resolution which I was proud to move and to support as a member of this Legislature: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as a long-standing friend of China, express concern with the current situation in Tibet and encourage the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue." I think the value of that motion stands today, as it did those few months ago when it was passed. I'm very, very certain that this falls in line

with the tradition of Ontario and of Canada of constructive engagement on these matters.

I look forward to offering more views in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Deputy Premier again: That all-party resolution that was passed on April 10 has not been played out by the Premier's trip to China. He certainly has not talked about human rights, he has not met with representatives of the Tibetan community, and if he has talked about them, where are the transcripts of such a discussion? We would like to see, on this side of the House, those transcripts made public. Again, empty words, unless they're lived out by trade trips to China.

So, again I ask: On his next trip to China, will the Premier speak about Tibet and human rights? And will he meet with Tibetan-Canadians and Students for a Free Tibet as soon as possible?

Hon. George Smitherman: I find it somewhat noteworthy that that honourable member is the one who's proposing that all transcripts of all conversations that one has brought into the public domain. I don't think that's typically the way that individuals have operated. I remind the House that this is the honourable member who once said that the Premier hadn't met with the Dalai Lama and we had to secure the actual photographic evidence to convince her otherwise.

But most certainly I would want to give that member the assurance that the resolution of this Legislature stands as a very, very firm statement of the views of the people of the province of Ontario and that our Premier and members of the government recognize it as such. I'm very, very certain that it will form, as it always would through the process of constructive engagement, part and parcel of the relationship that we have with the nation of China.

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Carleton University, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, has established a reputation on the international stage for its groundbreaking research. Ranked among the top four comprehensive universities in the country, research funding has skyrocketed from \$28 million in 2000 to over \$85 million in 2007. Carleton holds 23 Canada research chairs, five NSERC chairs and four endowed chairs. To date, 26 faculty members have been inducted as fellows in the Royal Society of Canada.

What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to promote fundamental, basic research taking place at Carleton and across Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Ottawa Centre for the question.

Just the other day, I was able to be at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, in the great riding of

Ottawa South, to make an announcement as the minister responsible for the Ontario Research Fund.

First, I'd say to my friend that we've made a commitment of some \$650 million to the Ontario Research Fund, and through a peer-reviewed process, we've been able to pay for both research excellence and research infrastructure.

When I was in Ottawa with representatives of Carleton University and your new president, Dr. Roseann Runte, and also with representatives from the University of Ottawa, I was pleased to say that, between those two institutions, we'll be supporting some 11 research projects which include 47 researchers with an investment of some \$1.5 million. That brings our total investment in Ottawa to the two universities—some \$38.2 million to the University of Ottawa and \$17.9 million—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Statistics Canada data shows that for both males and females, those with a university degree have higher earnings than those without. On average, those with a degree make \$52,250, compared to \$32,750 for those without. A study by the US Census Bureau looking at earnings by level of education shows that for all workers with a Ph.D., average annual earnings stood at \$81,400, compared to \$54,000 for a master's and \$45,000 for bachelors.

It is important that these students study and then actually work in Ontario. We need to actively lay the groundwork, investing in equipment and attracting the world's leading researchers in order to draw students to our universities and create Ontario's high-paid workforce of the future.

To the Minister of Research and Innovation: What is the ministry doing to reverse the brain drain and ensure Ontario's position to lead in the 21st century?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I can share with the House that the brain drain is gone and now it is a brain gain. Let me just share with members of the House some of the world-class talent that has been attracted to our province under our leadership: Dr. Tom Hudson came from McGill University to lead the newly formed Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, an investment by our ministry of some \$347 million. Dr. Gordon Keller, a leading stem cell researcher, came from New York to Toronto to head the McEwan Centre for Regenerative Medicine. Dr. Neil Turok, a world-leading physicist, Stephen Hawking's protégé at Cambridge, is now the new executive director of the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in K-W. Dr. Jack Mandel, a top epidemiologist, is returning to his native Canada to be the first director of the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. And Dr. Raymond Laflamme came from Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico to become the director of the Institute for Quantum Computing at the University of Waterloo. There is a—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and it's about prioritizing for infrastructure. The McGuinty government, having manoeuvred Ontario into a deficit, finally concedes that there is a great need to prioritize government spending. Over the summer, this Liberal government threw a casino party that cost Ontario taxpayers \$2.3 million, money that could and should have been used, for example, to fund health care services at struggling York region hospitals. It could have bought CAT scanners, MRI machines for any of them or funded the long-awaited master planning stage for a future hospital in Vaughan.

Is the \$2.3 million spent for a casino party in Windsor your idea of a priority? Do you place entertainment ahead of much-needed investment in infrastructure for the health and well-being of Ontario communities like York region?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do find it curious that the honourable member stands in his place and asks such a question when his party has in place a plan to cut health care spending by \$3 billion, which would obviously be a far more destructive circumstance for York region.

On his question, which was about prioritization of infrastructure initiatives, I can tell the honourable member that we continue to work through the progress of ReNew Ontario, a five-year, \$30-billion plan which has seen unprecedented levels of investment in infrastructure—this year alone, \$9.9 billion of investment.

I'd be very, very happy to talk to the honourable member about the rationale associated with the casino introducing an entertainment facility, which has the effect of bringing more clients onsite and enhancing the revenue there, which is important, of course, for the programs that it funds and important for the thousands of people who enjoy employment as a result.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That minister can justify a casino but he can't justify why he denies essential health dollars and continues to insist that we have a plan to cut health spending when it's just not so.

Tonight, I will be joining my community at a Vaughan Health Care Foundation gala to raise funds for the Vaughan hospital, and I believe that minister will be in attendance as well. I know that all those present will want to know the plans for investment in their cause.

Minister, it is time to put your infrastructure dollars where your mouth is. Since you appear to agree that health care is a priority higher on the list than any casino party, tell this House what funds you have put aside for health care infrastructure funding, notably the master planning phase for the Vaughan hospital.

Hon. George Smitherman: Apparently the honourable member doesn't live in his riding, because if he did, just driving there, through the various routes that are available to him, he couldn't help but notice the ongoing investment that our government's making in infrastructure, especially in hospital infrastructure related to

the 905 region. I urge the honourable member: Go to Newmarket, the riding of his colleague, and see the emerging regional services that are provided there. I urge the member: Go just over to Richmond Hill to York Central and see the hospital tower that's emerging. Look just slightly to your west and see in Brampton an \$800-million hospital. All of these pieces are evidence of the renewal, the renaissance of hospitals, and it stands in very sharp contrast to a party that has on its record closing 28 hospitals. Instead, we keep them open, we rebuild them, we make them bigger and we make them better.

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As of today, the number of suspected E. coli cases thought to have originated at Harvey's restaurant in North Bay has climbed to 190, with 36 cases confirmed. Like during the listeriosis outbreak, the public has remained calm about this E. coli outbreak due to the swift and transparent action of Dr. Catherine Whiting, North Bay's medical officer of health.

My question is simple: When will the McGuinty government follow through on the number one recommendation from the Walkerton inquiry and ensure that every public health unit has a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health?

Hon. David Caplan: Every public health unit has a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health. Some are in permanent positions and some are in acting positions.

I just want to say that I am confident that the necessary steps are being taken by the local public health unit in North Bay to ensure that the cases are being fully investigated. We have taken the steps necessary to protect public safety.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is working in collaboration with our colleagues at the North Bay public health unit, with our colleagues at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and with the Public Health Agency of Canada to investigate the outbreak.

I am very proud of Dr. Whiting and her team, who reacted with incredible swiftness to be able to protect North Bay residents and residents of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I hate to differ, but back when the Walkerton inquiry was in full swing, a third of the public health units did not have a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health. On October 23, 2008, one third of public health units in Ontario still do not have a full-time, fully qualified medical officer of health. But Dr. Whiting is a qualified, competent physician and she has taken the right steps with this crisis to ensure that there was immediate and transparent communication.

I would like to know when this government will provide clear communication guidelines to all—whether

it be public health units, hospitals or long-term-care facilities—so that when outbreaks arrive we have this kind of clear, concise communication throughout Ontario like Dr. Whiting has demonstrated.

Hon. David Caplan: The member asks when there will be guidelines. They're already in place, as the member in her own question proves: that Dr. Whiting in fact did the right thing, took the necessary steps, provided that information to the public, just as we have, and as we have seen through other public health outbreaks that have occurred.

The member has asked about medical officers of health. She should know, and all members should know, that in our recent contract with the Ontario Medical Association there is a provision to be able to do something about the disparity in the wage rates that are paid for medical officers of health. A concerted effort is being undertaken by both the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario government to redress the long-standing disparity.

It's this kind of collaborative effort which stands in stark contrast to the lack of effort that we've seen in previous governments. I have every confidence that, working with our medical partners, we will be able to ensure strength in public health for all Ontarians.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the members—I should have introduced the individual earlier—to welcome in the east members' gallery Maurizio Gherardini, vice-president of the Toronto Raptors. Welcome today, sir.

DEFERRED VOTES

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

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies / Projet de loi 108, Loi concernant la présentation d'excuses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bentley has moved second reading of Bill 108, An Act respecting apologies, 2008. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq
Albanese, Laura	Elliott, Christine	Ramal, Khalil
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Rinaldi, Lou
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Sandals, Liz

Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Scott, Laurie
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Sergio, Mario
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Shurman, Peter
Brotten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sorbara, Greg
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Carroll, Aileen	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Chan, Michael	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Colle, Mike	Moridi, Reza	Wilson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Naqvi, Yasir	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry	Yakabuski, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Pupatello, Sandra	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 66; the nays are 5.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I request that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller: On the occasion of Ontario Public Library Week, I'm most pleased to offer my congratulations to the Bracebridge Public Library on its 100th anniversary. The Bracebridge Public Library was made possible by a donation from entrepreneur and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Headed by CEO and chief librarian Cathryn Rodney, the library has been celebrating its centennial with a number of different events, including a tribute to Andrew Carnegie, an official birthday party, a cruise, an antiques appraisal event and a genealogy workshop.

Patrick Boyer's commemorative book *Local Library, Global Passport: The Evolution of a Carnegie Library* chronicles the library's history and was launched as part of its centennial celebration. The Boyer family has been connected with the Bracebridge Public Library for many years. Patrick Boyer's father, former MPP Robert J. Boyer, was a long-time supporter of the library. The

library's Robert J. Boyer reading room was opened in his honour several years ago. His mother, Patricia M. Boyer, formerly Miss Patricia Johnson, was chief librarian from 1934 to 1938. The library's Patricia M. Boyer children's library is named after Mrs. Boyer.

We are very fortunate in Parry Sound–Muskoka to have a number of great community libraries.

I also would like to send my congratulations to the MacTier Public Library on its grand opening this Saturday, October 25.

I hope that you all join me in thanking the staff, volunteers and benefactors of all our public libraries across Ontario.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to inform all members of the exciting new initiatives taking place in Kitchener-Waterloo to ensure that it continues to grow and prosper. Those of us from the area and from the riding of Kitchener–Conestoga already know it's a great place to experience the best of urban and country living.

The McGuinty government is committed to responding to the challenges of growing cities through a series of funding initiatives that will improve the lives of all residents. Some of these recent initiatives include: The University of Waterloo received \$8 million for its downtown Kitchener health sciences campus; Wilfrid Laurier received \$3 million to expand its renowned music facility; Conestoga College received \$21 million to expand programs in skilled trades and to welcome 3,000 more students and apprentices; the region of Waterloo received \$27.6 million for 945 new rental and supportive housing units, \$2.2 million for 160 housing allowance units, and \$1.8 million for 185 home ownership units.

These investments in education and affordable housing symbolize the McGuinty government's belief in strong cities and underscore our commitment to improving the lives of all Ontarians.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I must put on the record my disgust for the way in which the Minister of Community and Social Services is treating thousands of grandparents looking after grandchildren in Ontario.

Temporary care assistance is a program that gave \$230 per month to assist grandparents with the additional costs associated with caring for their grandchildren, many of whom have additional and extraordinary expenses as a result of medical conditions such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

To date, the minister has said that if the grandparents need help, they can apply for social assistance—not true. The minister must know that once an Ontario resident turns 65, they no longer qualify for social assistance and would be turned away. The minister has also said that these grandparents can apply for kinship benefits—again,

not true. If the grandchildren are already in the care of grandparents, they do not qualify for the kinship money.

As a result of this minister's decision to remove temporary care assistance, as many as 15,000 Ontario children will be left with no assistance. Where will these children go if their grandparents cannot afford to continue to care for them?

It's time that this minister stopped putting up barriers, does the right thing and gives back grandparents the temporary care assistance so that these grandchildren can continue to live with their own family in a caring and nurturing home. Grandparents can't and should not be abandoned by this uncaring Liberal government.

HERBERT WILLIAMS FIRE EQUIPMENT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to inform the Legislature of a success story of a family-owned business in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. The original company, Herbert Williams Fire Equipment, incorporated in 1908, recently celebrated 100 years in business in Scarborough, Ontario. Herbert I, Herbert II and grandsons Bill and George sold and serviced fire equipment to many of Toronto's established institutions, such as the Empire, National and Toronto Cricket clubs, the Toronto Board of Trade, old city hall and many more.

In 1966, Herbert II retired, knowing that his two sons, Bill and George, would carry on the family business with the same high standard of quality and service. Bill and George expanded into the manufacturing of metal fire-related products and portable fire extinguishers. The one company became two: the Williams Brothers Corp. and Strike First Corp., and expanded into the US market.

The Williams Brothers remains today a respected Ontario manufacturer, employing 110 people. On behalf of the province of Ontario, I offer congratulations to the Williams family on celebrating 100 years of success in Scarborough and contributing to fire safety and prevention worldwide.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yesterday, in his economic update, the Minister of Finance used the word “prudent” four times. That's one “prudent” for every \$7.75 billion the provincial debt has increased under Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. The dictionary definition of “prudent” is “exercising good judgment or common sense.”

Patients and families in Ontario are forced to put their hard-earned money towards the over \$12 billion in the Liberal health tax coffers. Minister Duncan is now telling families that he needs to save money, so he's cutting them off from opportunities for health care because he feels it's prudent—oh, but he's not returning their health tax to them.

In 2006, Minister Duncan said, “Our government remains on track to eliminate the fiscal deficit no later than 2008-09.” Fast-forward to yesterday and the minister told us something entirely different: He's right on

track to bringing Ontario into a \$500-million deficit. Seven months ago the Minister of Finance told Ontario he had more than \$6 billion in surplus and reserves; only four weeks ago he said his finances were on track; now he has the fortitude to tell Ontarians to hunker down and be prudent.

Ontarians know that spending over \$6 billion of taxpayers' money in less than seven months is far from prudent—it's disgusting. There is also a second definition provided to the Minister of Finance's commonly used word "prudent." It's this: "Being careful in regard to one's own interests." So let me be the first in the House to recognize the Minister of Finance for being so unwavering in his carefulness and his protection of—

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

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN PROJECT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Women are extraordinary and important members of society. Women make incredible contributions to Ontario communities and have shouldered enormous burdens and challenges throughout history. Women are leaders for change.

All too often, girls and women struggle with questions of image and self-acceptance. When 13-year-olds are saving for breast implants and when girls as young as seven and eight develop eating disorders, something is terribly amiss.

