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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 4 March 2009**

**Mercredi 4 mars 2009**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 March 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 mars 2009

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS  
AMENDMENT ACT  
(ORGAN DONOR LEAVE), 2009  
LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI  
(CONGÉ POUR DON D'ORGANE)

Mr. Fonseca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of organ donor leave / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé pour don d'organe.

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

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing the time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

Today we begin second reading of Bill 154, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Organ Donor Leave), 2009. I would like to begin my comments by reiterating what is in this bill and why we are acting.

Our government has already taken some steps toward making the province a national leader in enhancing and saving lives through organ donation for transplantation. These steps are contained in our announcement made in 2007, setting out \$4 million to implement an organ donor strategy. This strategy includes the establishment of the program for reimbursing expenses of living organ donors. This is a fund that will reimburse living organ donors for reasonable, out-of-pocket types of expenses and lost income associated with their organ donation. The purpose of the fund is to remove potential financial barriers to living organ donations.

Reimbursing organ donors and removing financial barriers was one of the recommendations made by the citizens' panel established by the Ministry of Health in 2006. The panel also recommended job-protected leave for donors.

Yesterday, we responded by introducing Bill 154. With this bill, we are taking another step that supports our commitment to encourage organ donations in Ontario. If passed, this bill may help increase life-saving transplants and reduce wait times for patients on the organ transplant waiting list. It would also assist in reducing health care costs. But there's another benefit, a benefit on which we can't place a cost. By providing unpaid, job-protected leave for organ donors, we may be helping increase the number who donate an organ. This will help save lives.

Providing an organ donation which would save the life of a husband, wife, son, daughter or other relative is a precious gift. Organ donors are caring and compassionate people. Job-protected leave for living organ donors would provide support for those compassionate Ontarians who are giving the gift of life to others.

Why are we introducing job-protected leave for organ donors at this time? Living organ donors play an important role in organ donation. They make up approximately 30% of total transplants. The job-protected leave we are proposing in Bill 154 may help increase the number of organ donors by providing support to those donors.

We have not come to this decision without due consultation and reflection. As I mentioned earlier, in November 2006, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care commissioned a Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations. The purpose of this panel was to survey the public on their views about organ donation and to find ways to improve and increase organ donations in Ontario. The panel released its recommendations in March 2007. Their recommendations focused on such things as improving awareness of the importance of organ donations and removing barriers to donations. One of those recommendations fell under the mandate of the Ministry of Labour. In response to the panel's recommendation, we're bringing forth this legislation.

In August 2007, as a result of the recommendations made by the citizens' panel, Premier McGuinty announced up to \$4 million to implement an organ donation strategy. At that time, we stated that in order to encourage more living donations through increased supports, the government would, among other initiatives, consult with employer and labour groups on providing job security for living donors with legislative protection. The organ donor leave we are proposing is consistent with the province's organ donation strategy. It furthers the objectives of the strategy and reinforces the government's commitment to improving rates of organ donation in the province.

As I have noted, this proposed legislation has not come out of the clear blue sky; it has come about because the citizens of this province have said, "This is what we need," and this is what we need.

Just a personal story: I have a relative who is currently undergoing dialysis and is a candidate for a kidney transplant. He is actually one of the lucky ones. He has someone who is a match for donation and is willing to provide a kidney.

Transplantation is a serious consideration for both the donor and the recipient. There are risks for both people. It's not something that's done lightly. I've not brought forward this legislation for the consideration of the House without understanding the nature and the impact of what we are doing. This is a serious matter. Although the number of employees and employers who are affected by this initiative is expected to be relatively small, it is no small matter for the individuals affected. The proposed leave would apply to employees who are donating all or part of the following organs: kidney, liver, pancreas, small bowel or lung.

#### 0910

Kidney and liver transplants are the most common types of living organ donation. Members of this House understand the importance of this legislation, but some have suggested that the bill is unnecessary as most employers would provide consent in any case. While we would hope that is so, donors want a guarantee, and this will provide their guarantee. It removes a potential barrier, particularly in this current unstable economic time. It is just one part of an overall initiative to increase organ donations. It provides the unpaid, job-protected leave that people say they need. It is one less thing for organ donors to have to concern themselves with. It re-enforces the fund that was established last April by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to reimburse donors for reasonable expenses and lost wages. That fund and the legislation before you would complement each other by helping to get rid of financial barriers to organ donations.

We have before us a bill that is part of a whole strategy. The people of Ontario and the government are working in partnership to reduce the barriers to organ donation and increase the number of donors. I ask the members of the House to join me and carry out the wishes of the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further debate: the member from Brampton West.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** I rise today to speak in support of Bill 154, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Organ Donor Leave) 2009.

Yes, this is an important bill. It is important only to the few people who will ever be asked to donate an organ. The number of employees and employers who would be affected by this proposed initiative is expected to be small—in the past fiscal year, only 260 transplants were done with donations from living donors—but when it is important, it is very important.

In Ontario, there are approximately 1,700 people on organ transplant waiting lists, and every three days,

someone on this waiting list dies. We want to help increase the number of organ donations; we want to increase the number from living donors. We want to increase organ donations across the board. This bill would help support that goal by providing unpaid, job-protected leave for people who donate an organ. By providing this leave, we would help to remove one of the potential barriers to organ donation.

In 2007, our Premier announced Ontario's organ donation strategy. This included a program for reimbursing expenses of living organ donors. The expenses covered by this program include certain travel, parking and transit, meals, accommodation, meal allowance, and a subsidy for loss of income after surgery.

These are very difficult economic times for working people. By providing these expenses, along with job-protected leave, we hope to make more organ donations possible. We also know that these are difficult times for employers. As we have noted, we expect that the number of employees who take this leave will be small, and so the number of employers affected will also be very small.

We held consultations. Employers who responded to the consultations supported this proposed leave and made suggestions about what the specific elements of the leave should be, such as the need for reasonable notice prior to leave. They also asked that we require a medical certificate for leave. This is something we've done. They asked that leave be unpaid. This is something we have also done. We listened to their concerns; we listened to their suggestions. We understand the concerns of business.

We feel we have found the right balance, which will have a small impact on business but a large impact on people's lives. This is why I urge my friends and colleagues in the House to support Bill 154.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Comments and questions?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** We just received Bill 154, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of organ donor leave, yesterday, but on the surface it certainly looks like something we would be supporting. I think that anything we can do to encourage people to get involved in organ donation in this province is a positive step.

I know there have been a number of members who have had private members' bills in the past that have taken different approaches to trying to encourage greater awareness of organ donation. I know that Peter Kormos, the member from Welland, had a private member's bill with one approach and as well, Frank Klees, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, had a private member's bill that, as I recall, required you to make a decision when you applied for a health card or for a driver's licence. You had to choose either yes, no, or undecided, but you had to decide something. That way everyone who was applying for a health card, which would be most of the people in the province, or a driver's licence, would at least be aware and have to think for a moment about organ donation.

Recently—just last week, of course—we had the grand chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation here at Queen's Park doing a press conference: Grand Chief Stan Beardy, who's taking a leadership role in producing a brochure and educating the Nishnawbe Aski Nation's people on the importance of organ donation. It's great to see Grand Chief Beardy taking that leadership role.

I certainly think education and awareness are important. This will be a small step to making it easier for someone to leave their place of work and not be penalized, and know they have a job to come back to after they've made an organ donation. Certainly we should commend anyone who makes that decision to actually donate an organ and realize they're giving another person a second chance at life.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I will be doing my lead on this; the government is indulging me.

I can use an hour standing on my head on the issue of organ donation. I've got some things to say about that. We've been passionate about the need to eliminate the waiting lists, we in the New Democratic Party, with some radical reform of the whole organ donor regime. We've got to be radical. We've got to be bold, because lives are at stake. People are dying every day on waiting lists while good organs are being burned and buried.

We're going to vote for this bill; of course we are—not that the bill will change the reality much, because I've asked the government to come up with a single worker who has been fired, for instance, because they took some time off to be a living donor. The government may well come up with one before we're finished with this. So the bill is inoffensive, but it's offensive in that it doesn't really meaningfully increase access to organs for people on waiting lists, including little kids.

Andrea Horwath is going to be speaking to this in short order. As I say, the government's indulging me. I go to a House leaders' meeting at 9:45 and the government is indulging me by letting me, as we say here, stand down my lead. But I look forward to the chance to speak to this bill because we've got to, once again, radically engage the public to encourage them to support and, in fact, to demand real reform in organ donation. All of the money that's been spent, all of the advertising, Don Cherry notwithstanding, hasn't radically or dramatically increased the number of organ donor cards being signed, yet we know that the vast majority of Ontarians want their organs to be used. Ontarians, Canadians, are people of goodwill. They expect them to be used. Well, if they expect them to be used, why do we have a presumed denial regime rather than a presumed consent?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments?

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to rise to enter the debate on Bill 154. I stand in this House and let the members know that I will be supporting this bill.

One of the stories that I like to tell from when I was elected in 2003 has certainly given me a whole new

insight into how organ transplants can affect families on an individual basis. If the members will remember, we had a quilt in the House. Those who had donated their organs signed the quilt on behalf of the family member. One of the stories was from my riding of Bruce county. There was a woman who was here that day, and the organ was donated on behalf of her son. She had also learned about organ transplants because her nephew had passed away a year before in a car accident, as had her son. She then told the story about the decision to donate her son's organs and the work that she did with her sister for her son. I can tell you that the recipients of the organs—when we heard the difference that it made in the young children's lives, we, as members of the Legislature, must do what we can to ensure that the process continues to move forward. Bill 154 is another step moving in that direction, to allow organs to move from those who have met an untimely death so that the recipients are available and ready. We need to continue to work diligently on that. I will be speaking at length, so I look forward to that opportunity.

**0920**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments?

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** Who can argue with what's being presented here today? But again, I think it's one of those bills that we're really missing the message on, and that is to put something into this bill that affects shortening the list. I don't think it's clear in this bill whether or not that's going to happen.

I know there will be job-protected leave for those people—"generous" is even a trite word for what is happening here—who really give of themselves in the fullest sense to help another fellow human being. That is admirable, but I really don't believe that this protected leave of absence is going to be the straw that broke the camel's back when somebody decides that they want to be an organ donor. I really don't believe that's going to do it. Whether or not this has any effect on that 1,700-person waiting list is very doubtful.

The minister says that the Ontario government is committed to boosting organ donations. I don't see anything in this bill that makes that happen. So again, it's one of those bills where I think there's—I don't know. I guess I would call it more symbolism than substance. That's what's happening here. It's an opportunity lost. It's a good idea. It's a great idea. But what are we really going to get from it?

I would be happy if, as this bill moves forward, there are amendments put forward that strengthen this bill and really make a difference to that 1,700 waiting list.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** We'll go back to the member for Brampton West, who will finish his comments and wrap-up.

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** Organ donation is never an easy issue for anyone—the recipient or the donor. Bill 154 is just one step further that we're taking to keep the organ donation subject on the radar. As I stated before, the impact on business will be very small.

As well, once in every three days a person dies because of a lack of organ donation, and one death is way too many. I know the list is huge. We have 1,700 people on the waiting list, and our government, our minister, is committed to bringing those numbers down.

In my community, whenever I go to the local temple, I remind people—the topic of organ donation is not an easy one for either side—to sign their organ donation cards, just to create further awareness of the importance of donating. With this bill, we are making the process of organ donation easier on those people who might be affected through a possible loss of job and income. Again, it's such a wonderful step to help those in need of an organ donation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further debate? The honourable member for Sarnia—

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Lambton. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair this morning. I know you will do an admirable job there.

I would like to rise and comment on Bill 154. As a number of members have already said, it's an admirable reach to try to remove this waiting list for recipients who are on the list and donors who hopefully will step forward and take advantage of the unpaid leave. If they did have concerns about their job being there when they would return, those fears would now be alleviated to some extent.

As the member for Burlington said, it could be a missed opportunity to put maybe more emphasis on making that list smaller, so let's look forward, when we do go to committee, to attempting to make the bill better, to putting improvements in it and to making other communication efforts, as well, available that will move people off that list.

We should have moved this bill sooner, like last Christmas. Around Christmas, we were looking for more bills, work to do. We could have introduced it then and maybe have had it debated long before now if there was a real issue about this.

I think it's one of these feel-good bills. Like the member for Welland said, no one is going to vote against it at the end of the day. It's something we all agree with; it's something that needs to be done and should have been done a long time ago.

I understand that a member of our caucus, Mr. Klees, from Newmarket–Aurora, introduced a bill that would have necessitated, when you enrol for your licence or medical card, that you would have had to, at that time, made a declaration whether you want to be involved in an organ donor program. I understand that the member from Welland, as well, had issues around that.

Just to go over a little bit of the bill, the people who would be taking part in this would be eligible for unemployment insurance while they're on there for up to 13 weeks in the initial phase. I understand from my perusal of the bill that if there were further complications, they could extend that a further 13 weeks, with medical documentation from a doctor, for a total of 26 weeks.

From my reading of the bill, from what I can understand, an employer has to have at least 50 or more em-

ployees before they would be eligible. That's something I need to look into further. So maybe not everybody in the province of Ontario would be eligible for this as an organ donor. That's something that I'll have to work on with the minister and his PA to also determine. Maybe that is something we can iron out at committee.

The new section, as I understand it, applies to certain organs—kidney, liver, lung, pancreas and small bowel donations—and other organs and tissues that may be added by regulation at a later time.

At the present time, statistics show that there are approximately 1,700 people on the organ donor transplant list at any one time. This is certainly a list that we should try to reduce—reduce that wait time. Those family members who have members on that list or who are waiting for those organ donors and those organs—it's all about life itself, so anything we can do as a Legislature, as a province or as individuals to help reduce that list, I think, is very important.

I understand that, over time, living donors have become a more important part of these organ donations. They now comprise somewhere near 30% of the total transplants which are done in Ontario. Hopefully, with a bill like this and with improvements made to it through amendments at committee, we can bring that list up from 30% to maybe 50% or more. I think that would be an admirable reach.

Statistics show that in 2007-08, out of 863 transplants that were completed, 260 or more, which would be about 30% of these, came from living donors. When employers were consulted—and I'm glad to see that the minister did do that—they did have some concerns, and those that they expressed to us were that they needed to have a reasonable amount of notice for this leave in advance, they wanted to have medical documentation to determine the length of leave, and, at the end of the day, the leave should be unpaid.

The government, when they were drafting the bill, appears to have listened, and a lot of those concerns that were put forward by the business community appear to, at this time, have been included in this bill. Like I say, when we go to committee and have opportunities for people from the business community and the organ donor transplant list to have input as well, we'll see if there can be improvements made.

#### 0930

The panel that was appointed in 2006 made numerous proposals to increase organ donations, including that the government enact legislation such as this. I say again: our party commends the minister for moving ahead with this bill. I think it should have been done a long time ago. Maybe it could have incorporated some of the ideas from Mr. Klees from Newmarket–Aurora and Mr. Kormos from Welland. He had ideas as well. Hopefully, at the end of the day, all of these can be incorporated to improve the bill. As the member for Burlington said, it's probably a missed opportunity to remove more people from the list. That, at the end of the day, is the ultimate goal.

I know the Minister of Health as well wants to see as many people off that list so that people can make a contribution to society and take the worry and the strain off families that are concerned about loved ones who are either on the list or going to make a donation of an organ themselves, that they have some employment to return to at that time. It's a big decision to be a donor in the first place, let alone if you had to worry about your job being there these days, with the state of the economy being what it is. It doesn't look like that's going to change any time soon either. Hopefully, as we move forward, there would be opportunities to improve this.

I did some checking on this and I did some research with the minister's office, and donors are eligible. I had questions of this asked of me in caucus. Yes, in fact, donors are eligible for employment insurance and recourse under the fund set up through the Ministry of Health in April 2008. The proposed job-protected leave would be unpaid and an employer would have no obligation under the proposed leave to pay any remuneration to the employee while he or she is on this leave to donate an organ. However, there could be obligations under certain collective agreements or employment contracts to provide some compensation during the leave of absence, and those would be individual cases governed by collective agreements or contracted services. The staff at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have confirmed to us that organ donors may also qualify for sick benefits if they are unable to return to work following organ donation surgery, assuming they meet certain qualifying concerns.

As in any bill, the devil is in the details. In summing up, the intent of the bill is good. To me, it's another bill that would be very difficult for anyone to make an argument against. I certainly wouldn't be one who would do it, and I'm sure no one in any of the other caucuses would either.

At the end of the day, the main issue is reducing that list. Let's get it from 30% to maybe 50% or 60%. We can highlight issues like this through debate in the House, in committee and newsletters so that people in Ontario understand what we're doing here to try and reduce these wait lists and hopefully bring a better quality of life to those recipients who are on these lists, sometimes languishing for years. I would encourage everyone to support the bill and try to make improvements at committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's my pleasure to say a few words on the speech by the member for Sarnia-Lambton. I will be making remarks on this bill myself in very short order.

I think he's correct in his comments that the bill is a helpful bill. It's a bill that I think nobody in this chamber would be opposed to. However, I do believe it's pretty clear that the bill really won't do much at all in terms of reducing the waiting lists for organ donations, which continue to be quite high in this province. I say that because, of course, the bill does nothing to change the framework,

in which organ donation takes place in the province of Ontario. It simply provides opportunity to ensure that there's no threat of job loss, no threat that someone who decides to be an organ donor will then have some kind of employment-related repercussion. Certainly, that's something that we would want to make sure of, that if someone is doing the right thing by donating an organ and has to take time off work, their work is there for them.

I don't believe the bill speaks to issues of financially helping that person who is making the organ donation, in terms of being able to make sure that that person is able to take the dozen or so weeks that are necessary to go through the surgery and the recovery stage, and ensure that their income is maintained. That would be something that I think would be helpful as well. Unfortunately, I don't believe that that is in the bill.

However, that's one really small piece of the puzzle. Organ donations from live donors are what's covered off in this bill specifically around their employment. A heck of a lot more needs to change, and later on we'll be hearing from the critic from the New Democratic Party, Peter Kormos, who has spoken passionately and often about the need to completely change our system of organ donation. I'll be making remarks in that regard as well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comment?

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** It's a pleasure to get up this morning and have some time to speak on this bill. I think it's a very important one, and I commend the Minister of Labour for doing what he did this morning in presenting this.

As I speak, I have a constituent from my riding over at Toronto General; two weeks ago, she took part in a double lung transplant. She's recovering nicely, and certainly this would fit right into what she is going through, a young gal who's certainly got a great outlook on life and, through cystic fibrosis, just needed that new opportunity in life. Someone in this province gave her that new lease on life. I was over to visit her just last week and was very, very excited about what this is going to do for her. In speaking in the House this morning, I would speak for my friend from Cornwall, who would say that this is the right thing to do, that this bill will support the goal of providing unpaid, job-protected leave for people who donate an organ.

In that regard, it was through the death of an individual, but when you have individuals putting their life on hold, their businesses on hold, their employment opportunities on hold to donate a kidney, to donate an organ, we as a province should have things in place that would help them. I think this bill is going to go a long way in that regard. I commend the minister for that and look to the day that this will receive passage through this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments and questions?

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** It's my pleasure this morning to comment on the speech of the member for Sarnia-Lambton. In effect, this bill guarantees the jobs of per-

sons who provide donor organs, and I think that is a good aim. It follows in the path we have already under the Employment Standards Act: guaranteed jobs of individuals who take a leave of absence for pregnancy.

I had the pleasure of introducing in this House a bill that would protect and guarantee the jobs of individuals who served with our armed forces and who served overseas. My bill only got to first reading. The government did, however, adopt it, and it has passed. So we presently have an Employment Standards Act in which the jobs of individuals bearing children are protected, and now those of soldiers serving in the armed forces overseas.

However, in this particular case, I do not believe this bill will satisfy the needs of those individuals seeking organs. This is a matter of life and death, and we already have presented in this House two excellent bills: one by my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the other by Peter Kormos, the member for Welland. Both of those bills, I do believe, would result in a sizable difference for people seeking organs. This bill is only a very small step. It's not a strike; it's in fact a ball that misses the mark.

**0940**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comment?

I'll go back to the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're doing an admirable job this morning.

I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton Centre and from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and also my colleague from Cambridge for their kind remarks this morning on the subject we are debating, Bill 154; with all these different numbers, it's hard to keep track of them.

To reiterate all the points they made, it's important that we move forward with this bill; make amendments when we get it to committee, where we can improve it; and support the organ donation program throughout Ontario and do everything we can to encourage more people to take part in organ donations to try to reduce that so-called 1,700 organ donor waiting list. I know that the goal would be to get it to zero. That's probably not possible overnight, but we should do everything, whether it's incorporating, over time, issues like the member for Newmarket–Aurora had in the bill he introduced—and the member for Welland, Mr. Kormos, had ideas—to improve bills like this, to do everything we can to reduce the wait list and make these individuals productive and well again so that they can go back to their families. They can be in the workplace, contributing to Ontario's society; they can be an important part of their family again; and their families can take that worry—one less thing—off their plate if they know their loved one will be able to return and be a valued member of society and also be able to contribute and they don't have to worry every day about their health.

Thank you again, and I look forward to further debate on the bill as we go forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further debate?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the bill on organ donation. The minister made his remarks earlier and spoke about his desire to bring this bill forward in a way that would increase opportunities for people to receive organ donations from live donors. The bill, as the minister indicated, provides employees who decide to become organ donors—who take that step and do that very selfless and important act of donating an organ to another person in need—with security around employment, so that the time it is necessary to take from work to be able to prepare for, undergo and then recuperate from the surgery—all that time that is taken off work—is not going to jeopardize that person's employment. As I said in my remarks a few moments ago, New Democrats are likely going to support this bill. It's a very minuscule step, but it's certainly a step in the right direction.

I say it is a minuscule step because right now we have a system of organ donation in Ontario that simply does not meet the needs of Ontarians. We know very well that there are people who are dying in this province every day because they cannot have access—because there is no access—to organs they so desperately need to save their lives.

In fact, just today there was an article in the Toronto Sun. The headline reads, "Teen's Desperate Plea." A 19-year-old woman is taking the search for a life-saving liver donor for her mom to Queen's Park. Her mom is very ill, suffering from a disease that will shut down her liver. Unfortunately, there is a blood type issue—the blood type of the mother is rather rare—and none of the other family members are in a position to donate a portion of their liver to help this woman survive.

We know that there are some 1,700 people on waiting lists for organ donation in the province of Ontario—1,700 people. Some of those people are children—some of those people are very small children—who have their whole lives ahead of them or face certain death if those organs are not found in time to save their lives.

What happens right now in Ontario? What happens is that through the driver's licensing system, we are able to sign an organ donor card, and we keep that card with us. If some tragedy were to occur where, by accidental or natural causes, we die, we pass, then the process begins where family is consulted. Even if your donor card says that you want to completely donate everything to medical science, to organ donation—everything—there's still a consultation process that goes on with family members.

First of all, we know that few people actually sign their donor card, even though Ontarians are generally very generous people by nature and very supportive of the idea of the commitment to doing things like donating organs after death. Yet people for one reason or another don't take the time; they don't take that card when they get their licence renewal and fill that card out. In their minds they think, "Oh sure, once I pass away, who cares what happens to my organs? Of course I would want my organs to go to a young person, or anybody, for that matter, who's in need, who would survive an otherwise



certain death if it wasn't for these organs." I feel that way and I know that many, many Ontarians feel that way. It's very clear. And yet, for whatever reason—because of the process, in fact, not for whatever reason—people just don't bother to make that happen. They don't bother to fill out their card, or when they do, there's sometimes disagreement with family members because they haven't taken the extra step. The extra step is actually talking to your family members about your wishes—very difficult conversations to have, of course, conversations about, "When I die, here's what I want to happen with my body; here's what I want to happen with my organs." It's not something that you tend to talk about on a regular basis. But I can tell you that many Ontarians are comfortable with that. They're okay with it. They think that it's the right thing to do.

After a person dies, the process then goes into—if there is a donation that's been indicated on the donor card and, of course, the family agrees, then a lot of things can happen. There are specific donations that can occur that are not even noticeable. So some family members or some people might think, "If I donate my organs, I am not going to be in a position or my family is not going to be in a position to have the traditional funeral" that some families have, that some cultures have. That's an open-casket viewing, an opportunity for people to come and celebrate the life and mourn the death of the loved one. But in fact, that's not the case. There are many kinds of donations that can occur that still provide for the open-casket type of funeral: bones, tendons, veins, heart valves, skin, corneas, eye tissue—all of these things can be very carefully removed so that there is no impact whatsoever in terms of the opportunity for a traditional funeral with an open-casket viewing.

If there's a situation where people have not spoken, unfortunately, to their loved ones, even these kinds of harvesting, if you want to call it that, even these kinds of opportunities to achieve those donations are lost, because it is up to the family, ultimately. It can be overridden, even if someone has signed their donor card.

As I was saying earlier, there are about 1,700 people in Ontario waiting for organs. Apparently, in 2008 some 549 transplants actually took place. In 2004, 242 patients died waiting for life-saving transplants in Canada. Over 120 of those were in Ontario alone. There have never been longer wait times and more people waiting for a transplant, and there have never been more deaths while people are waiting. If that doesn't signal to this government, if that doesn't signal to every one of us in this place that we have to significantly overhaul our system of organ donation, then I don't know what does. It's very obvious and apparent. It's obvious and apparent by the statistics. It's obvious and apparent by the article in today's Toronto Sun about the young woman who's here at Queen's Park today to try to bring attention to the issue of her mother's need for a liver.

**0950**

New Democrats have brought forward what we think is a plausible solution. I say "a plausible solution" be-

cause it is a solution, a system, a regime that already exists in a number of other jurisdictions that have progressed so much further than we have here in Ontario in terms of organ donation, in terms of the ability of people to get the organs that they need.

It's called the system of presumed consent. My colleague from Welland, Mr. Kormos, has been an extremely vocal advocate of this type of model. He has brought this issue to the table time after time after time. When New Democrats say that of course we'll support this bill, we do so knowing that it is extremely minor, minor to the extreme, in terms of getting at the crux of the issue, the core issue. The core issue is that our system simply does not provide enough organs to save the lives of people in Ontario who need those donations.

Presumed consent does something a little different. Instead of relying on the people who would normally think it's okay, who would support it and believe they would be doing a good thing and a good deed, and having all those people be proactive in terms of signing a card and then going through the process of having that card legitimized, more or less, by surviving family members, have people sign a card who adamantly do not want to have their organs donated.

This is the solution to the problem we have in Ontario right now with lack of organ donation. Many people think it's the right thing to do. Many people not only support the concept, but believe they should be part of that process, of that opportunity to help people survive in the case of a needed organ donation.

Very few, some 2%, adamantly do not want to have their bodies harvested for organs after death. Only 2% have that adamant sense that they do not want that to happen. I respect that; I think everybody respects that. So then why isn't it that the people who are most motivated, those who don't want, for any reason, their organs to be harvested, who don't want to donate after death—why isn't it that we just ask that small percentage of people to sign the card, to be registered as someone who doesn't want to have their organs donated? It makes so much more sense. Why try to take the opposite position, where you're trying to get 98% of people to sign a card? It's silly. It's opposite of what would be a very functional, simple and direct way of dealing with the problem. The result would be enormous, in terms of the numbers of organs that would be available to save lives of people in Ontario.