In Hamilton last May, I attended a showing of the Beautiful Women Project, a touring art and educational presentation for women and girls, boys and men. It addresses the questions of wellness and self-esteem. The creative brainchild of Ottawa-based artist Cheryl-Ann Webster and project manager Laurie Gordon, the show consists of 120 clay torsos of actual women aged 19 to 91. The Beautiful Women Project aims to raise awareness about the link between self-worth, self-identity and physical appearance. It's a community-based, not-for-profit effort that enjoys widespread backing from a variety of individuals, communities and business sponsors. It's a wonderful exhibit for the entire family to see, a powerful attraction that is geared to help people feel great about themselves. As one audience member put it, the Beautiful Women Project is "a feast for the eyes and a treat for the soul." I encourage people to contact beautifulwomenproject.com to either book a visit of the exhibit in your riding or to buy the Beautiful Women Project book online and support this important initiative.

1310

COMMUNITY CLEANUP

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am pleased to inform the members of this House about a community cleanup in London-Fanshawe. Last Tuesday night, neighbours came together to clean up graffiti in my riding. This was organized by the Neighbourhood Resource Association of Westminster Park. This effort was a real community partnership. Neighbourhood Watch donated environ-

mentally friendly graffiti cleaner. Businesses in the neighbourhood donated paint and primer, as well as food and drinks for the volunteers. Residents were joined by students from the police foundations program at Fanshawe College.

About 30 people came out on a cold, rainy night to clean up the most heavily tagged building in the neighbourhood. The property owners and the tenants in the plazas were thrilled with the result.

Sheri Denomme is the community development worker who shepherded the cleanup after residents identified graffiti as the biggest visual blight in the neighbourhood. The participation of the police foundations students was a great effort on behalf of my community. I want to thank them all and congratulate everyone who participated in this effort.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House to speak about our government's ongoing commitment to Ontario seniors. The McGuinty government values the contribution seniors have made to this province throughout their working lives and is dedicated to providing them with the highest level of care.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care recently announced an additional \$23.3 million to support the creation of 873 personal support worker positions in long-term-care homes. This will increase the average paid hours of direct daily care per resident to 3.26 hours.

This initial investment is part of the McGuinty government's plan to add 2,500 new personal support workers and 2,000 nurses in long-term-care homes. This will increase the average hours of daily care per resident in long-term care to 3.5 hours. Seniors in long-term-care homes will benefit from these investments through more hands-on care such as personal hygiene care, help with transferring them into chairs, vehicles or beds, as well as with dressing and undressing.

The residents of York South-Weston, and Ontarians in general, want their government to invest in seniors, and while there is more to be done, increasing daily care averages will go a long way in improving the lives of our seniors in this province.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Mr. Charles Sousa: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize Waste Reduction Week and some of the exciting initiatives being undertaken to ensure a greener, cleaner Ontario.

Much progress has been made over the last five years, but this government also knows that to ensure a green future, we must involve the younger generations of this province.

We commend the Recycling Council of Ontario for sharing this vision, and we were pleased to join them and Oscar the Grouch, the beloved Sesame Street character, as they kicked off Waste Reduction Week across Canada.

We were also pleased to provide \$40,000 to support their recent initiatives to assist youth and adults in implementing waste minimization and conservation strategies in their homes, schools and businesses. These initiatives include assisting municipalities in implementing waste, audits and recycling programs; developing homework assignments to make students aware of current waste statistics; and encouraging companies to market environmentally friendly products. These initiatives will go a long way to creating the greener Ontario we need for future prosperity.

In this spirit, I had the honour of introducing Bill 105, the Waste Reporting Act, to encourage increased recycling and waste reduction.

So that we can protect our environment and grow our recycling industry, I encourage all members in this House, and all Ontarians, to celebrate the spirit of Waste Reduction Week, not only today but every day throughout the year.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CORONERS AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES CORONERS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT (UNLOCKING PENSION FUNDS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE (DÉBLOCAGE DES FONDS DE RETRAITE)

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act to allow transfers of locked-in pension funds to registered retirement income funds / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite pour permettre le transfert de fonds de retraite immobilisés à des fonds enregistrés de revenu de retraite.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to thank my page, Adriane Pong, for taking that up to you, Speaker. She's from my riding, so it's very special.

Currently pension funds that are in locked-in accounts cannot be withdrawn except in specified circumstances. This bill amends the Pension Benefit Act to allow up to the entire amount in the account to be transferred into a registered retirement income fund. The transfer can be made at age 55 or, if the pension plan provides for retirement at an earlier age, at that age. It gives Ontarians access to their own money.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CORONER'S OFFICE

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise in the House this afternoon to introduce the Coroners Amendment Act, 2008, which, if passed, will significantly strengthen Ontario's death investigation system. These amendments represent the first modernization of the Coroners Act since the 1970s. Even when taken against the backdrop of the measures that this government has already implemented to improve death investigations in Ontario, this overhaul is long overdue. Members will recall that on October 1, Commissioner Stephen Goudge delivered his recommendations following a thorough and forthright inquiry into pediatric forensic pathology in Ontario. Our government called for this inquiry in 2007.

The actions being proposed today encompass but also reach far beyond pediatric forensic pathology to correct what is wrong in the death investigation system and to help prevent something like this from ever happening again. The proposed amendments meet with the intent of the legislative framework recommended in Commissioner Goudge's report. At all times, we must be sympathetic to the fact that when a death is being investigated, it involves members of the public at a sensitive time when their emotional state is at its lowest and that the system cannot turn a deaf ear against legitimate concerns over how an investigation was handled.

Today I am introducing amendments that would deliver a higher standard of oversight and accountability, greater public accessibility and transparency throughout the death investigation system in Ontario. Today's proposed legislation aims to build on the improvements to the system that our government has been making since 2003. Public confidence can only exist when the integrity of the system stands above reproach. These proposed amendments would establish a death investigation oversight council to oversee the work of the chief coroner and the chief forensic pathologist. This oversight council would be made up of qualified judicial, medical and government representatives with the knowledge to set the

highest standards of practice and the expertise to make certain, through strict monitoring and reporting, that these standards are met. The Lieutenant Governor would be making all appointments to this council.

An important component of the oversight council would be the public complaints committee. In the past, the death investigation system has lacked accessibility for those who have had legitimate concerns about an autopsy or the conduct of a coroner or a pathologist. Accessibility is the key to public confidence in a system that is, quite literally, life and death. A public complaints committee would ensure access for families to file a complaint, and serious concerns over the death investigation system would be taken seriously and would be investigated thoroughly.

1320

The legislation being introduced today recognizes the complex and important role forensic pathology plays in death investigations. These amendments propose centralizing forensic pathology under the chief forensic pathologist to ensure consistent, high-quality standards for forensic pathology across the province.

We are also proposing a registry of practising pathologists to ensure that all pathologists employed in a post-mortem examination in the province of Ontario are duly qualified and will perform at or above the appropriate standard.

The objective of this proposed legislation is clear. The government seeks to serve Ontarians with a death investigation system that has greater oversight; improves public accessibility; and is more transparent, with stronger accountability.

I am also proposing in this legislation to remove my power and the power of future Ministers of Community Safety and Correctional Services to call an inquest. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is made up of organizations that have operational autonomy from government in order to serve the people of Ontario effectively. The chief coroner has the scientific expertise and experience required to determine when an inquest should be held. Having the minister make a decision contrary to the chief coroner's would be inconsistent with the arm's-length relationship between the chief coroner and government.

But I want to remind you and the House, Mr. Speaker, that the chief coroner's decision on whether to call an inquest could still be subject to a judicial review, should the decision be questioned. The decision whether or not to hold an inquest must be based on science and for the public good.

The legislation being introduced today builds on progress our government has already made to strengthen Ontario's death investigation system, such as nearly doubling annual funding to the Office of the Chief Coroner to \$36 million. This government will also continue to review and evaluate the resources needed as we further strengthen the death investigation system, provide for greater oversight and accountability, and improve coroner and pathology services throughout Ontario.

I believe that this is also the will of every member in this House.

NATIONAL FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DES FAMILLES D'ACCUEIL

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I rise today to honour National Foster Family Week. Around the country, people are celebrating those heroes of our communities who welcome people into their homes and into their hearts. When families cannot give loved ones the daily physical and emotional care they need, when families need time to get back on their feet, les familles d'accueil de l'Ontario entrent en scène.

Les familles d'accueil créent des foyers chaleureux où les enfants et les jeunes peuvent se développer en étant confiés à une famille stable. Pour cela, elles méritent notre admiration et nos sincères remerciements.

As we pause to honour the contributions of foster families throughout the province, I'd like to draw your attention to the foster families we rarely hear about. These foster families host adults with a developmental disability. As they welcome adults with a developmental disability into their lives, they help them become a part of our communities.

Vivre avec une famille d'accueil dans un appartement, une copropriété ou une maison donne aux adultes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle davantage de liberté et de possibilités de se développer. Ces personnes instaurent de nouvelles relations, se joignent à de nouveaux réseaux sociaux et ont davantage de liens avec leurs collectivités. Les lettres que j'ai reçues de certaines familles d'accueil confirment combien cette vie dans la collectivité est précieuse.

I learned that Nicole, a young woman, is now enjoying more autonomy living in a condo with the warm-hearted M^{me} Lajoie in Ottawa and that the entire condo community benefits from Nicole's presence. M^{me} Lajoie said, "I chose to open my condo and my heart and welcome an adult with a developmental disability. Receiving her into my home was certainly the best decision I could have made.... She deserves her place in the centre of my family."

J'ai aussi appris qu'un jeune homme du nom de Michel fait maintenant des progrès remarquables en habitant chez un M. Hupé, et que M. Hupé a acquis un nouvel ami.

It is stories like these that prove how important Ontario's new developmental services law really is. It gives adults with a developmental disability the right mix of services and supports to participate in their communities so that they truly belong.

Et nous sommes très fiers des Ontariennes et des Ontariens qui respectent l'esprit de cette loi par leurs actes : des Ontariennes et des Ontariens qui accueillent des personnes de toutes aptitudes dans nos collectivités— Ontarians who prove that the families we're born into

and the families we make are what keep this province strong.

People with a developmental disability give back to Ontario communities as much as they receive, and foster families that include adults with a developmental disability enjoy the rich experience that people with different abilities bring.

Les familles d'accueil de l'Ontario aident à bâtir des collectivités diversifiées qui soutiennent les gens dans toutes les situations. Elles veillent à ce que les collectivités de l'Ontario soient des endroits chaleureux et accueillants pour grandir et se sentir à sa place.

I would like to thank my colleague and friend Children and Youth Services Minister Deb Matthews for her support. On behalf of this government, I would like to thank foster families of all kinds for their openness, generosity and commitment to Ontarians in need. They prove that charity begins in the heart of Ontario's homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

NATIONAL FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to acknowledge the work of the National Foster Family Week. I wanted to start with quoting from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. Cecile Brookes, the president of the Foster Parents Society of Ontario, says, "The celebration of Foster Family Week brings attention to and honours foster parents who play a critical role in achieving and supporting permanency outcomes for children in care by providing a place a child can call home." It's a wonderful acknowledgement of the selflessness of so many Ontario families who are willing to open up their homes and foster children.

I can't let this statement go by without acknowledging one family in particular. Bernice and Rolland Desnoyers from Leamington were, in December 2007, awarded the Order of Ontario because as of that date—they may have extended this now—they'd raised over 65 foster children in their home, an incredible example of what individuals can do to make a change in our society.

1330

The only other thing I would like to highlight is again from the children's aid societies of Ontario. This is a quote from their press release: "In the past few years, the number of foster families has decreased. More families who can provide safe, temporary care to vulnerable children are needed so that every child can have the opportunity to grow up in a loving family home." And what does this government do as a solution? This government removes temporary care access for grandparents; to quote a grandparent from Belleville, "because the Ontario government persists in making decisions without regard to common sense or responsibility.

"My wife and I are senior citizens who have been raising two of our granddaughters for the last 11 years....

"Our family income is very low: old age security, Canada pension and whatever else we can earn. The girls' biological parents cannot help us....

"The only way we have been able to manage so far has been the so-called 'temporary care' allowance from Ontario."

He goes on to talk about how he would not qualify for the kinship benefits because the children were already in his care. He says, "This is amazing ... close to 15,000 children who will be kicked off the 'Meilleur' program, and who will not qualify under the 'Matthews' program. What should we grandparents do? We cannot morally turn these children back to the children's aid from whence most of them came, although that would cost Ontario taxpayers nearly \$1,000 a month per child."

As we acknowledge National Foster Family Week, I think it's terribly unfortunate that we also have to highlight the ignorance and the lack of caring that is coming from across the floor with the removal of the temporary care access.

CORONER'S OFFICE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm responding briefly to the introduction of the Coroners Amendment Act. Off the top, I would like to commend Judge Goudge for the outstanding work he did and the very clear and unequivocal language in which he outlined his findings. Most commendable, the government minister is indicating that they're accepting all of the commissioner's recommendations. We very much appreciate that and are very supportive of that decision.

My only question in briefly reading over the statement is that although we like to see something like this move quickly—I think that view would be shared by all members of the Legislature—the government has this tendency to throw in a poison pill or two on matters that you may otherwise find consensus with throughout the assembly. I note here near the end that he's talked about removing the power of future ministers to call inquests. I'm not sure if ever that right has been utilized. It may have been, some years back, but it certainly has not been abused. What this is really doing, I think, is removing another safeguard, an accountability mechanism as well, for the government of the day. I am initially concerned about that one aspect of the minister's announcement here today. That may cause concerns amongst my colleagues. It will have to be caucused.

But aside from that, in terms of accepting Judge Goudge's recommendations, we're wholeheartedly in support of moving in that direction.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: I'm seeking unanimous consent to stand down our response to Minister Meilleur so that she can be here to hear it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member knows that (a) he should not be making reference to the presence or non-presence of a member and (b) it is not a point of order.

CORONER'S OFFICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I am going to first respond to the bill that the minister brought forward in terms of the

government's initiatives around the Goudge report. New Democrats as well appreciate the opportunity that the Goudge report and recommendations brought to increase our trust and our ability to have faith in the system of our coroners and of death reviews. That entire package is important, but to take away the minister's right to actually call for an inquest is absolutely unacceptable. I have to say that I was shocked when I opened the package and noticed that piece in this recommendation.

We know very well in this House that there is a particular inquest that should have been called by this minister under section 22: the inquest for young Jared Osidacz, who was killed by his own father. The only inquest that Jared is getting is the inquest that stems from the fact that his father was killed by police. What does this minister do? He uses the first opportunity to remove himself from that equation, to take away the only hope that Julie Craven had to have her son have his own stand-alone inquest in the province of Ontario. It is a shameful abdication of responsibility by this minister. Not only once, but twice has this joint inquest been postponed or cancelled.

Now here we have, conveniently—I wonder why now, in retrospect, looking at what the minister put before us today, that was delayed. Why were those inquests postponed? So that the minister could table legislation in this House to give himself cover so he doesn't have to respond to the demands of the grievance? Unacceptable and shameful. So here we have us going backwards again in the province of Ontario—removing the right of the people of this province to demand accountability from their government and from the ministers of the crown. It's absolutely unacceptable.

So, what are we left with? We're left with a child, as a result of a history of domestic violence in his family, being murdered. We're left with a system now where the minister is saying that he is going to take a hands-off approach, we're left knowing that the very pieces around why that murder happened will never be appropriately investigated, and we're left with the watering down of the rights of the people of Ontario to have their elected members, particularly their ministers, speak on their behalf on important issues like the death of loved ones and the people in their community—completely unacceptable, and a shame on this government.