If we took the 2%—maybe it's 5%; who knows? But take the small number of people who do not wish to have their organs donated and get those people on a registry, very clearly indicating that they do not want to have their organs donated. That's fair; fair is fair.

But instead, we do it the opposite way. We do it in a way that people have to take that card and sign it, and then the follow-up happens, when the family members have the opportunity to override the decision. It's no wonder that we have 1,700 people on a waiting list in this province. It's no wonder that we have children dying because of lack of access to organs.

The presumed consent model is one that works in many other jurisdictions. It works in places where it's been instituted. I'm going to list a number of jurisdictions around the world that have already instituted organ donation on a presumed consent model: Austria, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Poland, Greece and Singapore. The opt-out rate in these nations is about 2%. I can't imagine it would be any different in a place like Ontario. Again, tracking that 2% is so much easier, so much more straightforward, than tracking the 98% who do wish to participate in the organ donation process.

The entire process of having a shift from what we have now, which is asking people to sign the card, versus the presumed consent model, is one that promotes the whole idea that as human beings we really do want to help each other, we really do want to make sure that we're doing everything we can to help our fellow person. It's kind of like a sense of value: a value of unselfishness, a value of really doing whatever we can for folks who are in desperate need. In the case of organ donation, of course, you don't need those organs anymore. You've died. So the idea that you could save someone else's life, that you could actually make such a difference, not only in that individual's life, but the families of those individuals—their whole circle of acquaintances and family members and co-workers could be so positively affected by your selfless act, upon death, of making sure that your organs can be utilized by someone else. It's an amazing act of unselfishness, it's an amazing act of camaraderie and of humanity, and I believe that most Ontarians believe that it's the right thing to do and have no problem with the concept.

My colleague Mr. Kormos, in the way that he so eloquently does, made quite a funny comment yesterday in the media about how when he dies, you'll find a tattoo on his stomach that says, "Open here and retrieve organs at will," or something of that nature. It's kind of funny, and it puts a bit of lightness in the conversation. Because do you know what? It's a tough conversation to have, as I mentioned earlier. What we know for sure is that most people feel that way, not only from the perspective of knowing that once the lights are out, the lights are out—once you're no longer alive, you have no use for your physical being. Your physical body means nothing. It's irrelevant to you. Your whole life has ended. There's nothing left.

There are all kinds of issues around spirituality and different religious beliefs around what happens to a person after death, but I believe all of those really have nothing to do with the physical body. The physical body is the piece that would help so many other people, and it seems to me that most major religions are supportive of the concept of organ donation.

For some, it's a squeamish topic, or some simply don't like having the conversation, or they don't want to have that happen to them once they pass away. That's fine. As

a society, we can respect that. But if we go to a situation, a model, a framework, that shifts the way that the public thinks about this, to say, "If you don't want to, that's fine. We respect that. Here's where you register to make sure that your organs are not taken because you don't want them to be," and then the rest of us, everybody else, are in a situation where when we die our organs automatically are put into the system to help those 1,700 people, to help those children, to help those parents, to help those people who need an organ—it seems to me that that would be the best way to do it.

#### 1000

It seems to me that the bills that have been brought forward by New Democrats like Peter Kormos are ones that specifically set out that not only would there be automatic presumed consent but there would be no opportunity for family members to override. So then the onus becomes part of the individual's responsibility if they don't want to be part of the program, but the program itself is universal in terms of ensuring that every Ontarian is a potential organ donor.

There are a number of other things that need to happen to make this change, to make this shift. It seems fairly radical in our minds, I know, and there's always quite a bit of controversy when this issue arises and when it's debated and discussed in the public realm, and that's a good thing because it's through that conversation, it's through that dialogue, it's through that debate that people's fears are assuaged, that people's squeamishness is reduced. A big part of what needs to happen in the context of moving forward in making our organ donation system one that works is to have the conversation more often, so I commend the minister in bringing this bill forward because once again it gives us an opportunity to debate the issues and have the conversation with the Ontario public about organ donation.

It also is incumbent upon us here, and others throughout the educational system, throughout the medical system, to bring forward these issues and talk to folks about them in their own communities and in their own contexts. It's important that we broaden the understanding, the awareness and the education around organ donation, not only from the perspective of what's out there in other jurisdictions, as I've already laid out in my remarks earlier, but also of what is currently happening within our system and how many people are in fact waiting and how many people are dying while they're waiting, how unacceptable that is, and how the system that we currently have is not one that leads to the kinds of organ donation volumes that we need and can easily get if we turn it around to a presumed consent instead of presumed denial, because that is what we have now. Right now we have presumed denial. We presume that people do not want their organs used after death unless they sign the card. All we're saying is: Let's switch that around to presumed consent so that we can presume that if a person dies, unless they have registered and unless they have indicated very clearly that they do not want to have their organs donated, then in fact they become a life-saver.

Every Ontarian upon death can become a life-saver; they can literally save someone's life. I believe that those are the values of Ontario and every Ontarian has that value and would love to be able to help someone else out. Let's just make the system work so that it's easy to do that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Comments or questions?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the intervention of my friend from Hamilton East.

This is an issue that is important to all Ontarians. We know that approximately 1,700 people in this province are on organ transplant waiting lists. Every three days, someone in Ontario on the waiting list dies. We want to help increase the number of organ donations. In the last fiscal year, only 260 transplants required a donation from living donors. This bill will help support that goal by providing unpaid, job-protected leave for people who donate an organ. By providing this leave, we will help to remove one of the potential barriers to organ donation.

Last year, the Premier of Ontario, Mr. McGuinty, announced Ontario's organ donation strategy. This included a program for reimbursing the expenses of living organ donors. The expenses covered by the program include travel, parking and transit, meals, accommodation, meal allowance, and a subsidy for lost income after surgery for living donors. By providing these expenses, along with job-protected leave, we hope to make organ donations possible. The government feels that it has found the right balance which will have a very small impact on our business community, which is one of the concerns, but will have a very large impact on the lives of those people who need the donation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments? The member from Halton.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I appreciate the applause.

A few comments that the member made, that this bill is an absolutely minimal bill: It is about the least that you can do and still do something. It's too bad that the government had an opportunity, particularly during these very difficult economic times, to do something that was worthwhile and could make a large difference and they've chosen to take this path which will make the minimal amount of difference a bill could make, in my opinion. I agree with the speaker on this bill and her comments that it's too bad this opportunity is one that is going to be missed for a lot of people.

I don't know if I'd go as far as the member would—as far as the negative billing, I call it—where you have to fill out the form not to donate your organs. I'm not sure I'd want to go that far with the organ donations, but in some aspects, for instance eye tissue, you might want to go that far. When you're taking bodily organs, there are some people who feel very strongly about that. Personally, my card is filled out. When I go, you can help yourself. You can have whatever you want. But it makes—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Yes, just make sure I'm not breathing any more. But after that, help yourself.

I think that's an individual decision people have to make, but this bill could be strengthened to make it a lot more palatable to the people of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments?

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I just want to begin briefly by offering a few thank yous in terms of those responsible for bringing us forward to the point we're at today. It's interesting that we have two Ministers of Health in the room with us today, one former and one current. I know the former Minister of Health, George Smitherman, had a lot to do with getting us to the point we're at today, and our current minister, David Caplan, as well has been involved in helping to carry this file forward. So I do want to make sure that we remember them and thank them very much for the work they've done.

The member opposite has expressed this legislation, as have others, in terms of it being minimalist in its approach. I think it's important that we remind people who are interested in this issue and who are paying attention to this debate as we move forward that the recommendation brought forward today in Bill 154 is a recommendation that came from the citizens panel. This was a panel that was struck one or two years ago that drafted a series of recommendations, one of which was that we move forward in the way we are moving forward here today: to provide job-protected, unpaid leave for live organ donors in the province of Ontario. So while we express this as maybe not having gone far enough, I think it's important that we remind people in the province that this is one of the recommendations that came out of the citizens' panel.

I also want to mention and thank, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Grand Chief Stan Beardy. As some of you have heard in this Legislature, very recently the Grand Chief came forward with his own initiative around raising the issue of organ donation awareness within his communities. I come from northern Ontario, and I think many of you know that the health outcomes in northern Ontario are not as good as they should be. They're not as good as the rest of the province of Ontario, and even more so when it comes to our First Nations population in the province of Ontario. The initiative of Grand Chief Beardy will take us a couple of steps forward in terms of trying to raise the profile of this issue.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes and look forward to the support of the opposition parties on Bill 154.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further comments?

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** I'm pleased to comment on the remarks made by the member for Hamilton Centre.

I think we all agree that organ donation is certainly something that people should consider. It's distressing when you have a family member who is on that waiting list. In my case, we did have a family member who wait-

ed for a very long time. When people are suffering life-threatening illnesses as it is, then to know they are a step away from the prospect of a successful transplant, certainly adds a great deal of stress for those family members and, obviously, for the individual.

**1010**

As time has passed and medicine has advanced, certainly in my lifetime, the whole notion of transplants has evolved. So I think that no one is going to dispute the intent of this bill, in providing a mechanism that would encourage people to feel that they could make this kind of potentially life-saving contribution.

I would, however, be remiss if I didn't also suggest that I think that it opens up the issues around health care and the importance of providing equity. As a member representing a high-growth area, we don't see the dollars coming in an equitable way and certainly would like to see that addressed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Wrap-up: the honourable member from Hamilton Centre.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It seems to me—and I might be able to get some advice from the Clerk or the Hansard table—that I may have forgotten to ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead of our critic at the beginning of my remarks. So I'm asking if the House would please indulge me and allow me to ask for unanimous consent, at this point, to stand down the lead of our critic.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Agreed? Agreed.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I want to thank the members for Algoma–Manitoulin, Halton, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and York–Simcoe for their remarks.

It seems to me that there is a sense of commonality around the chamber, in that people really do believe that we need to do something to jump-start the number of organ donations that we see happening in the province of Ontario. People are saying, pretty much unanimously, "Yes, this bill is supportable."

The government thinks that it has gone far enough with this bill. Of course, on this side of the House, we don't think that the government has gone far enough.

Even if you're looking at the bill itself on its merits, in terms of trying to encourage people—for living donors—to make that step, the government is not prepared to ensure that lost wages are paid. They talk in the bill about a subsidy to help people financially. It's really hard to take a couple of weeks or a couple of months off work, in fact, and only be able to rely on some kind of subsidy. If the government was serious about making sure that living donors had every opportunity to take that on, then it would be very clear that complete wage subsidy would be implemented—not only wages, but pension payments, pension instalments, benefits. Everything would be covered off. That would ensure people would not be left financially at risk after getting into the process of being a live donor.

Having said that, we think it's about presumed consent. We think the whole system needs to change, and I know our critic will be talking about that a little later.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** Further debate?

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm pleased to add a few more comments in regard to Bill 154.

As others have said, we're all very proud. I think there's going to be general consensus on the bill in support, from all parties, including both opposition parties, when this particular piece of legislation is called for a vote.

Some have indicated they don't feel that the bill is going far enough. But as I mentioned in my two-minuter, as a northerner, any piece of legislation that comes before this House that has the intention or the capacity to extend health care in the province of Ontario is something that's easy to support. As northerners, as I said in my original two-minuter on this, we have had, traditionally and chronically in northwestern Ontario, and in northeastern Ontario as well, I would expect, health outcomes that are not what we all feel they need to be. There are a variety of reasons associated with those less-than-we-would-hope-for health outcomes in northern Ontario, but nevertheless they are there. This bill will be a piece of being able to move forward in enhancing the health outcomes for people in northwestern Ontario, where I come from.

As I said earlier, First Nations communities, specifically, within northwestern Ontario have health outcomes that are even lower than those associated with the rest of the population in northwestern Ontario. I referenced in my earlier comment the initiative brought forward by Grand Chief Stan Beardy.

While these are amendments and regulatory changes under the Ministry of Labour, this is, at the end of the day, a health issue. As I recall, when we came into government in 2003, the province of Ontario was spending somewhere in the order of about \$30 billion on health care. Today, in the province of Ontario, we are spending somewhere north of \$40 billion on health care. In this province, we are approximating or coming close to spending close to 50% of our total provincial budget on health care.

So when people talk about this as being minimalist, about it not going far enough and about the expenses part of this legislation not being enough, well, that's fine. We can always have that discussion. It's a question of degree, I suppose, but when you place it in some context around how much we're spending on health care already in the province of Ontario, I think all of a sudden the people who are watching the debate, who are interested in the issues, start to say to themselves, "It's quite interesting, isn't it? Some \$40 billion plus being spent on health care in the province of Ontario." It is no insignificant amount, obviously.

As the costs on that particular budget continues to rise, we find ourselves in the position of having to offer constraints and restraints in other areas of the provincial budget. Any time you are spending almost 50% out of your total provincial budget on one ministry, we need to

be cautious in terms of the way we move forward on any of these issues and in terms of being very careful when we're spending provincial dollars.

Some of the expenses that are going to be covered—and I haven't heard any of the other members in the opposition speak about this part of it—include travel, parking and transit, meals, accommodation, meal allowance and a subsidy for loss of income after surgery. Those are some of the things that are going to be put forward. Not only is the job protection leave a part of this legislation, but there is an expenses-paid part for those who are providing the organ donation. It's extremely significant that we talk about that.

I also want to mention the citizens' panel—Speaker, I see you're calling me—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jeff Leal):** It now being 10:15 of the clock, I'm required to recess the House until 10:30 a.m.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

*The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.*

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's my pleasure to introduce the Paterson family, with their son Teddy—Sylvia, John and Teddy, in the Speaker's gallery.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to introduce to this House a number of home care workers who have made their way to Queen's Park today: Claire Dahms, Theresa Clapham, Lucy Lavarinko, Joan Gray, Madeline LeBrun, Anne Fisher, Dianne Anderson and Pam Sulyma.

We also have members of SEIU with us—Service Employees International Union, Local 1—starting with their secretary-treasurer, Cathy Carroll, Caroline Demers, Sue Saville, Linda Micks, Charlie Renaud, David Thatcher and Cathy Ryan.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On behalf of the Minister of the Environment and page Rachel Goldstein, we'd like to welcome her mother, Liz VanDerkerkhof, and her father, David Goldstein, sitting in the east members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is to the Premier. The Speaker ruled on March 25, 2008, and I'll just do part of the quote: "It is ... a matter of courtesy and respect for this institution that all important announcements be made here first...." Yet yesterday, you had an opportunity to share the details of the deficit number with members of this Legislature on numerous occasions as questions were asked, and you chose to make the announcement of the \$18-billion deficit outside of this

House, at the Empire Club, to an exclusive group of people who had paid for the privilege to be there. Why did you not make the announcement in this House yesterday?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We have responded to a number of questions from the opposition on the deficit. We have indicated in this House that there would be a deficit. We were never asked by the opposition what the deficit was, and then when—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Please continue.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** The size has been the subject of tremendous speculation. We're here today to answer questions about the deficit. It is a serious matter. We're very concerned about the people who lost their jobs at Stelco. We're here to answer questions about that.

We think that this is a big enough issue that we should speak about it here in the House, we should speak about things out there, and we should be open and transparent at all times.

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

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** I go again to the Premier, who supposedly is the leader of the MPPs in this House. You have demonstrated since 2005 that you are totally, totally paralyzed in responding to the concerns that have been expressed by the official opposition and by business leaders. We have been warning you about a manufacturing crisis. We have been warning you about job losses. Yet you've said, "It's only a little bit of contraction." I say to you today, will you acknowledge that, as leader of this once-great province, you have been derelict in your responsibilities?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Stop the clock. Order.

Minister.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Ontario is a great province and the people of this province deserve more from the Conservative Party of Ontario than to talk down our economy and to talk down—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

*Interjections.*

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

**Mrs. Witmer:** Under our leadership, this province and the policies that we introduced allowed for the creation of one million new jobs. We've seen jobs lost day after day after day, and we heard more about job losses yesterday. I say to you again, you showed disrespect yesterday by announcing your deficit outside of this House. I ask you today, do you, Mr. Premier, have a plan to deal with this deficit, or are you going to leave this to the next government to deal with?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We certainly won't leave a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit like that party did. And we

certainly won't talk Ontario down like that member does. We laid out a plan last year where we invested more than \$9 billion in infrastructure; that member and her party voted against it. We reduced business tax by \$3.5 billion as part of a plan to stimulate the economy more than a year ago; that member and her party voted against it. The world economy is in a crisis, tens of thousands of jobs are being lost around the world, and that member is concerned about where we say this, that or the other thing.

We will build on the plan we've laid out. It will be here on March 26. We hope you will vote in favour of a plan to stimulate this economy and stop talking down this great—

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

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Premier: This question is about your government's lack of leadership and planning with respect to manufacturing job losses in Ontario. US Steel, a proud international corporation, one of the best in the steel working world, recently moved to Ontario and bought Stelco. You know the bad news of yesterday. You've mismanaged the economy.

On behalf of 2,000 steelworkers who have now lost their jobs both in Hamilton and Lake Erie works and Nanticoke, as Premier of Ontario, what are you going to do about these job losses in primary industries?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I welcome the question. What I want to do at the outset is extend our feelings and thoughts to those families who are affected by this in a direct way. There's always the danger that we will get caught up in numbers, whether that's GDP growth or budgetary projections.

But when it comes down to families, they are much more concerned about some sense of security, some sense of hopefulness for their future and for the future that their children are going to face. It's a difficult time for the city of Hamilton. I just got off the phone with Mayor Eisenberger, and we had a long chat about how we might better work together to improve the economic opportunities there. We've been working long and hard with the city of Hamilton over an extended period of time. I know this has been the result of a huge drop in global demand for steel.

1040

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I'll ask you to focus on the problem. Hilton works and Lake Erie works are now closed; Lake Erie, one of the largest, most modern integrated steelworks in North America. You knew this day was coming. In fact, you supported our motion in December 2005, when we asked you for an immediate plan for the manufacturing sector in specific communities. Auto, manufacturing—they all use steel. You can't lose 270,000 manufacturing jobs based on steel and not have a plan for this gutting of primary industry. It's been nearly four years. When will you announce your industrial strategy, a strategy for primary industry, specifically to deal with this devastation that was announced yesterday?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My honourable colleague will know, because I'm sure he pays attention to these kinds of things, that there's been a dramatic plunge in global demand for steel. There is a much lesser demand for steel originally used in construction, a much lesser demand for steel originally used in the production of cars and a much lesser demand for steel used in the production of appliances. That's experienced here in Canada, North America, South America, Europe, Asia and other places as well. It's affecting the global economy.

We have, as my colleague knows, put forward a number of measures to strengthen manufacturing during the past several years, none of which that party has supported, including eliminating capital taxes for Ontario manufacturers. It would have been nice to have that support back then rather than simply putting forward these kinds of concerns here today.

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Premier, we called for your support for an all-party committee to deal with this, for all of us to work together. At this point, the steelmaking community needs answers. Thousands and thousands of lives are on hold while you apparently remain paralyzed by indecision. Locally, in my riding, auto part jobs are gone in the west; you've destroyed our tobacco economy and the 9,000 jobs that go with that; and, three years of native disputes have crushed our building industry. Your budget is already a month late.

I ask you again: What positive actions will you be taking to help people at Hilton and Lake Erie works, actions required between now and the March 26 budget, the late date for the budget? We need some answers, Premier.

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Just as a bit of an aside, our March 26 budget will be earlier than each and every budget ever put forward by the past Conservative government. In fact, they put out six in May and one in June, just so we're clear on that score.

Let me speak to you about some of the things we have been doing which they don't support when it comes to strengthening our economy. We're cutting business taxes by \$3 billion; they don't support that. We're investing \$60 billion over 10 years in infrastructure to create jobs; they don't support that. We've put over \$1 billion into innovation, research and commercialization projects; they don't support that. We continue to partner with businesses. We've landed \$8 billion in new investment. We're investing in the skills and education of our people. They don't support measures to strengthen this economy.

#### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Premier. Yesterday was a very curious day. The finance minister delivered a speech aimed at rewriting the McGuinty government's record. He said, "As far back as 2006 our government was talking about the gathering clouds of a slowing US economy." I want to quote the same finance minister from his budget speech, not even a

year ago, where he said, “Over the next three years, we expect to see another 270,000 new jobs.”

My question to the Premier is this: Which version of history from your government is accurate—the speech that was made up for yesterday or the budget speech that boasted about 270,000 new jobs just 11 months ago?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I’ll let the people of Ontario be the judge when it comes to what is history and what is not. I look forward to that judgment.

I think our shared responsibility at this point in our history is to do two things in particular. One of those is to lend what support we might to families who are being hurt by this recession. At the same time, and just as importantly, we have to begin to build a stronger foundation for a new economy, one that will speak to the aspirations we have for our children and our grandchildren. For the past five years, we have significantly invested in and revitalized our public services. We have better schools, better health care and better protections for our environment. At the same time, we are building infrastructure in this province like never before. We have a stronger workforce than we’ve ever had before. We’ve done more to support innovation and build an innovation culture than ever before. That is a very strong foundation on which we intend to continue building.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Once again, this is the McGuinty government’s Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review of the fall. In this, when you look at the background documents, the McGuinty government was actually cutting what it was going to invest in infrastructure and in new capital construction. It’s all here in the figures. At the same time, what did we see yesterday: 2,100 jobs gone in Hamilton; 75 jobs gone at Quaker Oats in Peterborough; 261 jobs gone at Vale Inco in Sudbury; and 100 more in Cornwall, Toronto and Mississauga—lost. When are we going to see a jobs plan from the McGuinty government rather than efforts to revisit and rewrite your own sorry history?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Yes, there is such a thing as a global recession. Yes, it is affecting the province of Ontario. Yes, it is causing job losses here. And yes, it is very difficult for anyone of us in this House, save and except for the leader of the NDP, who says that he can prevent any of that from happening here in Ontario. Perhaps he has some secret solution of which the rest of the people on this planet remain unaware.

When we’ve had opportunities to lend strength to our economy, time and time again, the leader of the NDP and his party have voted against that. When we’ve sought to shelter people who are being hurt by the economy, he stood against those measures as well. We said we wanted to put in place an Ontario child benefit, and we’re doing that. He voted against that. We put in place 22,000 new, affordable child care spaces. He voted against that. We’re raising rates for social assistance. He voted against that. Putting in place new affordable housing units: He voted against those measures. So whether it comes to strengthening the economy or supporting families—

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Once again, I think people wonder what world the Premier is on. Child care spaces are disappearing. People who lose their jobs fall into poverty. More schools are closing under the McGuinty government than closed under the former Conservative government because you haven’t changed the funding formula. But the real issue is jobs. Seventy thousand good jobs are disappearing every month. The response of this government so far has been to commission a report by Professor Florida. When he was asked, “What should laid-off workers do?”, his response was, “Maybe they can open an art gallery, or maybe they can get a job filling out tax returns.” Tell me, Premier: Is this the McGuinty government’s jobs plan for communities that are losing thousands of jobs every week—open an art gallery?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** In addition to the NDP choosing to stand in the way of enhancements when it comes to building on the strength of this economy and standing in the way of supports that we want to provide to families who are up against it through no fault of their own, we have yet another option that we’ve tendered in this Legislature. It’s called the Green Energy Act. It is designed to put into place 50,000 new jobs and to give Ontarians access to clean and green electricity so that we can join together in the fight against climate change. What Ontarians now want to know is: Will the NDP also stand in the way of that piece of legislation? Will they stand in the way of those 50,000 new jobs? Will they stand in the way of clean electricity and stand in the way of our joint efforts to fight climate change?

Here’s another opportunity for us to do something together to move forward in a progressive fashion on behalf of Ontarians. Are they with Ontarians or are they against them once more?

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Again to the Premier: Once again, the issue is jobs. I’ve looked at your bill to find a guarantee of jobs. In Quebec, any green energy projects have to have a 60%-Quebec-manufacture level. Is there such a thing in the McGuinty government’s bill? No; it’s not there. What we’re afraid is going to happen is what we’ve seen over the last few years. The McGuinty government shovels \$235 million to General Motors without any guarantee that the new energy-efficient hybrid half-ton will be built in Ontario. The McGuinty government shovels \$100 million to Ford in Oakville and 1,000 workers get pink slips. The McGuinty government shovels \$77 million to Chrysler in Bramalea and we see a shift eliminated. Where is the jobs plan, Premier? As thousands of people lose their jobs every week, where is the McGuinty government’s jobs plan?

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**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We have a jobs plan. Perhaps again the leader of the NDP or some members of the

opposition have some secret that might work in this regard. They might pretend that they can stop all job losses in the province of Ontario, but we will not make that pretence. What we will do is say we'll do everything that we possibly can to ensure that we are taking steps to strengthen this economy.

I say again, today in Ontario we are making massive investments in infrastructure. We're building hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, border crossings and public transit, and creating thousands and thousands of jobs through that work. The opposition, whether the official opposition or the NDP, oppose that kind of investment.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I challenge the Premier: \$235 million went out the door to General Motors. We didn't see new jobs; we saw thousands of people laid off. I ask, how is that a success? I continue to ask, where's the jobs plan? Quebec has a reasonable industrial hydro rate to sustain manufacturing jobs there. Wind turbines are being created there. Electric cars are being manufactured in Quebec. Solar components for solar power are now being manufactured in Quebec. Manitoba has implemented a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to sustain manufacturing jobs there. Has the McGuinty government done any of these things? No, it hasn't. So I'm left to ask again: What is the McGuinty government's jobs plan, other than telling laid-off workers to open an art gallery?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Apparently life is better everywhere else. My mother used to tell me that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. I guess that is in part human nature. But when you remove yourself from Ontario, assume the position of the crow's nest and bring a global perspective, I don't know of any place on this planet where the grass is greener than it is here in the province of Ontario.

I sense a loss of confidence in our future in the opposition benches. I'll tell you why I am so confident about our future in this province: because I have confidence in the people of Ontario, their resourcefulness, their resilience, their perseverance, their courage, their determination to succeed, their track record. We're with the people of Ontario. We will build on our foundation and make this province stronger than ever. Our best years are yet to come.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** You're a loser, Dalton.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** The member from Cambridge will withdraw the comment.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Certainly.

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

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I withdraw.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I'm sure that the 2,100 workers in Hamilton who just found out that they're losing their jobs are going to take great confidence from a Premier who stands up day after day and still doesn't have a jobs plan.

Let me try again. Quebec requires that 60% of the manufacture of any transit vehicles that are used in Quebec has to be manufactured in Quebec. The United States have a similar policy, the buy-America policy. In fact, Alstom, manufacturer in France of transit vehicles, is now looking at setting up manufacturing operations in Quebec. Why? Because of the Quebec 60% content rule.

Can the Premier tell me: If it works in the United States and maintains good manufacturing jobs there, and if it's building new manufacturing jobs in Quebec, why has the McGuinty government failed to do the same thing here in Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My honourable colleague keeps talking about 60% requirements in other jurisdictions. He maintains that there's a law to that effect in Quebec. I want to assure him there is no such law, and he should just do a little bit of research to confirm that.

The leader of the NDP may settle for 60%; we have chosen 82%—82% of all public investment going into public transit projects; 82% is being invested in the province of Ontario. He may settle for 60%; we've chosen 82%.

#### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

**Mr. Frank Klees:** To the Minister of Finance, who yesterday announced that his government will be adding \$18 billion to the debt of this province—that's \$18 billion more of spending than the government will receive in revenue. Since they took office, they increased spending in this province by \$27 billion, or 40%.