NATIONAL FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, I also have the opportunity to make a few remarks about the announcement from the Minister of Community and Social Services, who happens to be unable to hear my comments. And I think that New Democrats are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member: Your own member rose on a point of order on this issue. I just remind you about making reference to absences.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker.

New Democrats also want to acknowledge and commend foster families—foster men, foster women,

foster parents—across the province of Ontario. They do incredible work. They provide love and care for children in sometimes the most difficult of circumstances, and when that system of giving those kids a chance for a normal type of home life works, it works very well.

But it's very ironic that as we're set to commemorate this important week, today in this very House we had a member who was so incensed by the callous disregard of the Minister of Community and Social Services for the work that is being done by grandparents across Ontario who are taking care of their at-risk grandchildren, who are in effect de facto fostering those grandchildren—the callous disregard of this minister: to pull away any financial aid, any hope of a meagre amount of assistance from the government to help those grandparents with those kids. Often those children have real problems, not dissimilar to the problems that children have who are in foster care in the regular system. There's fetal alcohol syndrome; they have all kinds of challenges. These grandparents are doing great work, and this minister pulls the rug out from under them.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Pembroke and Petawawa.

"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 and will affix my name to it and send it with page Elise.

1340

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings; and ...

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

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

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

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

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

CHILD PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’ve signed this.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Milton District Hospital was designed to serve a population of 30,000 and the town of Milton is now home to more than 69,000 people and is still growing rapidly; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada and was forced into that rate of growth by an act of the Ontario Legislature called ‘Places to Grow’; and

“Whereas the town of Milton is projected to have a population of 101,600 people in 2014, which is the earliest date an expansion could be completed; and

“Whereas the current Milton facility is too small to accommodate Milton’s explosive growth and parts of the hospital prohibit the integration of new outpatient clinics and diagnostic technologies;

“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 timely approval and construction of the expansion to Milton District Hospital.”

I’m pleased to pass this to Ethan and sign this petition with my name.

TUITION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from Local 30 of the students’ general association of Laurentian University that will add to the 50,000 names that were submitted by the member from Trinity–Spadina yesterday. They want to drop tuition fees and increase funding for post-secondary education. It reads:

“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;”

They petition the Ontario Legislature “to introduce a new framework” that would do three things:

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

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

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

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today. I’d like to thank Dr. Ike Ahmed for collecting signatures for this petition from his patients at the Credit Valley EyeCare centre.

“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 ... 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 ... 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 ... four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Chloe.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Page Chloe is having a birthday today.

I have a petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, and the current population is now ... 170,000”—40,000 more people; and

“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 187,500 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” have access 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 put my signature on this and pass it to page Adriane.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I want to thank the Consumer Federation of Canada, who sent these petitions to me on this important issue, on identity theft. The petition reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

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

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

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

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

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

1350

BEER RETAILING AND DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current system, practice and arrangement of retailing and distributing beer in the province of Ontario—and more specifically, the ‘near monopoly’ of The Beer Store—severely restricts the accessibility,

convenience and choice for retail consumers of beer in Ontario; and

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

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

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

I agree with this petition. I am pleased to sign it and pass it to my page, Ethan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition here that has been sent to me by Dr. Ike Ahmed and his patients at Credit Valley EyeCare in Erin Mills. It is about the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre, and 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 Cole to carry it for me.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Highway 35 Four-Laning

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35...; and

“Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton;...

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

“That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation.”

This is signed by many people from my riding and I affix my signature.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Speaker, on this in the last few minutes.

This petition supports Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree and I sign it as well.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d just like to raise with you today a concern that we have with respect to the opposition day motion presented by the member for Leeds–Grenville which is to be debated on Tuesday. It is my contention, Mr. Speaker, that the motion itself violates the sub judice convention as well as standing order 23(g).

As you know, the sub judice convention is a restriction on the part of a legislative body to refrain from discussing matters that are before a judicial or quasi-judicial body, and no distinction is made between criminal and civil proceedings. As well, the convention can exist to prevent prejudice to a judicial case by the discussion of that case in a public or influential body.

Standing order 23 states that in a debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she:

“(g) Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding,

“(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination; or

“(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature,

“where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding.”

In his motion, the member for Leeds–Grenville has made reference to evidence and concerns. I believe that, in debating this motion, it would require that members of this House on all sides comment directly on an ongoing criminal proceeding. Unlike question period, it is clear that the proceedings in this case are before the courts. The whole debate surrounds a court proceeding that is presently under way, and I would request that you rule on whether or not the motion violates both the sub judice convention and standing order 23(g).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Whitby–Oshawa on the same point of order.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: If I could just respond to the point that the member has raised with respect to the opposition day motion which has been tabled for next Tuesday: I would submit that it should not be necessary to discuss the specifics of any case that’s presently before the courts. The matter is more one of general application in discussing some of the rules regarding the apprehension of people who have been charged with these serious criminal offences and not applying house arrest. It does not necessarily require any reference to any specific matter that is presently before the courts, but it can be discussed in the context of a more general rule.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the Minister of Tourism and the member from Whitby–Oshawa. There’s only one person who should be standing, and when—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Do you remember Bert Johnson? Good old Bert.

I have heard the Minister of Tourism’s point of order, and I’ve heard the comments made by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I will take both under advisement and will take the comments of both into consideration in reviewing the motion that has been laid before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

SENIORS’ OMBUDSMAN ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L’OMBUDSMAN DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr. Sergio moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to establish the Seniors’ Ombudsman / Projet de loi 102, Loi créant le poste d’ombudsman des personnes âgées.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 97, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The intent of Bill 102 is to create the office of the seniors’ ombudsman to investigate complaints and make recommendations respecting the impact on seniors of the administration of public bodies in Ontario.

I would like to thank, first of all, my staff, who have been very busy providing all the information necessary to complete the bill, and our legislative legal staff for providing the bill in a timely fashion so that it could be debated today.

We have some 1.7 million seniors in the province of Ontario, making up something like 14% of our population, which is distributed on a fairly even basis throughout our province. Riding for riding, it amounts to something like 15,000 seniors in each riding that we all represent. The number of 1,700,000 seniors—it is bound to be something over two million seniors in about 2012–13.

I am delighted today to have in the chamber and witnessing the procedures of the House in the east lobby—I don’t know if they are all here, but I have received a number of not only wonderful submissions and quotes but support for Bill 102. There’s a number of them here today in the east lobby. Specifically—not in any particular order—we have, from the United Senior Citizens of Ontario, Marie Smith and Richard Stack; from Canada’s Association for the 50 Plus, better known as CARP, Susan Eng, Anne Gravel and Jonathan Schwartz; from the Ontario Retirement Communities Association, Tracy Fairfield; from Care Watch Toronto, Charlotte Maher and a guest; from the Canadian Snowbird Association—who doesn’t know that?—Mike MacKenzie; from the family counsels program, Samantha Peck; from the Ontario Family Council Program, Rose Marie Grycaj; from the Multicultural Council of Ontario Seniors, Zul Kassamali, and he will be here tentatively. It’s nice to see they are present and to have their support as well.

1400

Often we patronize our seniors during the month of June, the month dedicated to our seniors, and during November, this particular week, which is dedicated to seniors as well. Often we refer to them as those that have fought for our freedom and have fought for paving the way to our future. But all too often, every day, there are seniors whose rights, whose dignity, whose quality of life is trampled upon; it’s threatened by negligence and uncaring government bodies, and not only by government but by others as well in the private sector.

For those neglected, abandoned seniors, for those who cannot speak for themselves, we do need someone who represents the seniors. Often we hear grievances from seniors who are frustrated about getting the runaround, and if I may say it more openly, seniors are often jerked around. What is a senior supposed to do? Where is he or she supposed to go when there is a wall: no one to listen, no one to talk to? Well, someone has to speak for our seniors.

I have a large population in my area of York West. I have many more than 15,000, and often I meet with some

of the groups. I have about 11 groups of seniors and I see them on a regular basis. If there is one thing that cries out from those seniors, it is, "Who will be advocating for us?" Often they say, "We seem to be the forgotten ones. We have given so much, yet we receive so little."

Seniors need help; they need a voice. The current Ontario Ombudsman does not have the authority to examine an individual senior's abuse complaint and is only required to make sure that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care action hotline follows the proper procedure in its investigative capacity. The seniors' abuse hotline is a great idea as a referral service, but it does not investigate cases of abuse. The seniors' info line is a great resource, but it does not necessarily handle complaints and may refer them to other departments, ministries etc., making the process complicated for seniors.

The Ontario Retirement Communities Association, better known as ORCA, only investigates private, long-term-care grievances. It is a problem. How is a senior supposed to know which number to call, and how many calls do they need to make, especially when they are in distress? We, not even ourselves—we are too familiar with the computer world nowadays. Imagine our seniors when they try to call someone and they are told, from telephone to telephone, from call to call, to call so-and-so, push this button, go here and go there. I think it's pathetic, the way we treat our seniors.

There are some saying, "Let's not re-create; let's not duplicate. Let the Ontario Ombudsman look after seniors' complaints." You know, members of the House, I would love to have that. I think the Ontario Ombudsman—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Give him the authority.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Give him the authority; wonderful. I hope that the member from—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You guys are in charge.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, indeed. I hope that indeed the members on the other side will be supporting this bill and that it will go through, and that there is a recommendation that this House will give the Ombudsman the authority to deal as well with seniors' issues. I do hope that I will have their support, that seniors in our province will have their support and that indeed Mr. Marin, the Ontario Ombudsman, will be allowed, will be given the authority to do exactly that.

I'm not here to re-create another level, if you will, of bureaucracy, or more money—no. I'm interested in having someone who will be speaking for, who will protect the interests, the rights and the dignity of our seniors in Ontario. Therefore, this is my message today.

I'm glad that the member is saying, "Let the Ombudsman do it." Absolutely, but there is a way of doing it. It would be very easy to say to my leader, to the party, to the House, "Let's just do it." Well, do you know what? I think the seniors' representatives who are here today would love to see someone from this House say, "We're going to do it either today or tomorrow," and somebody gets up on that side and says, "Let's move third reading as well." I would love that.

I think we tend to use the seniors when it's convenient for us—at election time, perhaps? Oh, we all love those seniors' community centres and whatever groups—we all love them. But you know how easily we forget them, and it's very unfortunate.

I remember a good, old friend of mine from the old days on North York city council: Mr. Irving Chapley. Some of you in this House know him very well. During a particular debate on community issues and seniors, he did say, "We're doing well. We're doing so much. But you know, if there is one that we leave behind, then we have not completely done our job." I'm calling on the members of this House today. I believe that out of the two million or so seniors who we have in the province of Ontario, if there is 1% who are not receiving the benefits that they are entitled to, where their dignity is being infringed upon, then I believe that we are not doing our job. One per cent of two million would be 2,000 seniors. Don't you think that we should be looking at the interests of those 2,000 seniors as well? Unless we do that, then it means we are not doing the job we are supposed to do.

You can't say everything about seniors in 10 minutes. I can appreciate that, and the members, I'm sure, know that. But I think the message is quite clear: Unless we initiate something, nothing happens, my friends. Unless we initiate something, the seniors cannot receive any action from their own government.

So I hope that today we send a strong message to the government, to everybody else, and say, "Yes, let's push it through, let's send it to a committee and let's hear our seniors." I hope that whatever recommendations come from such a body, one of them would be either a seniors' ombudsman—or why can't we have the Ombudsman of Ontario look after the needs of our seniors? If that is the case, God bless the politicians who have embraced the call and are willing to look after the seniors of Ontario.

I think they deserve our attention, not only three times a year, during the month of November or June or during a particular week such as this week here; I think seniors deserve our attention on a daily basis. If we fail to do that, then it means we haven't finished our job. I hope today we can begin to deliver on our services to our seniors.

1410

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I must say, with great respect to my honourable friend, that it's a shame when a member of the backbench on the government side has to use his time for private members' business when this inequity could be rectified with the stroke of a pen by the Premier. But let me speak to the issues that he brings up and let me speak to what I support and what I don't support.

Here's what I support. First of all, I want to address the spirit of the private member's bill, which is indeed very positive, and I support it. I'm in full agreement with the member for York West in that seniors are entitled to an ombudsman to oversee their fair treatment. They are amongst the least capable in our society of speaking for

themselves. They have a friend in my friend from York West and they have a friend in me. There is a current gap in oversight of seniors' issues which I believe the member for York West is seeking to address with this private member's bill, the Seniors' Ombudsman Act. I commend him for it because when it comes to people living in long-term-care facilities in Ontario, there is really a gap in oversight, which I'll address more fully as I continue to speak.

Seniors have earned our protection, and as this House knows, there are some of us—my friend and I included—who truly care. Seniors are the people who built Ontario, they took care of this province, they took care of us and it's our turn now to take care of them. And why don't we? We do indeed already have an Ombudsman, but that's where this oversight gap exists.

I applaud the member for recognizing seniors as the fastest-growing demographic, especially in Ontario. He and I will be members of that cohort very shortly, I believe. Making provisions to address the challenges they face is the responsible thing to do. We must do what we can to make sure that seniors maintain their independence. They have the right to make their own choices about their future, their care and their finances. A few months ago, I proposed my own private member's bill that would do just that, and I proposed that we implement a province-wide property tax deferral system to allow seniors to remain in their homes longer—and we haven't seen or heard the last of that one either. I'm disappointed that, despite support from members of both opposition parties, the Liberal MPPs voted against my proposal. I hope for more support on seniors' issues from the Liberal members in the future. In fact, they'll likely vote for this bill, and that's fine.

Here's why I cannot support Bill 102 today: because it's about duplication and red tape. We have a provincial Ombudsman now. I have a letter dated October 14, written to my colleague the member from Dufferin-Caledon, in which André Marin, the Ombudsman of Ontario, says:

"In response to your question, there is currently an oversight gap when it comes to the care of seniors in long-term-care homes in Ontario. Many other provinces provide their ombudsmen with the authority to investigate issues relating to long-term care. Since I took office in 2005, I have been calling for modernization of my office's mandate, including adding the authority to investigate long-term-care homes."

Also, the bill provides for an insufficient mandate. It's limited to public agencies only, and it involves—as he himself pointed out—additional expenditure, which means increasing the bureaucracy and increasing spending at a time when we can ill afford to do that.

As far as duplication and red tape are concerned, I myself, as members of this House know, consider seniors' issues a priority. While I support the intent and the spirit of Bill 102, as I've mentioned, I disagree with the proposed method of implementing this idea. The best service we can provide to our citizens is to enforce the

laws already in place and to use the agencies of the government to their fullest capacity, and that includes the Ombudsman of Ontario.

You fix a squeaky wheel; you don't reinvent a squeaky wheel. We already have in place a framework which can incorporate the intent of this private member's bill. It is called the Ombudsman of Ontario. Investigation of seniors' issues, services, complaints and so forth should be conducted by someone who already exists—not by somebody whom we invent to duplicate that service. We should expand the mandate of our Ombudsman, not duplicate his office. How do we do that? An amendment to the act creating the office of the Ombudsman, allowing for what the member from York West proposes. No need for additional red tape, and I would be happy to support that.

Bill 102 does not make a case for why the oversight for seniors can't be conducted by the office of the Ombudsman of Ontario once his mandate has been expanded accordingly, and I suspect that my friend agrees with what I'm saying. There is no reason why seniors' complaints, or decisions and recommendations made by public agencies, should not be investigated by the Ombudsman. After all, why was that office created in the first place, if not to look into any complaint by any citizen of the province, old, young or in between?