I want to ask the finance minister today, does he regret having spent \$400 million on casino renovations in Windsor, \$2.3 million by the OLG on the opening gala of Caesars in Windsor, \$8 million on a tourism study, \$2 million for incomplete reports and \$3.5 million spent by the Ministry of Education on hotel and conference centres? I have a list here of multi-millions of dollars of spending. Can the minister tell us today, will he admit that he—

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** What I regret is that that member and his party added \$48 billion to the provincial debt in one of the highest growth periods in our history, and how quickly they forget. How quickly they forget that record; how quickly they forget that our debt-to-GDP ratio is lower today than when they left office, that we paid off their hidden \$5.5-billion deficit; how quickly they forget the state of affairs this province was left in when we fired nurses and teachers and health inspectors; how quickly they forget the damage associated with 26 million student-days of education lost at a time of growth in this economy and the world economy.

The world economy is being challenged like never before. We have responded—

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



**Mr. Frank Klees:** We all understand the world circumstances that we find ourselves in. What I want the minister to do is to stand up and accept responsibility for the misspending of tax dollars while, in fact, we didn't have a world recession which put us behind the eight ball today—\$91 million he spent to fire nurses, \$90 million to close or consolidate community care access centres, and \$50 million, at least, in costs related to the Caledonia occupation that this government chose not to take action on.

There was a time in this province, while he was the Minister of Finance—we're not talking about the past; we're talking about \$27 billion of additional spending. My question to the minister is simply this: What did he do to prepare for these times, and will he admit that he has responsibility—

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

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** We did hire more nurses, sir; we did. We hired more teachers. We rehired environmental inspectors and meat inspectors, and the people of Ontario gave us a mandate to do that.

In addition, we've laid out now a number of budgets that have invested in infrastructure, that have invested in tax cuts. That member, for instance, voted against billions of dollars for innovation and retraining. He voted against property tax credits for senior citizens, not once, but twice.

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We have laid out a plan that has served us till now. On March 26, we look forward to hearing some details about how they will get into that balance, because what they're talking about now is gutting public services and raising taxes over the long term for the majority of our citizens.

## MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. Paul Miller:** A question to the Premier: Thirty-two years ago, I followed in the footsteps of my grandfather, my father and my uncles and went to work at Stelco in Hamilton. It was a proud family tradition, one that spanned 300 years of service to the company. Yesterday, we heard the devastating news that the operations there are temporarily shutting down. For nearly a century, Stelco provided jobs that helped families in my community pay their mortgages, send their kids to college and buy their food. Not even, Premier, during the Great Depression did the plant shut down. Given the unprecedented nature of what has happened, when will the McGuinty government fast-track its infrastructure money—

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

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to thank the honourable member for his question, for sharing that personal history with us, and for the genuine concern that he is expressing on behalf of his constituents and people who've been affected by this terrible circumstance.

I had the opportunity to meet this morning with the member for Hamilton Mountain and discuss these kinds of issues, hence the reason for my contacting Mayor Fred Eisenberger to talk a little bit more about this and how we might find some way to provide further support to that community. We now have in place an action centre to lend support to the steelworkers as they try to manage and struggle through this.

I am always interested in hearing from the opposition members and my own caucus with respect to what we might do to lend more support to these folks who are caught up in these kinds—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Back to the Premier: The shutdown is affecting people who worked hard each and every day just to try to get ahead. Our local economy is getting wiped out in Hamilton, and the McGuinty government still has no jobs plan to deal with the recession.

Ontario needs bold action to protect jobs and help our communities cope with the growing crisis that we're facing. A Buy Ontario plan, Premier, would help sustain jobs that exist now, stimulate the manufacturing sector, and ensure Ontario's continued leadership in the manufacturing sector.

If the McGuinty Liberals are serious about helping Hamiltonians, as the Premier just said, and protecting Ontario's manufacturing jobs, will they immediately implement a Buy Ontario plan for this province?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I appreciate the member's representation that she makes on behalf of her community, as well.

I think there are always good reasons for us to remain hopeful, and one of those includes a comment made by the representative of the Steelworkers: "The Steelworkers have been vocal in our call for domestic procurement policies"—and they have. "So including domestic content guidelines in the Green Energy Act is a decision in the right direction," said Ken Neumann, national director of the United Steelworkers union."

I'm not sure if it has been well noticed, but in our Green Energy Act, as part of the legislation, we're going to create the authority for ourselves, through regulation, to put in place specific requirements for these kinds of Buy Ontario/Buy Canadian policies. So we're open to suggestions with respect to what that number might look like, but I think it is some reason for some of the folks who are working in the steel industry to remain hopeful.

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My question is for the Minister of Economic Development.

Minister, constituents in my riding are devastated over the news that US Steel is idling its Hamilton and Lake Erie plants and will be temporarily laying off 1,500 workers. US Steel Canada, previously Stelco, is a company with deep roots in Hamilton. Everyone in my community knows at least someone who works for US Steel

Canada, whether it is a family member, a friend or a neighbour. When I heard the news yesterday, I knew that I had to do everything I could to help the workers in my community.

Minister, what has the Ontario government done to help this company and what can you offer to the workers and the communities of Hamilton and Nanticoke, which have been rocked by this latest news? Also, what has the Ontario government done to help Hamilton weather this economic storm?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I appreciate the member's questions, and we've had discussions as well about this. No doubt, as the member says, we all want to work toward immediate assistance, as well as working with the company and the workers, to see what the future holds.

As has been mentioned, the company announced a temporary idling. We don't know what that means yet. I've spoken with company officials; I've spoken with Leo Gerard, the head of the Steelworkers union, as well. We're looking at ways in which we can deal immediately to assist those workers. It's a brutal time for them, not only in terms of the very difficult news, but also in terms of the uncertainty that comes with it.

The government has in the past worked with this company in Hamilton. We did come forward in 2006 and worked with Stelco in order to see a future for it, and we'll continue—

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

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** This is no doubt devastating news for the workers and the families affected by yesterday's announcement. I have heard from many of my constituents and they simply do not know where to turn. Many workers who now find themselves without a job have never been in this situation before and don't even know where to start. People are scared and can't begin to imagine how they are going to tackle finding another job. Some of the workers at US Steel will be looking for training or education required to compete in today's workforce. For many, this is the only job that they've ever had.

Minister, can you tell me what services are available to these workers today?

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I'll refer that supplementary to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I thank the member for the question and obviously add my voice to all members of the Legislature who are very concerned with the situation in Hamilton. I want to assure the member and all members of the House that we're working with the union and the company to address this issue.

As was mentioned by the Premier, due to a previous layoff, we helped establish the Hamilton Area Steelworkers Action Centre. Right now we're in the process of formulating plans to expand services so that those affected by yesterday's layoffs can access adjustment services there. Certainly, all affected workers will have access to all our employment service programs, including Second Career. I also want to inform the House that

we're working with Service Canada to discuss an integrated and co-ordinated approach to making sure that all affected workers have access to both federal and provincial programming during this very difficult time.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Protection. On March 31, your government is forcing through, once again, an increase to the minimum wage. Barrhaven's BIA chair, Ken Ross, who also owns Ross' Your Independent Grocer in Barrhaven, told me they do not need another increase in the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario. This will compromise his ability and others' ability to address an hourly end rate for their full-time and part-time employees.

As the Minister of Small Business, why do you just sit there instead of breaking down barriers for Ontario's businesspeople? Why don't you defend the interests of the little guy like Ken Ross? Will you stand up against the job-killing schemes of other cabinet ministers?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** Let me tell you, I am very proud of the contribution that small businesses make in this province. We have about 360,000 strong small businesses in Ontario, and they contribute \$250 billion worth of economic activity. Our government has worked very closely with small businesses to address some of the needs they currently have in the global recession they are facing.

I talked yesterday about what some of the challenges are in the manufacturing sector. Our government has worked very closely with them to develop programs, which are integrated in nature, so that we can assist them. Some of the programs are a Smart program that we run with the help of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association that provides assistance to them to look at their processes, and also provides capital needs up to the extent of \$50,000 for special projects. Then, we also have—

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

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**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Fifty thousand dollars for special projects is not going to save this economy, Minister. Your government is creating roadblocks for job creation and retention instead of helping them. This government won't be happy until all the jobs in Ontario are gone, and more people are losing them. I'm telling you something: Not only is Ken Ross facing a higher minimum wage, and he's struggling; he's also going to have to grapple with a hydro bill which is currently \$30,000 a month but, because of your power grab and your energy act, is going to go up by 30%—close to \$12,000 more.

Will the minister responsible for small business do his job, stand up for the little guys and stand up to the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Energy and his Premier and tell them that enough is enough? Will their

policies change so that we won't be forcing more job losses at a time when we can't afford it?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** Let me tell you what our government is doing. Our government is standing up for small businesses. What they are doing is just asking questions in this House. What we have done is actually met with small businesses and developed programs that will help them in the long haul.

I talked about the SMART program, but in addition to that, we are actually helping them with their training needs. We are going and meeting with these people. We have the AMIS program, which is targeted at companies if they want to spend capital expenditure. We have programs on the innovation side. We are helping them to position themselves in the global markets. We are not just talking; we are actually acting. All you're doing is asking questions in the House, and that has been your nature from day one here.

#### HOME CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** My question is to the Premier. After months of study and review, last December the Minister of Health declared that he had solved the problems plaguing our home care system. He had brought in accountability and found the right balance; he had the solution. Today, just weeks later, thousands of women and men who provide home care services are on the verge of a strike that will affect 40,000 people who depend on them. Home care workers are ready to strike because the Liberal cut-throat bidding system has left many of them living in poverty. Is the Premier willing to admit that his minister has failed to address the crisis in home care, or does he consider this impending strike a success?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. David Caplan:** The member's characterization of a new quality-based selection system for home care services—I couldn't disagree more with the member opposite. I will say this: I want to thank the personal support workers who have come here to Queen's Park. I want you to know how much I and Ontarians appreciate the work you do on their behalf and the care you provide. The support that this government has provided in the home care sector, I would say, compares quite favourably to what we've seen in previous governments. In fact, since 2003, there has been almost a 50% increase.

I know that there are always difficult issues when it comes to bargaining. There is bargaining taking place between management and labour. The member also knows that it is not appropriate, as Minister of Health, to insert myself in the midst of that negotiation. I do hope that both sides will come together and—

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Both sides have come together and they both agree, but the minister has to step in. Home care workers are critical to our home care system. They support people when they want to live in their own home.

Walter Van Hengstum provides home care in the Niagara region. He works a 10-hour day. For four hours of his shift, he travels from home to home, from client to client. He is paid for six hours because he's not paid for his travel time. He makes \$84 a day. That works out to \$8.40 an hour. That is less than minimum wage.

Does the minister plan to build our home care system by forcing health providers into poverty? When will the Premier and the minister bring in basic working standards for home care providers?

**Hon. David Caplan:** The facts are these: This member and her colleagues have voted against the personal support worker stabilization strategy, a \$30-million investment in the sector which has increased the base minimum wage for qualified personal support workers from \$9.65 an hour to \$12.50 an hour. This provided improved compensation for travel costs and for travel time. It has introduced service volume targets and training initiatives.

The fact of the matter is that since 2003, 220,000 more Ontarians are receiving home care services, and \$573 million, an almost 50% increase—47%—in funding availability of home care services has prevented more than a million visits to our hospital emergency rooms since 2003. Unfortunately, this member is stuck with her ideological blinkers on and cannot see the improvements in quality—

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

#### ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, we know that aboriginal students face unique barriers to accessing a college or university education or training. For many students, continuing their education after high school is not viewed as an option due to the many barriers that they face. In most cases, this is because students simply do not have adequate information to make decisions about their future and do not have ample support both at home and in their communities.

It is imperative that we provide aboriginal students with improved resources so educators and staff can better support aboriginal learners and increase awareness about First Nations, Metis and Inuit cultures. We know that we have to do a better job of reaching out to these students. Their success and the success of this province depends on it.

Minister, how are you ensuring that aboriginal students have the information they need to ensure they are making the right choices about their post-secondary education?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to congratulate the member for his interest in aboriginal education and confirm to him and to this House our government's intention to work with those students from groups which are not well represented in our post-secondary education system, particularly aboriginal Ontarians.

Through our access to opportunities strategy, we are supporting counselling, tutoring, career planning and cul-

tural awareness services at our colleges, universities and aboriginal institutions. This year, Ontario is providing \$6 million in access funding to improve access so that more aboriginal students can graduate. We have invested a total of \$24.1 million for aboriginal post-secondary education and training; \$14.7 million was invested in aboriginal post-secondary education and \$9.4 million was invested in aboriginal training.

We remain committed to working with our aboriginal partners to ensure that they are fully participating in our—

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

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Both Confederation College and Lakehead University in my community are working very hard to reach out to aboriginal students to encourage them to consider university, college or training. I know that they have been active in providing services to both potential and career students.

For instance, the Nanabijou project at Lakehead University is training teachers on how to effectively mentor aboriginal students. At Confederation College, our government provided funding to help the college hire an access adviser to help students navigate the college application system and process.

We know that institutions can't do it alone. They need the support of government to help them demonstrate to students that post-secondary education or training is the tool that is going to set them up for success later on in life. Minister, how are you supporting more projects such as the ones I have outlined?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to congratulate both institutions from the honourable member's community, which are doing an excellent job in terms of welcoming and supporting aboriginal students. Through last week's access announcement, Confederation College and Lakehead University will each receive \$250,000 to support tutoring and mentoring services for aboriginal students. This funding will help the institutions provide invaluable resources to students that will help them be successful in their studies.

I'm very proud of the work that my ministry is doing, along with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, in welcoming First Nations and Metis students into our post-secondary institutions and taking advantage of the opportunities that exist out there. The aboriginal community is one of the fastest-growing in our province, and we are going to continue to work to make sure that every young person from the aboriginal community can achieve their potential through post-secondary—

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

#### DEADSTOCK INDUSTRY

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. We've been getting a lot of calls in our office from farmers around the province, farmers like Billy Yates from Beaverton, Donna Geisberger from

Brock, Kelvin Kerr from Greenbush, and Andrea Steinlechner from Brockville, just to name a few. Madam Minister, because you cut funding to the deadstock operators with no warning, they tell me, and no plan, all these farmers have deadstock on the farm that they can't dispose of safely. What do you want me to tell those farmers they should do with this stock in this situation?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I thank the honourable member for the question. For those of us in rural Ontario, the safe management of deadstock is a very important issue. We have been working with industry partners, I would say, since the event of BSE. We became aware that for the end product of deadstock, there was a very limited use for the product. Once, there was a much greater use. So we have been working with industry partners.

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What has happened in other provinces is that the deadstock is managed safely, on-farm, by way of composting, or there could be the establishment of a central composting facility, or it could be put into an anaerobic digester.

We recognize that we needed to update our regulation for on-farm management. Those regulations will be in place so that farmers can manage this by-product of their industry on-farm.

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

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** Minister, changes may be coming in the future, but there are dead animals on the farms today and no one is picking them up.

Minister, in 2006 you said that deadstock collectors were not financially viable without government assistance because of the restrictions introduced by BSE. You promised two years ago to come up with a plan to make the industry sustainable. Instead, you've simply cut off the funding, in spite of the fact that the deadstock operators said they would be forced to close.

In eastern Ontario, all the companies have stopped picking up deadstock as of the first of this month. You've created a dangerous situation, Madam Minister, for the farmers and deprived them of an essential service. How are you going to deal with this dire situation today, not two, three, four weeks later? Today, Madam Minister.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** We have worked with industry partners on this. We have implemented regulations that have been posted on the EBR so everyone in the industry is aware of how they can manage deadstock on-farm.

I would say as well that when you look across Canada, this is the way, for the most part, that deadstock is handled in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec; either that, or when there are collection services provided within the province, the owner of the deadstock pays the full cost of picking up those animals.

We did recognize that we had a responsibility, until regulations were in place, to support the collection of the product. However, we now have regulations that will enable the on-farm, safe management of deadstock, and that is where we believe the industry needs to be.

## SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Teddy Paterson, in the Speaker's gallery, was born with cerebral palsy. With hard work and support, he's graduated from high school. He requires full-time, assisted care, yet, like so many families, the costs are devastating without government help.

Almost a year ago, you assured the Paterson family that they would receive the services they needed for Teddy to remain a part of his community. The Paterson family has received no new assistance. Why won't the minister keep her promise to Teddy Paterson?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Thank you for that question. I want to welcome Teddy, in the gallery today, and his parents. Thank you for being here. First of all, let me say thank you to the parents for all the service that you're providing to your son. It's very admirable, and I congratulate you.

Like many other parents here in Ontario, they have a disabled child and they take care of him. For these children, there's no place like home with the parents. That's why this government has invested in different programs—special services at home, the Passport program—to help people like Teddy to remain at home.

We are investing every year. It's a very successful program. In 2005, we started this Passport program, which has been very successful in helping people like Teddy stay at home with his parents.

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

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** The minister's words are empty. Your Bill 77 hasn't increased access to developmental services as you claimed. It has entrenched the minister's approach to developmental services: flatlining funding and expanding waiting lists.

Especially in times of economic uncertainty, the correct response is not to stall resources to the most vulnerable, as the minister is doing. The Patersons risk losing their home and risk the ability to be the loving and willing caregivers who have helped Teddy thrive, a struggle that so many other parents also face in Ontario every day. They have not seen any new funding, Madam Minister. When will you send new funding and help the Patersons to look after Teddy?

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** I just want to correct the member from the third party—what she said—because this program was started in 2005. Since 2005, we have invested \$27 million in this program to help more than 2,000 individuals. This program and this service were not there when they were in power.

They can stand up today and say what we have not done. We know we need to do more; we know we need to invest more; we know that we need to help people like Teddy and his parents.

I just want to correct—I'll ask my colleague to verify the answer. I never said in the House that I will provide the money, because we want to be fair for everyone in need. We have evaluation tools so everyone is evaluated and the service is provided as they need it.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Like all members of this House, I've been working hard in my riding to find ways to increase access to primary care for constituents. We have a new hospital under construction, new investments in medical equipment and increased supports for seniors to stay in their homes, but Sault Ste. Marie, like many other cities, is an aging community with an increasing need for health services.

While our government has also significantly increased the number of medical training spaces, it takes years to educate a primary health care provider, and I know that some residents in my riding continue to look for a doctor or nurse practitioner. That is why I was pleased that the Premier made a recent announcement which will help ensure that orphan patients in my community are able to access a primary health care provider.

Minister, can you tell the House about the health care supports that are being added in my community to help residents get the care that they need?

**Hon. David Caplan:** I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for not only the question but for his advocacy in support of nurse practitioners.

I had the great pleasure to join the Premier just a couple of weeks ago at the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's office to announce that we are moving forward and making good on our commitment to add 25 nurse practitioner-led clinics in Ontario. NP-led clinics are locally driven, primary health care delivery organizations which will include registered nurses, family physicians and a range of health care professionals who are committed to working together collaboratively. The first three of these new clinics will put down roots in Belle River, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay.

We're building on the success of our first nurse-practitioner-led clinic, which opened in Sudbury in 2007. Today, the Sudbury clinic provides family health care to approximately 2,000 patients.

We're moving ahead on the next round of nurse-practitioner-led clinics this spring. I'm proud that our province is able to capitalize on the unique and valuable skills—

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

**Mr. David Oraziotti:** I want to thank the minister for his support for the nurse practitioner clinic in our community, and I also want to congratulate the successful bid team from Sault College, which, over the next few months, we will work with to ensure that they have the resources they need to help patients in my community.

The new clinic will include nurse practitioners, on-site physicians, consultative physicians and other health care professionals, who could include pharmacists, dietitians and social workers. I know that our government is committed to increasing access to health care in this province, and I'm sure my constituents will benefit from the clinic when it's up and running.

However, given that these clinics will not be immediately operational, there is concern about what constituents can do to access care in the meantime. Minister, can you tell Ontarians what they can do to ensure that they get access to primary health care more quickly?

**Hon. David Caplan:** Ontarians have a number of avenues that they can explore when they're trying to find care. Most recently, I had the pleasure to launch Health Care Connect, a new program, a partnership with the Ontario Medical Association, to help people find a family health care provider by dialing a special 1-800 number. Ontarians will be able to tell a Telehealth staff member that they are looking for a family doctor. A nurse known as a health care connector will then try to match that unattached patient with family health care providers who are accepting patients.

We've also launched a new website; it's called Your Health Care Options. It's an online tool that uses Google-style mapping to help people understand the different resources for health care available to them in their community. I think it's an innovative way to help Ontarians find the health care they need when they need it.

We're always looking at ways to increase access to health care and to reduce wait times. That's why we're adding these 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics and an additional 50 family health teams. Combined—

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

1130

## TOURISM

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have a question for the Minister of Tourism.

Minister, it has come to my attention that the school year may begin one week earlier than usual to accommodate the number of in-school instruction days. However, this would mean that many tourism operators across Ontario would be adversely impacted by the shortened summer season, through loss of revenue.

As an example, I've heard from the manager of Santa's Village, Jamie Hopkins.

He writes: "That one week of a shortened summer will effectively reduce our operating season by 10%. Our margins would not be able to absorb such a significant swing in operating days."

He says, "Our labour force is also primarily students, representing 95% of our staff complement."

Minister, are you willing to make sure that tourism operators who are dependent on the summer months for their livelihood are protected by pushing back the start of the school year to the Tuesday after Labour Day?

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** This is an appropriate question for the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'm very pleased to be able to address this issue because, like the member opposite, I think it is one of real concern.

I understand that locally there are different circumstances that need to be accommodated. In a community

where tourism is a huge issue, like Muskoka, obviously this is of great concern. I do have some of the e-mails that have gone to the member opposite—one from the Lumina Resort—so I'm very aware of the issue that he's dealing with.

The situation is this: If a school board decides to start the school year before August 31, then the Minister of Education has to weigh in on whether that's appropriate or not. None of those decisions have been made. There have been some boards that have asked for that consideration. The vast majority of boards will be starting their school year after August 31, into September—

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

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. And to the Minister of Tourism, I would think there are some tourism consequences in the riding of Nipissing as well.

I'm certainly hearing from many, many different operators in Parry Sound–Muskoka. The tourism operators are quite concerned about this, and it is significant. The example I just gave you, Santa's Village: It operates mainly in the summer. That's 10% of their whole season. That's all their profit gone, basically. So this is very serious.

I've heard from other people, like Betty Bacon and Sue Watson, owners of the Craft Room in the village of Rosseau. They write, "We strongly oppose this action as we own a small retail store ... and do 50% of our whole year's business from the time the school year ends...."

I've got many other examples.

So I think you recognize it is a very serious question. I hope you'll use whatever powers you have, if the board decides to start before the end of the school year, to make sure it doesn't start till after Tuesday.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Again, I absolutely take this concern very seriously, and in fact the Minister of Tourism has raised it with me a number of times. I'm very aware and very concerned about it.

The fact is, the last time this situation pertained, in terms of the calendar, was 1998, and at that time the authority to make those decisions was left at the local level, except for when there was a request to start before August 31. That situation is exactly the same now. These decisions have not been made.

When I look at the correspondence with the member opposite, my hope is that he and the tourism operators are speaking with the school board. It's very important that the school board be very aware of the implications of their actions. I will certainly do everything I can to support the industry and the province, but the school board and the community need to be—

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

## MINISTER'S COMMENTS

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: During question period, I distinctly heard the Minister of Finance suggest that you were biased when you asked

him to sit down. Most of our members heard it too. I know that the Minister of Finance sees himself as a parliamentarian. He'll want to withdraw that comment and perhaps apologize to the Chair.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I do wish to apologize to the Chair. It was uncalled for.

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

#### BIRTH OF MEMBER'S GRANDCHILD

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask your indulgence to make a brief announcement. Yesterday at Victoria Hospital in London, my daughter Paula and her husband, Kyle, became the proud parents of an eight-pound, seven-ounce granddaughter for Lynn and me. She will be a cousin to MacKenzie Fessey of Mississauga.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** On behalf of the Legislature, congratulations to you and your family.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's my pleasure to be here today in the Legislature to discuss a very important issue in my constituency of Nepean–Carleton.

As I've said a number of times in this esteemed chamber, Barrhaven in south Nepean in the great city of Ottawa is one of the fastest-growing communities not just in Ontario but in all of Canada, with one of the strongest and fastest-growing birth rates.

But it brings me to some challenges a fast-growing community faces. Among them, we know that it's difficult to make sure that we've got the infrastructure we need, and right now we need the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge to be built to link two very important communities.

We also have health care challenges. One of those challenges in particular is ensuring that we have an X-ray clinic to look after one of the fastest-growing populations in this entire province. Last year, unfortunately, the X-ray clinic in Barrhaven was taken away from our community, and what we're asking for is to send it back. My constituent Perra Wharton is going to be leading a petition campaign to this Legislature to ensure that we have the adequate health care resources we need.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I see the former government House leader, the current Minister of Transportation, mocking this side of the House when we discuss the challenges for our communities, particularly those which were farmers' fields just 10 years ago and do not have the

adequate resources in place today to deal with the growing populations. So I might add, to him and to the other members in the government, that just because we are asking for resources in our community does not mean that you should shut them down.

#### PARENTS REACHING OUT

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** Before I begin, I would like to recognize Evene Pedoven and Danny Lopes from my constituency office, who are here today.

I rise in this House today to speak about community involvement in education. Our government has encouraged parents to take on active roles in the activities of schools through the Parents Reaching Out program. In my own riding of York South–Weston, seven schools will receive funding for setting up local events designed to foster an open dialogue between parents and teachers in order to improve the overall educational experience of students.

After all, schools are more than just buildings with desks and books. What makes a school a thriving educational institution is the community involvement that underpins a child's academic development. To name a few examples of how we are supporting parent-teacher engagement: St. John the Evangelist Separate School will conduct numeracy workshops to get students talking about the importance of math. Frank Oke Secondary School will stage an event titled ArtConnect, where parents will learn how to get their youth involved in the visual and performing arts. Finally, Maple Leaf Public School will hold parenting workshops designed to offer advice to parents on how to generate an interest in at-home learning for their kids, among other things.

I very much look forward to working with the schools in my area to continue with the programs and ensure that the constructive dialogue between parents and teachers carries on.

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** In answers to questions today, the Premier and the Minister of Finance repeatedly referred to measures that the government took in the last budget that our party does not support.

They know full well that this House only gets to vote on the budget in its entirety. This means that you can either vote in favour of the whole budget or against the whole budget. Claiming we oppose every measure because we vote against the budget is disingenuous. Taken to its ultimate extent, voting against the budget means you oppose every single cent of government spending. This is obviously absurd.

So I have a proposal for the Premier. Why don't you let the House vote on each line item in the budget? That way, members of all parties could say yes or no to specific provisions one by one. At the end of the process, you can then have a single vote on the entire budget. Only this final vote would have to be a confidence vote.

If you have the courage to give this House a vote on every line item, then do so. Otherwise, don't pretend we oppose every action of government because we vote against the budget.

### SKILLS TRAINING

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** Last week in my riding of London–Fanshawe I visited, alongside with my colleague Minister Bentley and Minister Matthews, the training centre run by the Labourers' International Union of North America, Local 1059. This centre is recognized as one of the leading training facilities of its kind in North America. LIUNA was celebrating a great achievement known as the training trust fund. Through this fund, they are investing \$1,074,000 in equipment and infrastructure at their training facility.