As for the mandate being limited to public agencies only, Bill 102 talks about the oversight of public agencies only, which essentially are meaningless provincial bodies. It doesn't address the issues of real people on a one-off basis. Does this mean, then, that allegations of abuse in a privately run seniors' facility, for example, would not be investigated? I feel that public and private facilities have to be held equally accountable. The answer here is an amendment to the original act creating the provincial Ombudsman's office.

As for the question of additional spending, which is, to say the least, timely in the context of what we've heard in the past 24 hours, we know that the government is breaking their election promises and telling Ontarians that they have to tighten their belts as a result of the deficit they've created. Private member's Bill 102, while not contemplated to be that way by the member for York West, perhaps, does not directly specify the funds required for setting up a seniors' ombudsman's office, but there is no doubt that funds are involved. I hope that as responsible and thoughtful members of this House we recognize that it would indeed require the expenditure of such funds to cover, at minimum, salaries for staff, pensions, benefits and overhead costs.

These are factors that Bill 102 does not address. How much would this cost Ontario's taxpayers and where would this money come from? We don't know. I fully support oversight of seniors' issues by an ombudsman, and while I think that Bill 102 is well intended, I feel that it is unnecessary to create a duplicate ombudsman's office. I would support an expansion of the current mandate of the already-existing Ontario Ombudsman to include seniors' issues and I would work with my friend to effect that. That way, we would ensure the protection

of our seniors, appropriate oversight would exist and we would utilize taxpayers' money better and existing government bodies more effectively.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand and speak on behalf of seniors in the province of Ontario. First, let me say that we are the only province in Canada that does not have Ombudsman oversight of our long-term-care facilities and hospitals. I also want to point out the obvious: We have a majority Liberal government in this place. Another bit of obvious data is that we, as New Democrats, have introduced a bill every single year, most recently through our health critic France Gélinas last June, asking that oversight be extended to André Marin, our current and existing Ombudsman for long-term care and hospitals. This was voted against by the majority party in the seats opposite.

We, on this side of the floor, cannot override them. We simply do not have the power. So I find it passing strange when the member for York West stands up and says two things. He says, first of all, that he's supporting his own bill, but his own bill calls for a separate seniors' ombudsman—a separate seniors' ombudsman, I might point out, without many teeth in his mouth, because it's very unclear whether this seniors' ombudsman, according to the bill as it's written, would really be able to investigate the over 200 complaints that they receive from private facilities, from long-term-care facilities etc. That's what the bill says.

And then he stands up and says, "Well, you know, either my bill"—or "your bill," in essence—"or have André Marin take on this added responsibility." I also heard from our member for Thornhill. We're all on the same page, here, it sounds like. So the question is, where's the action? Why does the Liberal majority government not want to act in the best interests of seniors and extend the jurisdiction of André Marin, our more than capable and current Ombudsman, to long-term-care facilities and hospitals? Even André Marin calls for that. It would be much, much less costly and much more efficient and it would get the job done.

I'm a United Church minister by trade. This is my third career, actually: first, in business, then in United Church ministry and now here. I spent most of the better part of 12 years in and out of long-term-care facilities and retirement homes visiting our seniors. I can tell you first-hand what goes on in those places, as I'm sure you can, representing seniors across Ontario. We have seen first-hand the overwork of the staff, the understaffing of the places and the lack of government funds. Over and over and over again, we in the New Democratic Party have called for sweeping changes to our long-term-care facilities, including, and primarily, increased care per client of at least 3.5 hours per day. We have called for that repeatedly; we have yet to see the government move on that.

1420

Certainly, calling for an Ombudsman is part of that. We see two-tier care in Ontario. We see care for those

who can afford it, much better care. Then, we see care for those who can't afford much better care and it's not much better; in fact, it's much worse in many instances. I and many of those who wander in and out of long-term-care facilities see that. My own uncle died from C. difficile. He was a senior at the time. He was moved from long-term care into a hospital, where he died, and the Ombudsman did not have the authority to investigate that death or any of the other deaths of C. difficile victims in our hospitals.

How long do we have to put up with this current state of affairs, a state of affairs that is only in place in Ontario? When will this government act?

I understand that the member is doing his best. He is trying to convince, clearly, a cabinet that is not in favour of what's best for seniors to make a little turn to the light and actually do what's right. He's standing up. He's presenting a bill. It's not the ideal circumstance, we don't think. We think that André Marin could do the job, clearly, and so does the member from Thornhill; extend his jurisdiction. But at least he's trying, which is more than I can say for the majority of the cabinet across there and Premier McGuinty himself, because clearly, we see that if something is going to happen it has to come from the Premier's office in this province, and it clearly is not.

You know, it really is one of the stranger moments, I have to say, standing here and listening to the member from York West speaking both for his bill and against it in the same breath, both for his bill and for our bill in the same breath, and challenging us to support it. The reality is, even if we did, unless Premier McGuinty and the cabinet wants to do what's right for seniors in this province, it won't get done. That's the reality. Certainly, as you've heard on this side of the floor, we in the New Democrats want to see that happen. We've been wanting to see that happen ever since I was elected, and way before I was elected we've wanted to see that happen. André Marin—I don't know what kind of card, in terms of party affiliation, he carries in his back pocket, but he wants to see it happen. Everybody, it seems, wants to see this happen except the Liberal cabinet, the Premier of Ontario and de facto the Liberal Party.

So again, I stand here; my colleague will speak to this as well and I'm going to leave him some minutes to do so. Yes, of course we want to see Ombudsman oversight of long-term care. We want to see Ombudsman oversight of hospitals. We want what's best for seniors. We want to increase the care in long-term-care homes. We want to do that. We've put forward legislation. Time and time again, it's been voted down, and here we hear a private member's bill, which, quite frankly, will go nowhere unless it has cabinet approval, which it clearly doesn't have.

So why are we here? Why are we wasting taxpayers' dollars yet again debating something that won't go forward? Good question—something to ask Premier McGuinty himself.

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

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First, let me congratulate the member from York West for his foresight to introduce Bill 102, An Act to establish the Seniors' Ombudsman.

I heard the member quite clearly when he said that he would not mind if the authority of the Ombudsman were expanded or extended to be the Ombudsman for seniors as well. That means he thinks, when it goes before committee, whether it's the Conservatives or the NDP, they will support this bill and make some changes. That's the process and that's how it works.

So I would reiterate what the member for York West says: that he has identified a problem. No doubt, he has identified a problem.

What we have said earlier is that as a government, we don't fear that the Ombudsman makes investigations; in fact, we welcome investigations by the Ombudsman. Why? Look what happened just recently. The Ombudsman made a very important decision to look into the matter of taxation and assessment. He made a number of recommendations; I think there were over 22 recommendations. Our government looked at these recommendations and acted on the vast majority of these recommendations. That should be the case, as well, with the Ombudsman's recommendations when he looks at the seniors' issues, when he gets authority to do that as well.

So here is a member who takes not only his time, but he's got it in his heart to help seniors out. And what does he get around here? Instead of all of us saying we should support this member from York West because he means well, he has listened to everybody, he has listened to CARP and the seniors' associations, he's coming before the House, and he's introducing a private member's bill—yes, and you may have a point. I suppose if the cabinet wanted to, they could do that overnight. Nevertheless, all these things take time. This is a process. Why do we have private members' hours in the first place, if he is being denied the opportunity to present Bill 102 in this House?

He said very clearly that he doesn't want to establish a new Ombudsman. He says what he wants to do or what one of the options would be, obviously, is to expand the authority of the Ombudsman. Okay. You agree; the Conservatives agree, as well. So he says, "Let's move forward and let's then see what the government will do." Isn't that what you want to do? Isn't that what we're here for, to ensure these bills get speedy approval? And what does he challenge the opposition to do? He says, "Well, first reading, second reading, third reading—do it." He says, "Let's move on this." Oh, no, he's being criticized. I want all the kids to know, and I want all of you who listen to this debate to know, that here we have the opposition, instead of saying, "You know what? This is great. Let's move and let's see what the Premier will do. Let's see what the government will do. Let's see how fast the government will act"—that should be your stand, not to be critical of this bill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We're doing our job. Why don't you do yours?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Look, I've introduced some other bills in this Legislature. I have had some seniors

come to my office, and they complained about restraints, they complained about the food, they complained about credit cards being stolen, and they asked what we're going to do about this, and they complained about issues that they have in fact brought before this very member here.

So it is very clear to me: If there is a will in this House—the member has brought forth this private member's Bill 102—the opposition could agree with it, and we could move in the right direction.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to add my comments on Bill 102, and I would start out, again, by commending the member from York West for bringing this matter forward. This is an important issue, and there is no question that vulnerable seniors need more protection that can only be provided, in some senses, by this place. There is no question that, on a daily basis, there is significant physical, emotional, mental and financial abuse of seniors going on out there. I can tell you from my years in private practice as a lawyer and even from my time here from people coming in to see me in my community office that some of the things that are being done to seniors, especially in the financial sense, would curl your hair. It's unbelievable, and there's a lot, I believe, that we should be doing.

I do commend you for bringing this forward, because this is an important issue in terms of gaining jurisdiction for seniors, at least with respect to long-term-care facilities and facilities being run by the province. However, I can sense the frustration as the honourable member is discussing it with us, because he's trying to do indirectly what he can't do directly, which is bring forward the amendment to the Ombudsman Act that will allow the Ombudsman to get involved in the first place. So he's forced to bring it forward as a private member's bill to bring forward a seniors' ombudsman. There's clearly a reason why we can't support that aspect of it, because it means setting up an entirely new bureaucracy to deal with something that a simple amendment to the Ombudsman Act could deal with. Everyone who has commented on that in this place agrees that the Ombudsman should have jurisdiction to investigate these kinds of complaints and there's no reason why he can't. It's easily done, and I urge all government members to speak to the cabinet and the Premier about that.

1430

Lest there be any mistake about the ability of the Ombudsman to deal with that, it's pretty clear that he is ready, willing and able to speak to that issue and be actively involved—he has asked for that responsibility. If I may, I'd just like to take a brief minute to quote the text of a letter from the Ombudsman to one of my colleagues, the member from Dufferin-Caledon, specifically on the issue of whether he would like to be able to investigate these complaints. I would like to read it in its entirety:

"Dear Ms. Jones,

"Thank you for your letter of October 8, 2008, concerning Bill 102, the Seniors' Ombudsman Act, 2008.

In response to the question you posed, there is currently an oversight gap when it comes to the care of seniors in long-term-care homes in Ontario. Many other provinces provide their Ombudsman with the authority to investigate issues in relation to long-term care. Since I took office in 2005, I have been calling for modernization of my office's mandate, including adding the authority to investigate long-term-care homes.

"While I believe Bill 102 is well-intentioned, it does not really address what I perceive to be the current oversight needs of seniors in Ontario. The provisions of Bill 102 mirror the current Ombudsman Act, which my office operates under. While Bill 102 sets out specific guiding principles addressing the entitlements of seniors in Ontario, the proposed seniors' ombudsman would only have authority to investigate 'public bodies.' Public bodies, as defined by the bill, would only include provincial government bodies. Accordingly, the seniors' ombudsman would have no authority to investigate services provided by private or municipal long-term-care homes.

"Although the definition of 'governmental organization' in the Ombudsman Act differs from the definition of 'public bodies' set out in Bill 102, there is no substantial difference. My office already has the authority to investigate complaints about the organizations covered by Bill 102. The creation of the seniors' Ombudsman would result in duplication of the oversight already available through my office, and would continue to leave private and municipal long-term-care providers beyond the scrutiny of independent investigative oversight.

"I believe that rather than create another legislative office, as proposed by Bill 102, it makes more sense to expand my office's authority to include all long-term-care homes, regardless of whether they are provincially controlled.

"As you may be aware, I am currently investigating the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's monitoring of long-term-care facilities. My office also resolves complaints on behalf of seniors on a daily basis, but at present, we cannot assist seniors by investigating long-term-care service providers."

So there's no question that the Ombudsman is fully capable of taking on this responsibility. We too believe it's badly needed, and we would certainly urge the government to consider this as we move forward into this very important sector, as one step in a much-needed plank of services to protect vulnerable seniors. Thank you for the opportunity today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): With the indulgence of the House, I want to welcome the grade 5 class of Huronia Centennial Public School from Elmvale, and thank their teacher, Mr. Jason Monck, for bringing them to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I really do appreciate the fact that the member from York West is bringing forward this bill. The sentiments are right; we don't dispute the sentiments. We all agree that oversight of these long-term-

care facilities is long overdue. It's for that reason that my colleague from Hamilton Centre introduced a bill two and a half or three years ago, if I recall, saying we need to allow the current Ombudsman to have oversight over these long-term-care facilities. The response from the government has been, "No." There has not been one Liberal who said the initiative by New Democrats to have oversight of these long-term-care facilities was good.

Today, we hear the member from Davenport saying, "Yes, the initiative is a good one." But when we introduced it, it was not. Why was the initiative we introduced not a good one? I'll tell you why. It's not an issue of money; it's an issue of fear. The current Ombudsman has been incredibly effective in the job he has done. When you look at each and every one of the issues he has dealt with, it's a long list, and that would take me a few minutes, but just to name a few:

The report entitled *From Hope to Despair: Whether the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Refusal to Fund the Drug Cystagon for Treatment of Batten's Disease is Unreasonable and Unfair*—and the government moved quickly.

The report entitled *The Right to be Impatient: Whether the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Has Failed to Properly Administer Newborn Screening in Ontario*—and the government moved quickly.

The report entitled *Getting it Right: Investigation into the Transparency of the Property Assessment Process and the Integrity and Efficiency of Decision-Making at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation*. They moved, not as quickly as they wanted to, but they moved. And this year, they moved on all of his recommendations.

The report entitled *Losing the Waiting Game: Investigation into Unreasonable Delay at the Ministry of Community and Social Services' Ontario Disability Support Program's Disability Adjudication Unit*. The government moved—and the list goes on.

The government has moved each and every time the Ombudsman has presented a report. What does it mean? It means he's effective in what he does. The Ombudsman has called for his oversight over long-term-care facilities. The member from Davenport agrees with everything he has done, but didn't agree with the Ombudsman's request to have his oversight over long-term care. Why? It doesn't make any sense. So you'll understand, those of you who are here from the seniors' groups, why we are a bit impatient and a little bit angry when we're dealing with a private member's bill that more or less moves in the direction that we have been moving in for three years.

This is a bill presented by this member, in a similar way that ours was a bill and requires legislative approval by this assembly. Our bill and their bill still require the members of this assembly to vote on it. In the same way that they are going to vote on this bill as it moves to second reading—and I suspect that all the Liberals will support it here, and everyone else—our bill would have meant the same, by way of your approval, to move it through the legislative process. Why would you not agree

to our bill? The reason why you are not agreeing to what we have done is because you are afraid of this Ombudsman and his effectiveness. That is what I put to you as a non-lawyer, and that is what my experience gives me based on the long history that we have here.

Oversight is incredibly important. Seniors are abused on a daily basis and much of it is because of underfunding, because the people that work in those institutions are underpaid and extremely overworked. We haven't dealt with that. Some of it is carelessness and some of it is negligence, but much of it is overwork. The Ombudsman would be yet another person that would get into those institutions and say to the government, "This is what you need to fix."