LIUNA Local 1059 represents 1,600 workers and has agreements with over 240 construction companies in London and the surrounding area. Under the leadership of Jim MacKinnon and his team, they have provided training to many professional labourers in their state-of-the-art facility. It's a remarkable place that provides both classroom and practical areas for students and apprentices. The training and education they offer is among the best Ontario has to offer, and I'm proud they are located in my riding of London–Fanshawe.

The LIUNA training trust fund is one of many achievements accomplished by Local 1059. Over the last 12 years, LIUNA's training programs have grown steadily, and even in our current economic downturn they are still in demand. I would like to thank the members of Local 1059 for their efforts to ensure that their apprentices and the construction trades receive the finest training.

### LA COMMUNAUTÉ D'ORLÉANS

**M. Phil McNeely:** C'est pour moi un grand honneur d'annoncer aux membres de l'Assemblée que St-Joseph d'Orléans, fondée en 1860, célébrera son 150<sup>e</sup> anniversaire en 2010.

Orléans fut un des premiers villages canadiens-français à l'est de Bytown. Pendant ces 150 ans, Orléans a su conserver son caractère francophone, et la paroisse St-Joseph est la plus grande paroisse du diocèse d'Ottawa.

Bien que les premières habitations furent construites sur la rive de la rivière des Outaouais, le village s'est développé le long du chemin de Montréal, plus précisément le long de la première concession.

Les célébrations s'étaleront tout au long de l'année 2010 et incluront des activités telles que des expositions d'art, le lancement d'un livre, une exposition d'objets patrimoniaux, du théâtre au nouveau Centre des arts Shenkman, une croisée de canots à l'île Petrie, la confection d'un DVD par les élèves de l'école secondaire Garneau, et j'en passe.

Je suis fier d'être le député d'une si belle communauté. J'accorde tout mon appui au comité organisateur et je lui souhaite le plus éclatant des succès : Peter Schonenbach, président, M<sup>me</sup> Colette Côté, vice-présidente, et M<sup>me</sup> Denise Lemire, agente de projets.

### ONTARIO ECONOMY

**Mr. Ted Arnott:** In yesterday's question period, I asked the Premier to explain why he hadn't made a serious effort to pay down the provincial debt when he had the chance, when the economy was strong. I asked him why Liberal members refused to support my 2003 motion calling for a long-term debt repayment plan. The Premier declined to answer, which is not entirely surprising. Unfortunately this government, through its negligence and neglect, has done as much damage to the economy as it has done to Ontario's balance sheet.

In May 2005, I tabled a resolution calling for an immediate investigation into Ontario's industrial and economic competitiveness in order to develop an action plan to maintain and expand our domestic and international markets. Of course the McGuinty government chose to ignore this constructive idea as well.

Now, it's almost four years later and more than 272,000 people have lost their factory jobs, but this government still has yet to produce an effective action plan to restore Ontario as the leader in Confederation.

In Hamilton, 1,500 steelworkers will soon lose their jobs. It's devastating news for that city and the neighbouring communities, including Puslinch township in Wellington–Halton Hills.

We all know that this economy is a global problem, but that's no excuse for this government's shameful record of inaction when times were good. Had they rolled up their sleeves and acted on the debt, had they acted on the need for an industrial action plan, had they taken our advice, Ontario would be in a far stronger position to weather the economic storm we're experiencing at the present time.

1510

### TOWNSHIP OF WOOLWICH

**Ms. Leeanna Pendergast:** I want take an opportunity to one more time to talk about Woolwich township, in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, and our bid to become Hockeyville. We are the last community in Ontario to become Hockeyville, and I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been so supportive, who has really worked hard to go online, phone or text in order to make Woolwich Hockeyville.

Woolwich is the home of Dan Snyder, a former NHL hockey player. I was Dan's vice-principal at Elmira District Secondary School. We tragically lost Dan Snyder in an accident with Dan Heatley. So we ask that Ontario continue to do it for Dan as well. Originally, voting was



to end at midnight tonight, but now it's 1:30 in the morning; it's been extended for an hour and a half.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee that has worked tirelessly to make this happen for Woolwich township. I want to thank Graham Snyder and LuAnn Snyder, Jay Church, Del Gingrich, Larry Farr, Deb Good, Sharon Schultz, Sherrie Goss, Brenda Boland, Sandy Mann, Linda Fauteux, David Brenneman, Carole Fife, Robert Lariviere, Val Martin and Sandy Shantz.

I also want to thank the mayor of Woolwich township, Bill Strauss, for his incredible commitment to this project, as well as Premier McGuinty for his support for Team Ontario, and everyone in this House who has spent the last three days texting, going online, phoning and doing everything they can, and everyone at home. Please continue to do so until 1:30 a.m. tomorrow.

#### STEEL INDUSTRY

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Hamilton and the Lake Erie Works, under the corporation US Steel, are shutting their operations in Canada. We're talking about thousands and thousands of jobs.

My family has a history of almost 300 years working at Stelco. The Steel Company of Canada operated during the Great Depression. My father worked two days one week and three days the next. He shared his workload with his mate so that families could keep working and wouldn't starve.

Stelco didn't close shop and run away. It stayed the course. It supported its customers and its employees.

In these new global economic times, governments must finally take the lead as the crisis continues to emerge. If we don't get our act together and don't work seriously now to get this economy rolling, the devastation will be complete.

We must move this infrastructure money into the steel sector, the construction sector and other sectors now to get our economy back on track and rolling.

#### STEEL INDUSTRY

**Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis:** My community of Hamilton was shocked yesterday by the sudden temporary closure of the US Steel plant. This plant has been a fixture in our community for the last 100 years.

Our steelworkers in both Hamilton and Nanticoke are among the best in the world, and we are proud of the strong tradition they have built.

This closure is a reflection of the global economic recession that has idled steel plants across the United States, including Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota.

I want the affected workers to know that they are not alone. As a government, we will help them navigate through these challenging times.

We have received assurances from US Steel that they will fulfill their employee responsibilities outlined in

their collective agreement, and we will work hard to make sure that this happens.

We also established the Hamilton Area Steelworkers Action centre in response to previous layoffs. Plans are under way to expand services that provide affected workers with the skills necessary to succeed in this economy.

We are proud of our steelworkers, and we will continue to work hard to help those affected. As a government and a community, we must and will continue to work toward a bright future for our great city of Hamilton and for all Hamiltonians.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item number 20 and Mr. Hoy assumes ballot item number 58 on the list drawn January 28, 2009.

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### TOBACCO DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE COSTS RECOVERY ACT, 2009

##### LOI DE 2009 SUR LE RECOURVEMENT DU MONTANT DES DOMMAGES ET DU COÛT DES SOINS DE SANTÉ IMPUTABLES AU TABAC

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to permit the Province to recover damages and health care costs incurred because of tobacco related diseases and to make a complementary amendment to the Limitations Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 155, Loi autorisant la province à recouvrer le montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé engagés en raison des maladies liées au tabac et à apporter une modification complémentaire à la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions.

*Interruption.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I would just remind our guests that we welcome your attendance here, but as much as you may wish, you're not allowed to participate in the debate.

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. Christopher Bentley:** During ministerial statements, please.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY  
AND RESPONSES**

TOBACCO-RELATED  
HEALTH CARE COSTS  
COÛTS DES SOINS  
DE SANTÉ RELIÉS AU TABAC

**Hon. Christopher Bentley:** As I rise today to speak to the legislation just introduced, I want to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of a number of different people who have been supportive, instrumental, in so many ways:

Michael Perley, executive director, Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco; Bill Thomas, president of the Heart and Stroke Foundation; Nadia Yee, government relations, Heart and Stroke Foundation; Gar Mahood, executive director of the Non-Smokers' Rights Association; Irene Gallagher Jones, senior manager of public issues, Canadian Cancer Society; Meridene Haynes, director of programming, Asthma Society of Canada; Dr. Terrence Sullivan, president, Cancer Care Ontario; Dr. George Pasut, vice-president, prevention and screening, Cancer Care Ontario; Connie Uetrecht, executive director, Ontario Public Health Association; Joanne Di Nardo, manager of government relations, Ontario Lung Association; Ratsamy Pathammavong, tobacco control manager, Ontario Lung Association; and also, to acknowledge in their absence, the Ontario Medical Association.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today to introduce this legislation that would, if passed, enable our government to take action to recover health care costs associated with tobacco use, costs that have long been a drain on the health care system and a burden on Ontario taxpayers.

Smoking is the number one cause of premature death and illness in our province. Tobacco use accounts for the death of approximately 13,000 Ontarians every year. That's 36 deaths every day.

I don't think I need to convince my fellow members of the staggering human costs associated with tobacco use. The friends and families of those 13,000 Ontarians who die every year from tobacco-related diseases can tell you about their loss, their grief and the hardships they suffer. There are thousands more whose loved ones are stricken with painful and debilitating tobacco-related illnesses. That's why the McGuinty government is a national leader in tobacco control initiatives, through our smoke-free Ontario strategy, a vital part of our government's commitment to a healthier Ontario.

Toutefois, la loi que nous présentons aujourd'hui s'écartera du modèle suivi par nos initiatives passées, bien qu'elle soit aussi importante. Le coût financier du tabagisme est tout aussi exorbitant que le coût humain du tabagisme.

Today's legislation takes a different step from our past initiatives, but it is also important. The human cost of smoking is immense, but so too is the financial cost. In

financial terms, the health care costs associated with smoking are more than \$1.6 billion every year in this province, with almost 500,000 hospital days every year. This is a huge drain on our health care system. Let me put that in perspective: \$1.6 billion would provide funding for 2,000 MRI units—not 2,000 MRIs; 2,000 MRI units—operating eight hours a day, every single day. It would fund 211,000 hip and knee surgeries, and it would also provide funding for eight large community hospitals the size of Toronto East General Hospital.

**1520**

Notre projet de loi traite des coûts monétaires des soins de santé liés au tabagisme. Si la loi est adoptée, elle nous autorisera à tenir les fabricants de produits du tabac responsables en recouvrant les coûts des soins de santé engagés pour traiter des maladies causées par la consommation de tabac.

The proposed legislation deals with monetary costs for health-care-related smoking. This legislation would, if passed, allow us to hold tobacco companies accountable by recovering health care costs spent to treat tobacco-related illnesses. It would allow us to directly sue tobacco companies to address their alleged misconduct. It would give the government a two-year window to seek redress from the tobacco companies for the drain on our health care system on behalf of all taxpayers. Under this proposed legislation, the government would be able to sue for damages alleged to have been caused by a tobacco-related wrong, whether it is current or happened in the past. It would, if passed, create a method to determine the health care cost damages due to tobacco-related illness that have drained our health care system and have been borne by our taxpayers, and it would allow for the recovery of past and ongoing tobacco-related damages. The liability would be divided among tobacco companies based on their market share. Further, our legislation would establish the burden of proof required to link tobacco-related illness to the harm caused by tobacco products and damages owed by tobacco companies.

If our legislation passes, Ontario would join British Columbia and New Brunswick, which are already pursuing lawsuits against tobacco companies to recover health care costs. Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba have also passed health care recovery legislation. I ask everyone in this House to support this proposed legislation so that we can work together to seek redress from tobacco companies. We want to work toward recovering the financial cost borne by taxpayers and our health care system as a result of the alleged wrongdoing of tobacco companies.

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

TOBACCO-RELATED  
HEALTH CARE COSTS

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I am pleased to respond, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, to the Attorney General's statement on proposed tobacco damages and health care cost recovery legislation. We are aware that there is a growing trend in Canada to enact

legislation to permit governments to recover damages associated with tobacco-related costs and damages, and that similar legislation has been enacted already in a number of Canadian provinces, including British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

We in the Conservative caucus agree with the principle behind the legislation, because there is no question that the economic cost associated with tobacco use to our health care system is staggering, not to mention the terrible human costs that are associated with it. We certainly do support the premise behind the legislation and it was something that we, when we were in government, tried to address as well.

The only question that we would have right now is whether this should be a priority for the government in dealing with the enactment of the smoke-free Ontario strategy. It's a question of whether this is a cost-effective type of recovery. Let's look at some of the other things that could have been done. In human terms, why not work towards ensuring that the smoke-free Ontario strategy is evenly applied across the province of Ontario? Let's look at recovering the hundreds of millions of dollars in lost tax revenue arising out of the sale of illegal cigarettes in Ontario, including in illegal smoke shacks in many of our communities. Why not crack down on that and get those revenues that could be applied to offset some of our health care costs? We should be doing that, and we implore the government to get busy with that, quite frankly.

But what I would say with respect to this piece of legislation is that it sounds very good—it sounds good to be able to go after the big tobacco companies and try to recover those costs from them, but you have to commence a lawsuit. Lawsuits take years and, I would suggest, hundreds of millions of dollars for what type of recovery you might be able to achieve in the end.

I would suggest that while the principle behind the legislation is laudable, why doesn't the government look at real ways of being seriously able to get revenues in quickly, with a sure means of recovery, rather than going after lawsuits that may or may not have a chance for success?

I would ask the government to address some of these other priorities as well as pursuing the strategies that are contained within this piece of legislation.

#### TOBACCO-RELATED HEALTH CARE COSTS

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'm pleased to respond to this ministerial statement on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park. France Gélinas, our health critic, was aware that this legislation was coming forward this afternoon, and she wanted me to make sure that I expressed her endorsement of the proposition.

It's simply incredible that a deadly and addictive product could be sold and marketed, yet the manufacturers deny any responsibility for the deadly impact of their product.

Oh, and I know the hoopla, the silliness, that comes from mostly the US tobacco lobby, but echoed here in Canada, about tobacco manufacturers not telling people how many cigarettes a day to smoke—"Why, gosh, if people only smoked two or three cigarettes a day, the risks of cancer would be limited." But the whole idea of luring people into a smoking habit is to get them smoking one, two and three packs a day. If every smoker only smoked two or three cigarettes a day, the tobacco companies would go bankrupt. The whole idea is to get people hooked.