So we've got a bill; we've had a bill here for years that you could have supported. It's nothing new to you. So I say to you Liberals, please, be a little generous when the opposition introduces something that you're now about to support, which I think is a good idea. But our view is that our bill and the Ombudsman would do a better job.

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to support Bill 102 that my colleague from York West has proposed. I would like to thank him for bringing forward this bill because it speaks to so many of the issues that the seniors face. I congratulate him for taking on this important initiative.

The member for York West has talked about how difficult it can be for a senior to know which number to call and how many calls a senior may have to make sometimes, especially when in distress. The sentiment is very familiar to anyone who has contact with seniors on a regular basis. In my household, we are blessed to have my 79-year-old mother living with us and I can relate to what that means.

Seniors can be among the most vulnerable in the community, especially with technology advancing so quickly, and making even a simple phone call can be confusing. A significant number of seniors live in the riding of York South–Weston and they contact my community office for help every day. Many may feel intimidated due to language barriers that make it difficult for them to convey their needs. Perhaps they've lost their husband or their wife, or perhaps their children live far away, so they often might feel ignored or alone. Of course, one would expect any public body or employee to give seniors the best possible treatment; it is our duty to respect and care for the needs of our seniors. They are proud of their lives; they built this country and they worked hard, as the member for York West has pointed out. They've tried to create a home for their families here; they've raised their children here, and because many decide to remain in their homes for as long as possible, it is important that they have access to programs and services that will benefit them and allow them to remain independent.

1440

We've heard that in Ontario seniors make up 13.6% of the population and there are approximately 15,000

seniors per riding. That's the same reality that I have in my riding. Everyone needs a little help, and through our aging at home strategy seniors are receiving more help each day, but seniors must know what services they can take advantage of. Last June, I held a seniors' forum, for example, in York South–Weston to bring information about the services that are available directly to the people they are designed to serve. I heard again and again at this forum stories about the struggles that seniors face every day, and also how happy they were that there were some services and programs that in many cases could help. It is our responsibility to give seniors the support they deserve and to advocate on their behalf when they need us to do so. They must not be forgotten.

I also want to add that we did not support the bill that came forward from the third party because that oversight is in the purview of the Auditor General. That's why we didn't support that. I want to thank the member for York West for bringing this bill forward.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Indeed, it's a pleasure for me to make some comments on Bill 102, presented by my colleague Mr. Sergio, the member for York West. This is an interesting bill that he's brought forward to help seniors in Ontario but, more than that, it's a real extension of the member for York West's philosophy during the long time that he's been in public life here in Toronto. I know when he was a councillor in the old city of North York, and indeed during his time on Metro council, he served many constituents. Many of them came to Canada after the First World War, after the Second World War and during the 1950s as the Iron Curtain descended over Europe, as Winston Churchill once described it. Many of these individuals took back-breaking jobs here in Toronto and literally built this community from the ground up. During that time, as they got on in years, during his work as a councillor, they would come to Mr. Sergio and ask him for his assistance to cut through municipal government, to get them access to municipal government services, federal government services and provincial government services. So this bill that we're debating today is really an extension of one's personal philosophy to reach a group of citizens in our community.

I think it has many merits, to really investigate those situations that occur from time to time and in our communities where there has been citizens' abuse. I know I get to tour long-term-care homes in my riding frequently. I chat with Marion Burton, who is the president of Mapleridge senior citizens in Peterborough, and Shirley Shaw, who is the executive director of Activity Haven for seniors in Peterborough. CARP is represented today, and I do chat with Bob Geddes, who is the president of the Peterborough chapter of CARP. When you chat with them about the member for York West's private member's bill, many of them are very much supportive and on board because they're the individuals who are working day in and day out in our communities with our seniors to make sure that they get access to all the services they richly deserve.

We're fairly close to November 11, Remembrance Day, a time when we reflect on those individuals in our communities who often made the supreme sacrifice. Many of them today—we think of our World War II veterans now, who are in their late 80s and early 90s, who are in long-term-care homes, or indeed veterans from the Korean War who are now in their late 70s and early 80s. When you go in, as we all will be doing toward November 11, to chat with them about the sacrifices that they've made and to remind them that we're all here, as legislators, working together in their best interests—and the bill that's presented today, I think, is part and parcel of our commitment and indeed the member from York West's personal commitment to see this initiative go forward.

One of the things that struck me a few years ago was seniors dealing with the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. I remember having a senior phone me, as she had some questions about how they decided upon the value of her property. She phoned the call centre in Pickering, Ontario, to try to get some information, and the person who was on the other end of the line in that call centre talked to this senior about multiple regression analysis in order to determine the value of her property. I bet if we did an interview of the 107 members serving in this House and asked them to define for us what is meant by "multiple regression analysis," many of them would have a hard time with that information.

What the member has proposed today is a seniors' ombudsman to cut through some of that red tape and get answers for our seniors in our communities. The member needs to be applauded; this is a very fine legislative initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member from York West, Mr. Sergio, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I want to thank my colleagues who have participated in the debate: the members from Peterborough, York South–Weston, Trinity–Spadina, Davenport, Parkdale–High Park, and of course Thornhill. One thing has come out very loud and clear: "Yes, there is a problem; yes, something should be done; yes, seniors are entitled; and I totally agree with you." You totally agree with the intent of the bill.

It seems that we have this notwithstanding clause that always grabs the best of this House and somehow holds back our very best. That's okay; I understand that. This is the way the wheels spin politically in the House. But there is one particular thing that we seem to agree on: Something has to be done.

To the members from Parkdale–High Park and Trinity–Spadina there, we are not dealing with the government today. We are dealing with seniors' issues, seniors' interests, and if you keep on saying why, why, why—there is a particular moment in time when action is required. Today is one of those moments when we can force the arms of the government, if you will, into the next stage, into the next action. I'm saying today, let's move this forward, let's go to the committee so you can

hear not only from the representatives who are here today, but others as well. And where are we going to send it? If it's going to the Ontario Ombudsman, wonderful. I didn't say that this should not be done. Wonderful.

There is a gap; let's bridge it. Let's give the seniors the representation, the care, the attention, that they need. I hope that today we can initiate that to move on and give the seniors the dignity and respect that they deserve.

I thank all the members for their support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. For those of you watching in the galleries and those at home, we will vote on this item in 100 minutes.

Orders of the day.

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

Mr. Hoy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Hoy, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 104, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005. We're here for second reading debate.

I want to make clear at the outset that the amendment to that Representation Act, 2005, is indeed a piece of Ontario Legislature legislation.

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That being said, the reason for the amendment would be to rename the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex to Chatham–Kent–Leamington. This is about identity and it's about being correct.

We often talk about identity theft in this chamber and elsewhere. We talk about protecting one's identity. I think this is part and parcel of what I'm trying to do here. If there was ever a group of people assembled who wanted their name to be spelled correctly or pronounced correctly when we read it through the press or in other instances, it might be us. So people want their names to be spelled right. They want that recognition of their identity directly to them. That's why I think we need, in part, to change the name of the riding to Chatham–Kent–Leamington and give the recognition to Leamington that it so well deserves. I'm very proud and honoured to be the provincial member of Parliament for Chatham–Kent–Essex, and I seek this name change.

There is a county of Essex, and that county of Essex consists of LaSalle, Tecumseh, Lakeshore, Amherstburg, Essex, Kingsville and Leamington. Leamington is one of seven municipalities within the county of Essex. There has always been confusion because there is a county of

Essex, a town of Essex, the federal riding named Essex and the provincial riding named Essex. Also, by having Essex in the riding name, it implies that I represent all of Essex. Many people unfamiliar with the riding boundaries do not know that the Essex portion that I represent is Leamington, and it's a wonderful municipality for anyone to represent.

Leamington is at the most southerly latitude of Canada. It shares the 42nd parallel with Rome, Italy, and northern California. It enjoys early springs, warm summers and the longest growing season in eastern Canada. Leamington enjoys the greatest number of sunshine hours of any municipality in Canada—over 2,000 hours, according to Agriculture Canada. That is why Leamington is known as the sun parlour of Canada.

This combination of favourable climate and rich soils permits Leamington growers to produce a wider range of crops than elsewhere in Canada. This is aided by the second-warmest climate in Canada, after the lower mainland of British Columbia. Fruit and vegetable stands line the roads leading to Leamington and within.

Highway 77 and Highway 3 provide access to Highway 401. Leamington is just 45 minutes from the Windsor-Detroit international border. There is a ferry service to and from Pelee Island and Sandusky, Ohio. It runs from April through November for tourist travel as well as the movement of agricultural commodities and business travel.

Leamington also has a private commercial airport and a public transit system. The Leamington District Memorial Hospital and the Leamington family health team provide quality health care service to a population of almost 30,000 residents. There are three high schools and eight elementary schools. Leamington Police Service has 39 sworn officers and 21 full- and part-time civilians policing the entire municipality of Leamington, in the former Mersea township, covering 262 square kilometres.

The Uptown Leamington Business Improvement Area represents over 200 businesses in uptown Leamington. Note that all the entities I have mentioned here this afternoon contain the name "Leamington," and there are many more within the municipality that I could have cited. Leamington should have special recognition for the people who live there, for the work they do and for their being a municipality.

Leamington is known as the tomato capital of Canada. Many people recognize this when I tell them that I represent Chatham-Kent-Essex, and I quickly say "Leamington." Tomatoes are Leamington's largest greenhouse vegetable crop, supplying supermarkets across North America. It is also the home of the Heinz food processing plant, the largest employer in Leamington. They use field tomatoes, not to be confused with greenhouse tomatoes.

In 1909, H.J. Heinz decided to expand to Canada and set up manufacturing operations at a factory in Leamington. The Leamington operation first started processing pickles, vinegars and beans. In 1910, it produced its first

bottle of ketchup, and two years later, started to make cooked spaghetti. Soups joined the production line in 1917, and juices and Heinz baby foods followed in 1930.

I wonder how many people know that Heinz baby food started so many, many decades ago. It's been food to many children throughout Ontario and indeed North America.

The H.J. Heinz plant employs 780 people, and another 330 people are hired for the very hectic harvest season, which is ongoing now. The farmers who grow the field tomatoes for the Heinz plant grow 280,000 tonnes of tomatoes, or half of all the processed tomatoes grown in the province of Ontario.

I was told some years ago, during a tour of the Heinz plant, that their tonnes per acre grown in Leamington exceed the tonnage per acre of California. They're very competitive in Leamington when it comes to tonnage and the production of their foods.

Leamington, with this great tomato history and background, celebrates its tomato legacy each year with an annual summertime fest. The tourist information booth downtown is shaped like a ripe tomato. The water tower—you can guess—is shaped and coloured as a giant tomato. Stompin' Tom Connors mentions Leamington in his tune The Ketchup Song.

Leamington has the largest number of commercial greenhouses in all of North America. The principal greenhouse crops include tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and flowers, and there are over a thousand acres under cover—innovations by owners and growers.

Greenhouse production in Leamington is a thriving, billion-dollar business. Some of the members have taken part when some of the Leamington growers have come here, and we have seen their flowers and vegetables many times. The combination of fertile soils, water temperature and longer daylight hours allow Leamington to support a variety of other crops.

I want to let you know—and I've mentioned in the House before—that Leamington was named by Money-Sense as the number one place to live in the country of Canada. It was up against Montreal, for example, and British Columbia. Leamington was found to be the best place in all of the Dominion of Canada to live.

My good friend and colleague the member from Essex has lived in Leamington for many years, and it's still home to Joan and Bruce Crozier.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Then again, too many to mention.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm sure he can attest to how wonderful Leamington is.

I have a letter from the mayor of Leamington, Mayor John Adams, who wrote to me in this regard. He said:

"I am pleased to offer my support to your private member's bill requesting the current riding name of Chatham-Kent-Essex be changed to Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

"The current name implies that you represent all people in Essex county, rather than just Leamington.

Having the town of Essex in Essex county additionally compounds this confusion.

“We are pleased and proud that you represent the municipality of Leamington at Queen’s Park and feel that changing the riding name to Chatham–Kent–Leamington would help make the riding boundaries more identifiable.”

Leamington, beyond its agriculture, is also known as Ontario’s southernmost recreational playground, bordered by Lake Erie to the south. A shipwreck diving area offers fascinating insight into the rich nautical history of our area. Local dive shops and charter operations fully service the industry, providing lessons, equipment, rentals and excursions. Non-diver excursions are available both in water and on land, for those who don’t wish to dive.

Each summer, Leamington’s municipal marina draws thousands of boaters and tourists. Naturalists from around the world come to witness the spectacular migration of birds and butterflies to this most southerly point of mainland Canada. Local winery and greenhouse tours are also a must to see. Tourists are never disappointed when visiting Canada’s most southerly point, Leamington.

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Including Leamington as part of the riding name will give it the special recognition that it deserves. It will identify the geographic boundaries of what is currently Chatham–Kent–Essex more correctly, and it just makes a lot of sense and will eliminate confusion.

I ask for all-member support in this regard and support the 30,000 people who live in this most blessed municipality, Leamington, Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Further debate? The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know it may take you some time to recognize me, but it did come. We very much appreciate that.

It is a privilege to be able to get up and speak to Bill 104, put forward by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, soon, hopefully, to become the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington if this bill gets royal assent. I think it’s a credit to the member for bringing this bill forward.

There’s not a lot to say about the bill that hasn’t just been said by the member presenting the bill. I would just point out to those who are watching as we speak here that the bill, as the Speaker would know, is covered on one page, and in fact it only needs to cover half the page, because this member isn’t trying to change his community. As he said about his community, nothing much in the community needs to be changed, because obviously, in his presentation, it was the number one community in Ontario. I’m here to agree with him that it’s one of the best two in Ontario. We very much appreciate his support for his local community. I won’t dwell much on what the other one of the two would be.

As I said, the bill is rather short:

“The Representation Act, 2005 is amended by adding the following section: ...

“2.1 Despite anything in section 2 to the contrary, the electoral district of Chatham–Kent–Essex is hereby renamed the electoral district of Chatham–Kent–Leamington.”

In fact, the next section is that it will come into force the day of royal assent, and that the short title of this act is the Representation Amendment Act, 2008. That is the entirety of the bill.

I want to say that I support the bill. As I’ve got some notes on the bill, there were a couple of things that I just wanted to address and only one that I would take some exception to.

First of all, I want to say that not only do I represent a community that is not only similar but is as nice a community or one of the nicer communities in Ontario, we also have in common that Tom Connors wrote a song about our riding too. In fact, some of you may remember the song about Tillsonburg: “My back still aches when I hear that word”—because of our tobacco industry. In fact, it was quite a popular song. I notice now that the member spoke about Tom Connors writing a song about the tomatoes in Leamington.

One thing I wanted to just talk about for a moment is that one of the reasons for the name change that the member put in his explanation for the bill was to give Leamington the recognition it deserves. I know that clarity, for people to understand the boundaries of a riding, is very important, but that is not what gives communities the recognition they deserve.

Now, remember, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of the names of our ridings are based on the boundaries of the upper-tier government or, in the former government—under the Baldwin Act, the county form of government. Of course, Leamington was in the county of Essex and was a lower tier in the county of Essex. So as part of Essex county, it’s not unreasonable to assume that the person who represented it would be representing Essex county.

If we go back not that many years, this riding would have been Chatham, which was a single-tier municipality, Kent which was the area around Chatham, and that part of Essex that was Leamington was the other upper-tier municipality that was involved in that riding, so it made a lot of sense to call it Chatham–Kent–Essex. But when you leave that county of Kent and make it part of the single-tier municipality of Chatham–Kent and put that hyphen in there, then all of a sudden, it starts to make one wonder how Kent and Essex are still involved in the name of this riding, because the only part of the upper-tier municipality of Essex that’s part of this member’s riding would be the village of Leamington. There’s absolutely no reason why you couldn’t procure a definition. Take the word “Leamington” and put that on the end of Chatham–Kent–Leamington, and then leave it to the other riding to be called Essex and whatever it may be connected to. But because of the number of municipalities that were listed, I think, by the member—the municipality of LaSalle, Tecumseh, Lakeshore, Amherstburg, the town of Essex, Kingsville, and Leamington, of course, is the one that we’re speaking about. All those other municipalities are in the county of Essex, and in a

riding that also uses the name “Essex” in the riding, I do believe. I stand to be corrected, but I believe that the member from Essex also used that name, so it makes a lot of sense.

The one challenge that I think we do face, and I’m sure that the member has looked into it, is the issue of the riding’s name being similar both federally and provincially. I think it’s very important that we don’t confuse the issue by having the same riding at the two levels of government. It may not be confusing for those who represent it, but it could very well be quite confusing to the people in the municipality, that they have a different name for the riding provincially as they do federally. I would hope that the member would talk to the federal member to also work on getting the name changed, so that in both jurisdictions, we would have the same name.

The one other thing, again, that I wanted to—the reason I brought up the issue of giving Leamington the recognition they deserve: I don’t want to stand here in support of the bill based on that principal, because that would somehow mean that the city of Woodstock, the town of Tillsonburg, the town of Ingersoll, the municipality of Zorra, the municipality of East Zorra-Tavistock, the township of Blandford-Blenheim, the township of Norwich and the township of South-West Oxford all didn’t deserve recognition because the riding I represent is the riding of Oxford.

The reason I say the riding of Oxford is that one of the biggest challenges I face in my riding is when I go to events and they have the program printed up, and the program will say, “Ernie Hardeman, the MPP for the county of Oxford.” In fact, we all know that the county is the jurisdiction of local government. I don’t believe that there’s anyone in the Legislature with a riding that has the word “county” in the title of the riding. I represent the riding of Oxford, not the county of Oxford. The county of Oxford is represented by county council; the riding of Oxford is represented by the MPP at Queen’s Park. I think it’s very important to point that out, but I think it’s ever more important to point out that I think that the recognition of my local municipalities, all those which I named, are local municipalities in the county of Oxford, and that they all deserve to have the same recognition as the town of Leamington before or after this change.

But again, I want to commend the member for bringing this forward and I want to say that I don’t know about others in this House, but I will be supporting this bill when it comes for a vote.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I’m delighted to rise. It was delightful, actually, to hear all about the member’s area of jurisdiction. I second the member from Oxford in saying that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, soon to be Chatham–Kent–Leamington—I was particularly struck by the fact that Tom Connors mentions Leamington, which I didn’t know, in his tune The Ketchup Song. That’s pretty cool. It does sound like a beautiful area. Certainly, his passion came through when he talked about

his area of jurisdiction, and I think it’s a passion that we all feel when talking about our own ridings, or should feel, because that’s why we’re here, after all, to represent our constituency.

I was impressed with the mayor’s letter too, and his explanation, which helped me in terms of why this bill came forward—just the confusion factor. Also, again, to second the member from Oxford, to prevent confusion, it would be very handy if the member did speak to his federal counterpart because he wouldn’t want two names for the same riding federally and provincially. Hopefully, he’ll act on that recommendation, which I believe is a good one.

1510

I would simply ask about process. I think that here in this House, we all know how rare it is and what a rare delight it is to be able to bring forward a private member’s bill and have it debated in second reading. It’s something that happens very rarely for any member here. It seems to me somewhat sad that this member has to use that opportunity for something that seems so pro forma, something that seems like an exercise that could have been done very quickly and perhaps at the beginning of the legislative session, instead of having to take 45 minutes to do it with his private member’s bill slot. I would hope that for other bills like this where everybody is going to agree—and on what grounds would you disagree, particularly when the mayor is in support of this and the folks of his community and riding seem to be in support of this? Instead of taking 45 minutes to talk about it, and give the opposition a chance to talk about it, why could this not have been done, again, very quickly and easily simply by a government motion?

We’re all aware here, particularly in these times, of tax dollars and the way they’re spent in this place, and also just aware of the member’s time and the fact that maybe there’s another burning issue that he would have liked to have spent his private member’s bill time on rather than a simple name change. Surely, simple name changes can be handled in a different way.

In the interest of not prolonging this, I’m going to cede to another member of our caucus in case he wants to say a few words. But without a doubt we all support this, and Godspeed.

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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I’m pleased to rise today to support my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex in his bid to make the name of his riding more clear. I’m pleased to do that for a number of reasons. One of those, and not all of you might know this in here, is: Mr. Hoy is my member of provincial Parliament because I happen to live in Leamington. The reason I live in Leamington and represent the riding of Essex is, in 1999, as many of you know, the boundaries changed. I had represented Leamington from 1993 to 1999 and I’ve lived there all my life. Joan and I raised our family there, so I continue to live there. In fact, I tell the other municipalities in the riding of Essex that I can represent each of them better

that way because I have no bias for any one particular municipality.

But a name is important. We're all identified by name. That's how people know us. In fact, in this place, on certain occasions we can use our surnames, but most of the time we are identified by our riding name, and that's the way it should be. I think that the proposal from my friend from Chatham–Kent is one that will make more clear the communities that he represents, because after all he represents two communities: Chatham–Kent and Leamington. How much better can you get than to have the name “Leamington” identify his riding?

These riding names are kind of strange. For example, prior to a year or so ago, the now finance minister was the member for Windsor–St. Clair, and yet he represented the town of Tecumseh, or almost all of it. I represented a little chunk of Tecumseh as well. So there are some confusing boundaries around. That one got changed, so now the Minister of Finance represents all of the town of Tecumseh. They went from having two members represent them to one.

Names are important. I know that my colleague Mr. Hoy gave you a lot of information about a great town. There are lots of great towns in this province, and we could all stand up and have a lot of good things to say about the community in which we live. But before I got to this place in 1993—and again, some of you may not know—I was the mayor of Leamington at the time. I had been mayor from 1988 to 1993 and I had been on Leamington council from 1985 to 1988 as a councillor. So you would think I would automatically agree with my colleague, in that this name change will, I think, identify his riding the way it should be identified. And I agree: I think that if this bill proceeds and passes and becomes provincial law, I, along with Mr. Hoy and others, encourage the federal member to do the same thing, and then there would be no further name—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To debate.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: —to debate. Thank you.

So I support Mr. Hoy. Thank you very much for listening to me. Good day.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today in support of Bill 104, An Act to amend the Representation Act, brought forward by the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who has done a great job of articulating the reasons why the name change would need to occur, to rename the riding from Chatham–Kent–Essex to Chatham–Kent–Leamington. He provided maps, did his research and has certainly got the support of the mayor of Leamington, John Adams.

There has been a question here by my colleague from the third party about working with the federal member, because as we know, the federal Parliament decides the boundaries and the names, and then as changes need to occur, we try to work together as two levels of government to do that. So I want to say “congratulations” to the federal member of Parliament, the newly re-elected member, Dave Van Kesteren, on his re-election.

I'm sure the member will be talking to him, if he hasn't already. Certainly the arguments you put forward make absolute sense, which we sometimes enjoy in private members' business, I can say, on Thursdays. Sometimes it's just not quite as partisan and we can agree on certain levels. So I certainly appreciate private members' time when we can talk, sometimes logically, about things that should be done.

I know that the member from Peterborough is here. Certainly when you talk about riding names, my riding is quite a lengthy name: Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I actually live in Peterborough county and have three pieces of Peterborough county, and the member from Peterborough has the city of Peterborough and three other pieces of Peterborough county. I'm not promoting that my riding name becomes longer, but just in the whole boundary issues and especially when we have larger geographical rural ridings, it becomes a challenge to be so inclusive. We share school boards and health units—and we can go on on that.

I enjoyed reading more about Leamington. My colleague from Oxford tells me that he's actually taken a plane ride over the area to see all—I mean, I think he'd have to see the aerial view to see all the thousands of acres of greenhouses that are there. That's fabulous. I didn't know it was the sun parlour of Canada. I always like sunshine; it always makes everybody feel better.

The statistics he brought out about Leamington were quite fascinating. I know our lives are very busy here, and we don't get to see all the information that goes on in the province of Ontario, or to sit back and actually take in all the facts. The member has gone on at length, and as the member from Oxford did say, “It's hard to repeat what has already been said,” other than the fact that both my riding and the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, as it stands now, share a great agricultural base, which we are pleased to support and encourage.

I would just say that changing the name from Chatham–Kent–Essex to Chatham–Kent–Leamington—that's how we hope we will address the member in the near future, if we can get all the mechanics of politics and Legislatures moving together.

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: My colleague is clapping. So with those comments, you have our full support.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Normally, I like to use up all of my time; I really do. And sometimes I just don't have enough in order to be able to say what I want to say. But on this one, it's going to be short. I want to say to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex that I support your bill. The mayor supports your bill. There appears to be no opposition. The federal law allows you to make an amendment to the riding by way of a name change, and therefore I'm just going to say that I support it.

1520

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I am pleased to take the opportunity this afternoon to get a few words on the record to support Bill 104, from my friend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, to change its name to Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

Thank goodness we have great people who work in our legislative library, because this afternoon they were able to get me a great book called Leamington's Heritage, 1874–1974. It's interesting what you get to know when you take a quick glance at a book that looks at this history. I didn't know that Leamington and Mersea township early in the 17th century was settled by French voyageurs and missionaries who paddled along the north shore of Lake Erie from Niagara to extend their contacts with the Indians and explore the vast, unknown country which stretched all the way to the west. They also discovered at that time Point Pelee—the French word, *pelée*, means “skinned, peeled or bare”—and that's how the point appeared to those voyageurs who passed that way in the 1600s.

As I glanced through this book, I noticed that one of the first women to be mayor of a community in Ontario, in Canada, was the mayor of Leamington, Ontario, from 1952 to 1957. Her name was Her Worship Mayor Grace McFarland. When you read about Her Worship Mayor McFarland, she was certainly a strong advocate of women to get involved in politics, and she indeed was in many ways a groundbreaker in southwestern Ontario, when she served during those five very distinguished years.

Point Pelee, in Leamington, is of course the home of Heinz tomato. I had the opportunity, when I was a student doing my postgraduate work at the University of Windsor from 1979 to 1981, of going with some fellow students to visit both Point Pelee and the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary, which was a very fascinating way to spend a full day on Point Pelee, going through that bird sanctuary and learning about Jack Miner's dedication to wildlife, and visiting the community of Leamington, the capital, where Heinz foods is located, and seeing such great events as the tomato festival and everything associated with the activity of Heinz in Leamington and certainly the great growth of the greenhouse growers.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: As does my friend Mr. Rosario Marchese, I support the bill. I and my friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock know what confusion you can get. There are many people who think that I represent all of Peterborough county. In fact, I only represent five municipalities in Peterborough county. The two northwestern municipalities and the southwestern municipality are indeed represented by my friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and it does create some confusion. So this afternoon we have an opportunity to carve out of Essex that great town of Leamington, attach it to Chatham–Kent and really let everybody have a thorough understanding of where the boundaries of that riding exist. I don't have to speak anymore. This Bill 104 is a slam dunk.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I was really disappointed with my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. Considering all the tomato sauce that he has eaten in his life, he never stands up in this House and says “thanks” to the good people of Leamington for all the tomatoes they've been producing for the last 100 years. So I will do that on your behalf. I just want to thank the member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't forget, Nino Ricci is from there.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Nino Ricci's from there. But I think, as other members have said, this is an opportunity for members to talk about their riding and to, in essence, give all of us in this chamber an opportunity to understand about the geography, the strengths of this riding. We all need to learn more about Ontario's geography. As the member said, “Who can stop and think and say that Leamington is at the same latitude as Rome?” Why go on vacation in Rome, I say to the member from Trinity–Spadina, when you can go to Leamington or Point Pelee provincial park? Or why go to California? Why go to Santa Barbara when you can go to Point Pelee park?

It's important to understand that we as Ontarians or Canadians sometimes undervalue what we have. As we know, Leamington has been named the best place in Canada to live, yet how many in this chamber have been to Leamington? I see a couple of hands go up. Not enough of us visit these incredible places in Ontario.

I think the member is trying to, in essence, give Leamington this identity and clarity of identity, and that's what this bill is about, so it has a very serious purpose. By bringing this bill forward, what he's doing is trying to correct an anomaly, given that the name of the riding is not really one that gives clarity to the location of where the riding is.

If there's a place in Canada or Ontario that deserves recognition and appreciation and deserves, really, international recognition, it is this wonderful spot in the banana belt of Canada, and that's the area of Leamington, Point Pelee, which is actually a magnet for people from all over the world. Point Pelee is one of the birdwatching magnets of the world. People come from every corner of the world. As beautiful as Northumberland and Quinte is, people from all over the world do go to Point Pelee for the birdwatching. It is incredible. In fact, during the spring, you can't get a hotel room or motel room anywhere near Leamington or Point Pelee, because it's such an attractive place.

By putting this bill forward, I think what the member is doing is just saying to all of us, “I think for people who are thinking of visiting a place in Ontario, Point Pelee and Leamington may be a place to visit, may be a place to retire.” With that kind of climate, why do you have to go to Florida and waste all those dollars in the winter? Don't go to Florida this winter; go to Leamington. You can have wonderful food, and besides that, why not invest in Leamington? There's already one of the world's largest greenhouse industries right there. It's a billion-dollar industry. So there are great business opportunities

in Leamington. We sometimes take that for granted because like the member from Trinity–Spadina, we sometimes don't appreciate where that tomato sauce comes from. It comes from the hardworking people in Leamington who are planting those tomatoes and digging those tomato plants. So thanks to Leamington—

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: Thank you to everyone who made comments here.

Perhaps the member from Trinity–Spadina will come to Leamington. He probably did not know that those tomatoes came from there or perhaps came from there.

It is indeed a fact that many people are retiring in Leamington because of the climate that it enjoys in the southernmost part of mainland Canada. That is why people are coming to Leamington, the greatest place to live, as deemed by Money Sense, not only in Ontario, but in all of Canada.

I want to just respond to the member for Oxford for a moment here. He was talking about Chatham–Kent, and I want him to be clear about this. Chatham–Kent is one municipality. It did have a two-tier government at one time: Kent county and the city of Chatham. It was amalgamated some years ago before we took power here, and it is now the single municipality with the name Chatham–Kent. I don't represent three municipalities; I represent two: Chatham–Kent and Leamington.

I'm doing this for the people of Leamington so that they can get the recognition that they well deserve. There are other ridings that probably could fit with somewhat similar circumstances to mine. I note that we have Ottawa Centre, Ottawa South, York West and York Centre, but this change in name is one that I will characterize as being clean. It is only the municipality of Leamington that we're talking about. There is no little part of another municipality or any part of a municipality that's into someone else's riding. It's a move forward that I think is positive for the people of Leamington. I do it for them—and I want to tell you that I don't live in Leamington; I live in Chatham–Kent. I live in a small village called Merlin. It has 500 people, 200 dogs and perhaps a few hundred cats. It is the home of the country and western singer Michelle Wright, and those of you I know who like country and western music would know Michelle Wright. She is our pride and joy.

I appreciate all your help with this bill here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for that ballot item has expired.

1530

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS
PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE
EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings / Projet de loi 96, Loi visant à protéger les régimes d'épargne-retraite enregistrés.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 97, Mr. Leal, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to speak in support of my private member's bill entitled Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings, 2008. As you may be aware, the purpose of the bill is to protect registered retirement savings plan and registered retirement income funds, as well as deferred profit-sharing plans, from most creditors. Those plans, however, and I stress, will still be subject to support orders under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996, and orders respecting the separation of property in family members.

First of all, I'd like to thank Mr. Mark Gaskell, a constituent resident of Peterborough riding, for having the initial foresight to raise this issue with me. Mr. Gaskell very succinctly expressed his desire for the Ontario Legislature to protect from creditors what retirement savings the people of Ontario manage to accumulate in various forms of registered retirement savings plans, as have the provinces of Saskatchewan in 2003, Newfoundland and Labrador in 2006, and Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Quebec and Manitoba in 2007.

Secondly, I'd like to extend my thanks to my special assistant in aboriginal affairs, Mr. André Nicoletti, for his research and preparation of this bill for me.

After a thorough investigation in this regard, I heartily agree with Mr. Gaskell's observations. I'd also like to take a moment to applaud the efforts of Minister Bartolucci for having brought forward a similar piece of private member's legislation in June 2003, entitled An Act exempting registered retirement plans from certain enforcement processes.

All governments in Canada encourage early and regular participation in retirement savings and ask that Canadians rely not only upon government to provide retirement income sufficient to maintain a reasonable and healthy lifestyle as we go. To facilitate and provide investment incentives, Canadians are provided with tax deferrals on income amounts invested in retirement savings. Saving for retirement through various investment vehicles such as retirement savings plans, RSPs; deferred profit-sharing plans, DPSPs; and registered retirement income funds, RRIFs, is a wise and widely encouraged practice.

As Mr. Gaskell notes, in Ontario today, the vast majority of working people are self-employed or employed by small businesses. In fact, there are more than 340,000 small and medium-sized enterprises across Ontario, which make up more than 99% of the province's businesses and account for more than 50% of all jobs. Many of these folks are not in a position to receive self-directed retirement vehicles to augment their pension plans as offered through the public or some private sector employment. As such, a considerable number of citizens

must rely upon their personal investments, such as RRSPs, to sustain themselves in retirement years.

While all governments in Canada rightfully encourage these sorts of investments, current law in Ontario does not exempt DPSPs, RRIFs or RSPs from credit seizure. As such, the law in regard to credit seizure is inconsistent and therefore unfair in its treatment of registered retirement holders.

As previously stated, other provinces in Canada have already passed similar forms of legislation. In November 2007, the government of Manitoba, under the stewardship of finance minister Greg Selinger, passed into law the Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act. As Mr. Selinger noted, "The Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act is designed to protect from creditors retirement savings held in deferred profit-sharing plans, registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds. ... We want Manitobans to have retirement savings available in their senior years and so we have moved to protect these funds." Likewise, in 2005, the government of Canada, through amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act under Bill C-55, initiated similar legislation. The act, subject to certain conditions and exemptions, exempts registered plans from being vested in a trustee as property available to satisfy the claims of bankrupt creditors. Though this bill has indeed received royal assent, it has yet to be proclaimed into law.

I can certainly understand why skeptics may be concerned that this legislation could possibly be used as a safe haven for debtors who wish to avoid or defraud their related creditors. However, this is certainly not the intent. As stated in the preamble, the legislation explicitly exempts orders made under the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, meaning that parents who are defaulting on child support can still be pursued, as can separating spouses. Also, as with retirement pension plans, the creditor protection provided in a new law will not apply to the enforcement of maintenance orders or orders for the division of family property. Similarly, the anticipated federal act protects against debit abuse by capping the amount of the exemption, by making contributions within 12 months of a bankruptcy available to creditors and by requiring that the exempted amount be locked in until rolled over into a retirement income fund annuity or similar product.

In this economic climate of uncertainty and fluctuation of world markets, I believe that the spirit of this bill is not only fair but timely. Ontario's manufacturing sector has been hit hard by an economically challenged United States trading partner, a high Canadian dollar and that high price of oil. While small and medium-size manufacturers have held up reasonably well for a time, the last couple of years have been especially difficult for them. We can and will protect our public services and, at the very least, assist those small Ontario entrepreneurs. As stated yesterday in Ontario's fall economic outlook and fiscal review, the slowing United States economy and global financial situation has undermined businesses and

consumer confidence. These impacts are not only real and present, but directly affect individuals, families and governments in Ontario.

The main goal of this legislation is to reinforce our government's commitment, not only to protect those retirees whose plans are left unprotected, but also to the entrepreneurial success of Ontario's small business community. As a former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and chair of the Small Business Agency of Ontario, I understand the fundamental challenges and concerns facing Ontario's small businesses, let alone the courage it takes to start up and operate a successful small business. From streamlining regulations to reducing the paper burden, perhaps we can further assist small business people.

As stated in the 2008 British Columbia Chamber of Commerce report entitled *Advocacy and Policy: Retirement Savings Protection*, "It is imperative that ... business people who provide so much of our province's employment and their employees enjoy the same level of protection as ... those covered by the current list of exempted investments. Other provinces in Canada have recognized the inequity in retirement protection and ... enacted provincial exemption statutes to fully protect self-directed ... savings" plans.

Likewise, the Manitoba charter of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, in a November 29, 2006, letter to Mr. Jon Gerrard, leader of the Liberal Party of Manitoba, expresses their desire to see passage of the government's retirement protection proposal: "On behalf of the ... CFIB" in Manitoba "and ... 4,800 Manitoba members, I am writing in reference to the introduction of Bill 6, the Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act... The CFIB urges your party to support Bill 6 and ensure its passage as soon as possible. Removing this disincentive to" invest "in RRSPs by small business owners" and individuals "will ensure a fair and equitable solution to an issue they have faced ... far too long."

This type of initiative certainly has not been overlooked by our counterparts in Washington. In 2006, the United States government signed into law the Pension Protection Act, ensuring greater retirement security for American workers. In part, this pension protection initiative contains provisions for workers who have saved for retirement through defined contribution plans, much as we have been hearing on CNN today, the 401Ks, which are very similar to our registered retirement plans here in Ontario and Canada.

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I believe that these turbulent economic times call for a steady hand and wise economic decisions, no matter the size or the complexity. Each on our own, we can rise to the challenge of the global economy and move forward in a prudent and responsible way. As such, this is a simple idea that has potential to protect Ontarians, both in terms of social security as we age and in terms of present economic development benefits.

As the Premier stated recently, we can't do everything, but we can do everything we can. I believe that this bill has merit and should be given due consideration by this Legislature.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings. I do commend the member from Peterborough for bringing this important matter forward to correct an inequity that exists for retirement savings vehicles. I also agree that it is particularly timely, given the very challenging economic times in which we're living currently. I do commend him for bringing it forward.

There is definitely a gap here that needs to be addressed between the registered retirement savings plans and registered retirement income funds held by individuals who are mostly self-employed entrepreneurs in the province of Ontario and those people who are subscribers to larger pension funds, either federally or provincially, whose pensions are protected under the current legislation, so that the practical result of this legislation as we go forward would be that the savings in a registered retirement savings plan would be exempt from seizure from creditors in the event that someone is sued, for example, and there is a judgment obtained, or by any other types of creditors. Those sorts of vehicles would be protected, which just makes sense when you consider the protection that is afforded to others holding similar programs, only in larger pensions and registered pensions.

Of course, there are some exemptions to it which are quite sensible. The Family Responsibility Office still will be able to make collections and to make claims over registered retirement savings plans in the same way they always have, which makes eminent sense in the context of the family situation. The Fraudulent Conveyances Act will also continue to operate so that people who may be facing creditors cannot just suddenly put money into registered retirement savings plans in order to avoid their creditors. That also is an important consideration to bring to bear.

We're pleased as Progressive Conservative members of the Legislature to support this legislation, because of course it does a number of things that we're very much in favour of. It encourages savings in the first place. Again, particularly in the challenging times in which we're living, the more that people are able to save to protect themselves from turbulent economic times, the better. It also levels the playing field in terms of the savings vehicles so that there is equality in the treatment of these pension plans. It also encourages and protects our entrepreneurs and small businesses, who of course provide the majority of the employment in the province of Ontario. I think it's particularly appropriate that they be given some protection to put them on the same playing field as people who are employed in other sectors of our workforce.

So we are very pleased to support this legislation. I expect and hope that the other members in this Legis-

lature will also follow suit and support it. I think it's a good measure of protection and, again, comes at a very timely point in our history.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I too will be supporting the bill presented by the member from Peterborough. I suspect, by the way—not to be prescient again—that we're going to have support from everyone, and there's a good reason for it. This bill would protect small business owners and others and would protect their RRSPs from creditors, whether or not bankruptcy has been declared. That is important because we know there are a whole lot of individuals who do not have a private pension, who rely on RRSPs as their pension when they retire. They're worried, and for good reason, because Ontario savings—pensions, mutual funds, RRSPs and so on—are tied to the stock market. They're worried about their financial future and want their savings protected from the wild swings of the market. So we can't have this discussion without looking at the markets.

By the way, member from Peterborough, my sense is that even the cabinet will support this. I suspect they will support this at second and third readings, in spite of the bad record your government has in terms of its support for private members' bills. But in spite of that, my sense—I could be wrong—is that even the cabinet is going to support you on this. So, let's assume they are going to do that.

Without talking about why we need to do it, we need to talk about the market and why it is that such a bill is before us. If we don't talk about what has been happening in the market, it would be a mistake. We know that in the last month or so, all the wealth created for those who had money invested in stocks, and so on, literally disappeared—20%, 30%, 40%, depending on where your money was invested. That is a serious worry for people. It's a worry for me, because since Mike Harris, we in this place don't have a pension.

Now, Mike did okay when he left, but most of us did not do well. Those of us who were here for a couple of years and all the Conservative members who came after Mike Harris, God bless him, don't have a pension unless they are independently wealthy. God bless those of you who are independently wealthy. Those of you who are not wealthy have your money in RRSPs and whatever else you do, and it's not protected. It's a serious worry.

So I say that we need to look at why the market has not served us so well. What is it that allowed these investors to say that the marketplace is the best place to put your money? "It's safe and it's good, and you'll make a whole lot of money." It's a casino, my friends. You throw your money into that casino and you never know what's going to happen. That money is at risk at any time, and this in the context of a market that is supposed to be efficient—some say scientific; some say calculating. Yes, there may be some swings, but don't worry, it'll come up again.

I'm telling you, it is often irrational. The swings are more frequent than you would like, it's unpredictable and

we don't know what might happen to those savings. In terms of market collapses, this is one of the worst we have seen in a long time—since the 1930s—so people are absolutely worried. Even the president of France, Monsieur Sarkozy, is worried. He calls for the need to bring ethics into financial capitalism. Now, Monsieur Sarkozy is a conservative president. He's worried. Even Bush, God bless him, says we need to sober up on Wall Street. Yeah, thanks a lot, Mr. Bush. Understand that even conservative types like Bush and Sarkozy are saying we need to regulate capitalism.

Mr. Mike Colle: That's socialism.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Exactly. A whole lot of these banks have been nationalized—in America. Did you hear that? Not just Iceland and places in Europe; the United States has nationalized some banks.

It's funny to hear these conservatives in the US—I'm amused by it. They say, "Socialism when necessary, but otherwise, capitalism all the way." Isn't it funny how, when the economic system collapses, they reach over to socialism to save them? And once they save them, and ordinary folks are stuck with paying that debt, they say, "Okay, move over, it's time for you to pay up, the system has served us well," and bring the wealth back to the very speculators who brought the system down. It's scary stuff. It's absolutely scary.

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We need to regulate our markets, and a number of economists are saying we need regulation in order to protect people's savings and their RRSPs.

Mr. Mike Colle: Even Greenspan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Greenspan and others, of course, they love socialism today. They love it.

We need regulation. We need the creation of a financial product safety commission just like we have for consumer goods, as recommended by one prominent columnist. This would address the invention of new financial products "not intended to manage risk but to create risk." We need to ensure regulators oversee the areas of finance that are now unregulated. To quote another financial expert, "If it quacks like a bank, regulate it like a bank." This includes real regulation of hedge funds and large pools of capital that are able to manipulate markets for quick profits in quick seconds, and they do, in seconds. You've got capitalism collapsing, reaching out to socialism, "Please help us today. We need you," and they easily discard it when they no longer need it. Strengthen regulation that restricts leverage to all financial companies. Leverage is the proportion of debt used in speculation and was one of the causes of the current crisis. These are some of the suggestions that we put forth today in this debate that we need to discuss.

Regulation is key to our financial markets. When Conservatives speak about regulation, it warms my socialist heart to hear them, God bless, because it speaks to an awareness of a problem that is beyond their control. They worry too. Even rich people worry. In fact, the rich people worry more than those who don't have because they've got a lot more to lose. Because the little guy who

doesn't have much, he doesn't have much to worry about. But oh, the big fish and the big speculators making loads of money on our backs are really worried about the collapse of the markets.

So I say to you, Jeff, member from Peterborough, I support your bill. It will protect businesspeople, small business and a lot of individuals who've got no other protection in the event that they need it. I hope that you and your government will look to the bigger picture, because if you don't put it in that context it means absolutely nothing.

I'll leave the remaining time to my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, who wants to speak to this as well.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: I want to commend my colleague from Peterborough, Mr. Leal, on bringing this bill forward, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings. Much has been said thus far about the timeliness of this bill and the economic state of the world perhaps driven by calamities in the United States in the main. I'm not certain that the member thought about this bill for this particular time and the events that surround us now. It might have been researched and thought about many months ago, as many of us do when we turn our minds towards a private member's bill. It might only be by coincidence in time and history that we're discussing the timeliness of this bill, as it were.

Small business owners and their families work extremely hard. Everyone attests to that. Retirees worked hard throughout their lives, and they may have been fortunate enough to start a small nest egg in an RRSP, a DPSP and then eventually an RRIF. They worked hard to achieve that, and for many of them hard work is just simply a way of life. They work from dusk till dawn in many cases. I suspect many of those hard-working small business owners don't have huge RRSPs put to the side for their retirement. They depend on that because in many cases they don't have a pension plan within their household at all.

How many of us have either taken advantage of this advice or given the following advice: "Buy your RRSPs at a young age. Buy them now. If you can't buy a lot, put a little bit in each month, just a very small amount; the monies will grow." I think almost all of us have heard that very good advice and have probably, if we can, taken it. Of course when I was much younger, there wasn't such a vehicle at all. There were no such savings. Basically, the saving that I was aware of at the time was to put it into a bank and accept the interest rate on that day, week, month or year. Now we have these other vehicles put aside with the intended purpose of providing for one's pension into the future, particularly for the people we're talking about, the small business owners, retirees; those people have worked very hard. I think it's good legislation to bring forward to protect the investment that they've made as they have worked so hard for their families.

The member for Peterborough mentioned safe haven. When I looked at this bill, I used a different term—I was

thinking of sheltering—but I think we're talking about the same thing. I wouldn't want members to think that through this legislation people could take monies, put them into one of these investment vehicles and shelter or have a safe haven from their creditors. We all know here that there are limits on the amounts of money that one can put into one of these plans. I'm not very versed in DPSPs, but I do know that in the others there are limits. So one could not shelter huge amounts of money because there are limits set by the federal government on what could be put into one of these plans. Therefore, I think we have a pretty sound bill here when we talk about safe haven and shelter.

With those remarks, I would urge everyone to support the bill and bring about a time when we can put this to committee and have a more thorough discussion on it.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to take a few minutes today to comment on the legislation brought forward by my colleague from Peterborough, and that's Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings.

I certainly do support the bill, as I believe our whole caucus does, because consistency is a very important matter in terms of how we treat retirement savings vehicles, and I believe one of the intentions of this proposed legislation is it do exactly that. There are many examples in my own riding of seniors and retirees who are struggling to get by, through no fault of their own, and deal with some of the challenges that life brings during post-employment years. I've also heard from a number of constituents the challenges they face from not having access to their locked-in pensions. I know the member for Halton introduced a bill about allowing people to access their locked-in pensions. I do have a constituent who is very tenacious about that, is suffering because he can't get to his locked-in pension, and hopes that he can get to it before he dies, because he needs the money today. He has been a very strong advocate of that, and we've worked with him and supported him in the past with that.

There's no question Ontario seniors and retirees have built the foundation for the strong Ontario that we have today. There is no member in this Legislature who would dispute that statement at all. They deserve to have control over their hard-earned retirement savings. I've heard from seniors and retirees who have stated that clearly the rules are too restrictive, so I hope today will spur on a good discussion on providing seniors and retirees the options about accessing their hard-earned money. It's only fair that they have access to their own money and can better plan for their retirement based on those needs.

It would be simple to change Ontario's pension rules with no cost to the taxpayer in a way that respects the wishes of these individuals to manage their money as they see fit. I think this is especially appropriate at this time with the economic uncertainty that we see with the stocks falling, the global situation that's occurring out

there and businesses that are going to be facing extreme challenges. People certainly do have a reason to be concerned about their investments and their nest eggs in today's volatile market. It's important to provide the types of resources and tools that can easily help with that burden.

I agree with Bill 96. If properly applied, it would certainly encourage our small business owners to invest more into RSPs and help them ensure that they have a financially secure retirement. It would certainly also encourage the employees of small businesses to look into ensuring that they are planning for their futures and their retirements. This week is Ontario Small Business Week, and, as has been mentioned, 98% of businesses in Ontario are considered small businesses. In my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, small businesses are key economic drivers. Small businesses are the hundreds and hundreds of farmers and agriculture businesses that they employ in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. So it's certainly appropriate at this time, during Small Business Week, to salute our small business owner-operators and staff that are employed, and this bill does reflect partially on them.

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I know I'll be joining the mayor of the City of Kawartha Lakes tomorrow. As well, the Minister of Small Business will be in Lindsay presenting the annual innovation awards to some worthy recipients in the area of the City of Kawartha Lakes. There's certainly no shortage of innovation and forward thinking there. So it will be an exciting day to celebrate small business in my riding.

I want to also appreciate the member from Peterborough in crafting Bill 96 in a way that doesn't have a negative impact on the important aspects of the family responsibility and support awareness acts.

It appears to be a tangible, practical and applicable piece of proposed legislation. It would be applied to pensions and insurance-based retirement plans to protect them against seizure under provincial insurance and provincial and federal pension benefits legislation, while the RSPs and other deferred income plans were not. I know that in other provinces this has already been brought forward, as has been mentioned. So hopefully this will bring forward some more consistency in terms of credit seizure, allowing Ontarians more security in providing for themselves in their retirement years.

The senior and retiree population in my riding is significantly higher than the provincial average, which is just a bit over 13%. In the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, it's more along the lines of 19% to 20%. It's not uncommon for people to decide to retire and move up to the beautiful cottage country that encompasses a large part of my riding. It's important that, as legislators, we understand the valuable social role that seniors and retirees play in the future of our communities. Promoting their health, their safety and financial security will certainly not only guarantee them a better quality of life, but it will help ensure our com-

munities continue to benefit from their knowledge and experience.

Bill 96 will help employers, employees and professionals who don't have registered plans also. As I say, certainly small businesses are the backbone of my riding in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. This legislation that's being brought forward today by the member from Peterborough makes good sense, not just in these times, but I think we're doing catch-up with other provinces and federal legislation. So we're pleased to support Bill 96, the Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act, in the Legislature today.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to rise as well to support this bill, and also, of course, to rise as the critic for small business for the New Democrats to support small business in Small Business Week.

We've heard that if you owe \$100,000, it's your problem; if you owe \$100 million, it's the bank's problem. Now we're in an era where if you owe \$100 billion, it's everyone's problem.

Certainly this bill does something to protect those who have to supply their own pension plan, and that's RRSPs. We know that 91% of small business owners, according to one survey, invest in RRSPs to provide their own pension plan. And certainly we know that in this House, again, without a pension plan, many of the members here are part of that group who have to invest to provide for their own retirement, or else they don't retire. I often joke that I'm on the Freedom 95 plan: It's going to take me till then to save up enough. I'm sure there are many in small business across this province who are in the same boat.

I speak to small business owners all the time. I've been working with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, TABIA, and have brought forward a resolution around business education tax, which we'd like to see more movement on too, because in the Toronto area, that tax is unfair in comparison to the 905 area. So there is lots more that we need to do to protect small business, but certainly Bill 96 is one step towards that. I simply hope, and this is absolutely non-partisan, that this goes to committee, that we have a chance to fully debate this bill in committee and to make it stronger. I hope, again, that the cabinet across the way supports that motion, because so many private members' bills' initiatives get lost in this place, and that that doesn't happen to this one and to the member from Peterborough, because it's a good one. We all agree it is, and we want to see it made into law sooner rather than later, because of the troubling times ahead.

The more that we can do to support the entrepreneur, the more that we can do to support the small business person, the more we do to support employment. As you heard the member from Whitby–Oshawa say, it is an absolute fact that small business is the major employer in our jurisdiction here in Ontario, and that's probably true around the world. So, to support everyone, we need to support small business. That's something that I think

needs to be emphasized over and over again in this place. Unfortunately, with bankruptcies already on the rise, we see that not enough is being done to do that. I know that other members have brought forward private members' bills around red tape, around tax reform. Here's one around RSPs.

Again, I would urge all members to think about the small businesses in their communities in this Small Business Week and to think about what more we could do as representatives here to support those critical members of our riding.

On behalf of New Democrats, we support this bill. We think it's a good one. We'd like to see it go to committee very quickly. We'd like to see it passed into law. We urge all members across from us not only to support it—members on this side clearly do—but, hopefully, you can also garner support from your cabinet and from your Premier so that this can be enacted as soon as possible.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today, on behalf of my good friend Jeff Leal, to speak about Bill 96. It's one of those things you learn, and that I've learned in the last five years in being here, that certain things are so obvious and we just don't pay much attention to them, and when they're brought forward—"Why hasn't somebody thought of this umpteen years ago?"

I guess I could just say "ditto" to everything that's been said and sit down, because, as you heard, everybody is in favour of this. For some who have been self-employed all their lives, like I have, with no fixed pension plan from anywhere and the few dollars—not too many—that we were able to put away, the last month or so, we've seen them evaporate. I know that this does not fix that; I wish it did. But it does put in some roadblocks. Sometimes people who have worked hard all their lives, like Ontarians, through no fault of their own, come up with difficulties, and some of these assets are frozen or taken away from them. I would just hate to see that day come. So this is, as most people say, appropriate for the time. Like I say, this should have happened a long time ago.

When we see that the majority of the provinces across this country and other jurisdictions have adopted such pieces of legislation, one would say, in common terms, that this is a no-brainer. So I urge all the members—and I think, from what I've heard so far from all sides of the House, this is supported. I guess the member from Trinity–Spadina said that we who sit here in this Legislature, especially the ones who haven't been here very long, will have no security the day that we leave here except for a few dollars that are contributed to a retirement fund—not a pension—that's dwindling away. So I think any kind of protection—at no cost to anybody—is strictly government doing what it is supposed to do: protect its citizens.

I don't have a lot to say because, like I say, this just makes good sense, and I hope that we get this done, not

just through second reading here, but that it goes to committee quickly and that it goes to third reading and gets royal assent, because we certainly don't want to see anybody hurt out there. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this.

1610

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: It gives me pleasure to rise as well in support of the member from Peterborough's private member's Bill 96. I want to take just a moment, though—as he mentioned at the very beginning of his speech, Mr. Gaskell is going to be very pleased today, I would think, if he has the opportunity to be watching these proceedings. I think this speaks so well for our process in private members' time on occasion, where this really is an opportunity when a constituent identifies for one of us a very critical issue to them or to those in the community that has the opportunity to come to the floor of this place and see support from all sides of the House—people speaking very positively about the initiative, people speaking to the importance of it in the context of understanding what it is for those who have retirement savings, those who are in their senior years and who are so dependent on those savings that they've put together over the years in judicious fashion and looking to protect those. But it's so important that this process allows for that to happen, and I think each of us wants to extend to Mr. Gaskell a sincere thank you for drawing this to the member from Peterborough, Mr. Leal's, attention in May of this year—at least that's the correspondence.

I suspect he probably spoke to him prior to that. He probably called him either here or at the constituency office. Maybe he had a meeting and told him what it was that he was concerned about, and I suspect that the member said, "Can you put something in writing for me? Can you kind of fill in the blanks a bit?" as he did when speaking about what's happened in Manitoba and a number of the other provinces, as you go through the correspondence that was provided in other jurisdictions where initiatives have been taken in this regard or are under consideration. That really speaks very well for what we're doing.

The current economic climate—others have spoken to that—is such that this is an opportune time for this Legislature to be considering this particular private member's bill, to be able to see it go to committee with broad support, because clearly the environment today is one in which each of us who has any money put away in retirement savings in one fashion or another is thinking about those savings. We hadn't necessarily considered what might happen in a circumstance where our fortunes had turned in some fashion, probably through no fault of our own. Those savings might have been at risk in addition to being a risk in the marketplace.

I note, as well, in Mr. Leal's correspondence to us that he made some reference to similar legislation that was brought forward as a private member's bill by the now-

Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, back in a former government time. I think that speaks as well to the fact that often these matters need to be brought before this Legislature on more than one occasion, as we know—before the public generally—before this Legislature would consider their adoption, before a government of the day would consider adoption. So it's opportune that this has come forward yet again to be considered, in effect, in this Legislature under private members' business and, potentially, by governments—the government of that day and the government of this day.

It was only a couple of years ago, during the budgetary process, that the province took an initiative and followed in line with what other jurisdictions are doing in a similar fashion, and that's with the LRIFs, the locked-in retirement income funds, that up until a couple of years ago in Ontario were 100% locked in and the pensioner had no access to those. Some jurisdictions treat it very differently. I believe that Saskatchewan allows 100% freedom for withdrawing from those locked-in retirement income funds. The province of Ontario moved from 100% locked-in to a one-time opportunity to unlock 25% of those. I must say that bureaucrats are rather concerned about that, but it was maybe, I'll suggest, a test of the marketplace, an opportunity to see what would happen, and hopefully the government will go back and review that situation when it has some data to work from.

I think this is the kind of bill that builds on that type of work. It's yet another opportunity for us to take a look at those who have money that they've set aside, first wanting to protect it, or, secondarily, in the other instance, wanting the option to be able to manage it in a fashion that they feel they want to manage it on their own behalf, feeling that they're the most appropriate folks to be doing that.

I'm pleased to be able to support Bill 96. I'm pleased on behalf of the member and his constituents and certainly encouraged, as I'm sure he is, by the very positive comments around this Legislature during the course of this afternoon's private members' debate.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise in support of the bill from the member for Peterborough. I think it's very important. It has been mentioned by many others, when it comes to RSPs for small business, that that is the only way they have of planning for the future. I think, because of circumstances that happened all the way through your life, that it isn't always that your future can stay protected, particularly if you had those funds in RSPs, where you cannot control them beyond that point; all of a sudden things happen and then not only your present leaves you but the future leaves you, too. So I think, definitely, the time has come. Particularly with the events of the last number of months, the time has come that we look after some of these folks in small business who have their future and their pension all waiting for them, but only what they've invested—then all of a sudden, because of circumstances beyond their control, they lose

all that, not only their present income but their future, too. I think it's very appropriate that we deal with this legislation today and thank them for their contributions that got us there, but make sure that what's left there for them is still there.

I was told many years ago when I was a young person that one must remember that the only thing that will be there when you get there is what you send on ahead. I don't think it's fair that these folks have all sent it on ahead and then find out that, for whatever reason, our laws didn't protect it so they would have it there when they got there. So I commend the member from Peterborough for bringing this forward, and I will be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Terrific. Further debate in the 24 seconds we have left? Seeing none, the honourable member for Peterborough, Mr. Leal, has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the members in the House this afternoon who spoke very positively in support of Bill 96—Pickering—Scarborough East; Chatham—Kent—Essex, soon to be Chatham—Kent—Leamington; Parkdale—High Park; Northumberland—Quinte West; Whitby—Oshawa; Trinity—Spadina; Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Oxford—to provide some comments today. Hopefully, we can move this bill forward. It is timely, certainly during Small Business Week and, of course, the economic turmoil that is now being felt internationally, throughout the world. It's interesting to note that, on paper, the New York Stock Exchange has now lost some \$3 trillion.

I get calls—the member from Pickering—Scarborough East mentioned Mark Gaskell, who did contact me many months ago. He had done some extensive research in other provinces in Canada and pointed out to me that Ontario was one of the remaining provinces that didn't have such protection of RRSPs if someone, unfortunately, is going into bankruptcy proceedings. One would have thought that the Ontario securities exchange—Ontario being, as John Robarts used to say, the great linchpin of Confederation—would certainly be a leader in this field to make sure that there was a legislative framework in place to protect RRSPs and other investment instruments from a situation where one might find themselves in a state of bankruptcy.

I'm really hoping, with the all-party support today, that we'll get this Bill 96 on to committee. At some future point, I happen to think this would be an important piece of legislation to be passed to provide that protection. As clearly articulated by all members in the House today, this is a good bill that has all-party support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98(e), the time for private members' public business has concluded before the expiry of the allotted two and a half hours. This standing order is there to give some certainty for members who may want to come to the House to vote. Therefore, the House is suspended until 4:25.

The House suspended proceedings from 1619 to 1625.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 46, standing in the name of Mr. Sergio.

SENIORS' OMBUDSMAN ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'OMBUDSMAN DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sergio has moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to establish the Seniors' Ombudsman. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sergio.

Mr. Mario Sergio: To the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? So referred.

We will now deal with ballot item number 47, standing in the name of Mr. Hoy.

REPRESENTATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hoy has moved second reading of Bill 104, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2005. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Chair recognizes Mr. Hoy.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I would ask that this bill be sent to the committee on justice policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy? So referred.

We will now deal with the final ballot item, number 48, standing in the name of Mr. Leal.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Peterborough, Mr. Leal.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd ask that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the standing committee? So referred.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Minister of Labour has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We're so adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1627.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldeep (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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

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

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Kim Craiton
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 Craiton, 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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**Seniors' Ombudsman Act, 2008, Bill 102, Mr. Sergio
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Second reading agreed to	3564
Mr. Mario Sergio	3564

Representation Amendment Act, 2008, Bill 104,

**Mr. Hoy / Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi sur la
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Second reading agreed to	3564
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**Registered Retirement Savings Protection Act, 2008,
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