I don't want to sound too sanctimonious. I was a long-time smoker, a heavily addicted smoker, and spent a lot of time breaking the habit. I'm quite pleased that I was finally able to get that monkey off my back.

What I find remarkable is this: Our generation, we grey-hairs, are less inclined to smoke, yet smoking amongst young people has not been arrested or halted in the same manner that it has amongst their parents. That is a shocking observation, and the tobacco industry knows it. The tobacco industry has to find new generations of markets to stay in business. They have to cultivate more smokers. They've had incredible power, and they've used it.

Successive federal government after government has tried to impose limits on, let's say, advertising or endorsements by tobacco companies at sporting events or billboard advertising. Those same successive governments, talking big games, have similarly been aggressively addressed by the tobacco lobby and have always inevitably backed off.

I believe in tort. I'm not a fan of the government's misuse, from time to time, of Bay Street lawyers, but I tell you that in this instance, this is exactly what tort law and the courts are designed to address. This isn't something that should be resolved by dispute resolution in a private mediation. This industry has to be exposed as a murderous industry. It has to be made accountable. They murder people, Attorney General. The tobacco industry murders people, and I, for one, wish that our criminal laws would make it possible for us to prosecute these same purveyors of death criminally, because manslaughter or homicide, a murder is a murder is a murder, and they do it knowingly.

I look forward to being able to address this bill on second reading. I can tell the government that we expect that it will be called promptly. We expect that it might have some brief committee hearings for some commentary by interested parties, and I suspect that it then would be referred back to the House for third reading. If—and I've read the bill very quickly here during the five minutes of the Attorney General's comments and my colleague's—there are what we believe are flaws in the bill, we're going to speak to them. If the interested parties believe that there are things that can be improved, they'll tell us about that and we'll speak to those too.

**1530**

But this is, as I say, deadly serious. I condemn that industry in the most forceful terms. I say that we have to create a culture where people don't regard the tobacco

industry as one that's in any way, shape or—as a matter of fact, just this morning in the *New York Times* I read the obituary of the Marlboro man in the United States, who was put into smoke-filled movie studios and camera studios for the publicity shots and contracted cancer and sued the cigarette companies that he was doing the advertising for. This utilization of the courts is in my view a most appropriate one, and one that New Democrats support, endorse and look forward to seeing it proceed promptly.

#### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in commemoration of International Women's Day.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Agreed? Agreed.  
Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** It's International Women's Week, seven days of activities and events that culminate this Sunday, March 8, on International Women's Day. I'm pleased to rise in this House today to celebrate the accomplishments of women in Ontario and around the world.

It's a time to celebrate the political, economic and social achievements of women, both past and present, and it's also a time to reflect on the work that still needs to be done for all women to achieve full equality in all aspects of their lives.

This year's national theme is "Strong Leadership. Strong Women. Strong World: Equality." Our communities need to see strong women in leadership roles: women who are making a difference, women who act as role models for our young people. Women have made great strides in acting as role models in boardrooms, community centres, academia and politics. But we need to do more.

I'm very proud to serve as an elected official in my community. I am delighted and encouraged every time a young girl asks me about my job here at Queen's Park. What I tell her is this: "You can do it, too." And we all need to work hard to ensure that she can.

We need to continue our work in levelling the playing field. Equality can come only when there is opportunity for all, regardless of gender. We know there's still much to do. We know there is injustice when there is a gender wage gap. We know there is inequality when women continue to live with the threat of violence. Our government is making systemic changes to break down barriers and create opportunity. Through our domestic violence action plan, we've been working closely with women's advocates and community leaders across Ontario. We've created in partnership with them innovative programs aimed at increasing public awareness of woman abuse and improving supports to victims.

Our Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign, a component of our domestic violence action plan, is now internationally respected and is in over 140 communities

across Ontario, and we've launched similar campaigns in francophone and aboriginal communities. This campaign recognizes that creation of a strong world calls on the leadership of all of us—communities, neighbours, friends and families.

Our goal is to ensure that all women gain hope and opportunity that they can live safe, rewarding and productive lives, and that they can participate in and contribute to their communities as strong women.

We celebrate role models. This year over 70 women were nominated by their MPPs for the Leading Girls, Building Communities and the Leading Women, Building Communities awards. These women are wonderful examples of people in our local communities who are doing the important work of helping other women and young girls be the best they can be.

I would like to close with a challenge to all of us this House, and in fact to all Ontarians. All of us have women in our lives who have made us who we are—women who have inspired us to do better, to speak out or to advocate for change. I challenge all of us, women and men, girls and boys, on International Women's Day: Let's celebrate these women. I'm asking you to take a moment to send a letter to a woman who has inspired you by making a difference in your life, a woman who has touched your life in a special way and inspired you to make a difference, too. It could be a teacher, a parent or someone you see as a strong leader and mentor.

During International Women's Day and Week, we reconnect to promoting the rights of women, ending violence, increasing economic security and helping all women to achieve the full equality we all deserve. I ask all of us to take the time to thank a woman for the lasting contribution she's made to the community and our world.

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus in recognition of International Women's Day 2009. Canada's theme this year is "Strong Leadership. Strong Women. Strong World: Equality."

International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the accomplishments of women and to reflect upon the progress that women have made in our province, our country and the world, as individuals and collectively. It's a day to recognize the sacrifices made and stands taken by women to afford the women of future generations the rights which so many of us take for granted in the year 2009. It's also a day, however, to consider steps that can be taken to further create an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment for our daughters to grow up in.

This year the theme for International Women's Day reflects the view that by increasing women's involvement in leadership roles, we can ensure that women across our great country are given the opportunity to reach their full potential and to play a part in shaping and improving the future of our province and our country. A release by the federal government in recognition of International Women's Day 2009 notes, "For Canadians, equality means women and men sharing in the responsibilities and

obligations, as well as in the opportunities and rewards, of life and work. In Canada, leadership is key across society—from the private sector, to governments, to the general public—for people of all origins, generations and backgrounds to participate fully in our country's economic, social and democratic life, and ultimately, in improving the state of the world.”

I'm proud to sit in the Legislature as the representative from my community and in a province which is a leader in promoting women's rights. I'm proud to be a member of a party which has had the honour of being represented by many strong women. The Progressive Conservatives have an impressive record both in Ontario and across the country with respect to advancing the status of women. In 1918, Conservative Prime Minister Robert Borden ensured that women were given equal status and the right to vote. In 1972, provincial Premier and PC leader Bill Davis appointed Margaret Birch as Ontario's first woman cabinet minister, as minister responsible for youth. The PC Party of Ontario in 1985 named Bette Stephenson as the first female Treasurer and Deputy Premier. Our party also played host to the first female Minister of Finance to introduce a budget in Ontario, Janet Ecker, former MPP for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge. I'm sure that I need not mention that our first female Prime Minister was delegated from within the Conservative Party: Ms. Kim Campbell.

While the leaders I have just spoken of are public figures, it's also important to acknowledge strong women in leadership roles across our province in other professions: our female teachers, for example, who go to work every day to arm our sons and daughters with the knowledge and confidence that one day they will grow up to make a big difference in society; our nurses, doctors, and other health care practitioners, who quietly work to improve the lives of others, often without thanks; our volunteers, who wholeheartedly and without any request for compensation are making huge differences in people's lives every day.

I would be remiss, however, if I were to fail to acknowledge that our work in gaining equality for women is not complete. For example, Statistics Canada reported in 2006 that the women in our workforce are still earning only 71% of what their male counterparts make. Women also continue to be underrepresented in some areas of traditional male employment.

All of this, however, is overshadowed when contrasted with the treatment of women in some developing countries. Many women are denied access to what are considered in Ontario as basic human rights, including access to education, health care or even food. Many women are unable to vote and are looked down upon for independent thinking and for aspiring to be more than a servant to their husband. Further to this, in some areas, women are often abused, raped and tortured by men in their lives without any legal repercussions.

1540

So today, on International Women's Day, let us join together in thanks and recognition of our strong female leaders who are the inspiration for our communities and

our world. Let us also vow to take a stand against unfair treatment within our communities and to lead by example in hopes that one day, women across the world will be recognized as persons, leaders and equals.

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** It's a pleasure and a privilege to stand in this House, which still sees a minority of women in its seats, and speak again about International Women's Day. You know, for 40 years I have been taking part in International Women's Day celebrations. But I have to tell you that International Women's Day is not Mother's Day. International Women's Day was originally a protest march about the inequality of women, and we are still protesting the inequality of women.

Back in 1969, I think, when I took part in my first protest march for International Women's Day, the banners we carried said, “Control of Our Bodies, Control of Our Lives.” We still are struggling for control of our lives. We've made some progress on control of our bodies in those 40 years, but not so much on control of our lives.

So I thought I would really focus on ways we could help our minister across the way to make the lives of women better. Here are some suggestions, and these are the same suggestions we were making 40 years ago.

First, back then the cry was for universal, 24-hour-a-day, free child care. We're no closer to that than we were 40 years ago. In fact, we're further away from that than we were 40 years ago. Right now in Ontario, only one in 10 children has a daycare spot. The average cost is over \$1,000. Next door to us, in Quebec, you can get child care for \$7 a day. Why not here? So there is a huge, huge demand.

Second, we need a minimum wage that puts women above the poverty line, because women are two thirds of minimum wage earners and women, predominantly, are the poor in this province. That means \$10.25 an hour and it means now; not tomorrow, not next year, not in 2011—now.

What else do we need? We need housing. We need housing for women. We need housing for women escaping abuse. We need transitional housing. The Redwood shelter, in my riding, is always full. They never have beds. We need beds for women escaping abuse.

Most importantly—and it has been touched on by the previous speakers—we need economic equality. There is no equality without economic equality. Wherever a woman makes 71 cents on the dollar, which is what they do in Ontario, you do not have equality. We don't have women experiencing equality in the province of Ontario. That's the reality.

Now, 20 years ago, we had pay equity legislation put in place in this province. But if you don't fund the folk who enforce it, which we haven't been, then it doesn't happen. So we're still dealing with that issue as well, and you heard my colleague talk about the 71 cents on the dollar.

Coming up on March 24 is Agnes Macphail Day. Now, there's a woman to celebrate. I rub her shoulder every time I walk up the steps of the grand staircase. We should all get five minutes to speak about good old Agnes. She was a woman with guts and a woman who

stood on principle. She was a woman who talked about the economic equality of women being necessary for full equality. Agnes said that without economic equality, there's no equality whatsoever.

I haven't actually often thought of Yogi Berra as a feminist, but his quote, "It's like déjà vu all over again," came to mind today. It is like déjà vu all over again. Every year we celebrate another International Women's Day, and we celebrate the women in our lives, as we should, but Lord sakes, how many more decades will it take before I can stand here and answer that kid that was me in that first demonstration 40 years ago and say, "Do you know what? Finally, we have control of our bodies, and finally—finally—we have control of our lives"? Will it be another 40 years? I hope not.

## PETITIONS

### IDENTITY THEFT

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a reported epidemic of fraudulent loans involving notarized affidavits by/from loan-handling lawyers' affiants that claim debts will be carried by other people's creditworthiness and/or equity in property; and

"Whereas banks, financial institutions and lending houses claim innocence in that they rely on third parties to perform potential debtors' identity validation and financial due diligence in cases of loans and mortgages they approve on the basis of third party representations; and

"Whereas it is perfectly legal for banks to readily approve loans they consider financially risk-free using third party affidavits that make debtors of people who are completely unaware, uninvolved and never see the money; and

"Whereas, by way of example, people have signed their support to reopen a quashed OSC investigation;

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

"That an investigation concerning identity theft be conducted into banks', financial institutions' and lending houses' lending policies, practices and procedures (as per reopening OSC file number 20050316-17043) to identify weaknesses in the law and lending system procedures for appropriate amendments to the law to strengthen specific areas of responsibility for potential debtors' identity validation and financial due diligence that will safeguard people's wealth and equity in property from fraudulent loan applications, specifically in cases of third party representations using notarized affidavits by/for loan-handling lawyers that may benefit themselves and/or their affiants."

I present this petition to the House and affix my signature thereto.

### MULTIPLE MYELOMA

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

"Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

"Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians" annually diagnosed with this disease;

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

"Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding."

### PROTECTION OF MINORS

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I have a petition provided to me by the Christopher Champlain Community Centre. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no law in Ontario prohibiting pornography and other sexually explicit material from being viewed on computers in public schools and libraries; and

"Whereas there are public schools and public libraries that do not use Internet filtering software on computers that blocks such inappropriate material; and

"Whereas parents in the province of Ontario have the right to ensure their children are protected from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the Internet in their public schools and libraries;

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

"That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet filtering software on computers to avoid screening of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content."

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

### MULTIPLE MYELOMA

**Mr. Michael Prue:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

"Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

"Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians diagnosed annually;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I am in agreement and would sign my name thereto.

1550

#### CHILD CUSTODY

**Mr. Kim Craitor:** I'm pleased to introduce this petition into the House, and I want to thank Alexander for his efforts in gathering these petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33.

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased and proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

#### DIABETES TREATMENT

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I have a petition provided to me by Dr. Robert De Miglio. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

“Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

“Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child's school several times throughout the day in order to test their child's blood sugar levels; and

“Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

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

“(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

“(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child's parent/guardian.”

As I agree and support this petition, I affix my name thereto.

#### INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“(1) ROCHE-NCE, a consulting firm hired to study potential sites for an interprovincial crossing between Ottawa and Gatineau, is recommending that an interprovincial bridge across the Ottawa River be built at Kettle Island, connecting to the scenic Aviation Parkway in Ottawa, turning it into a four-lane commuter and truck route passing through downtown residential communities; and

“(2) Along the proposed route are homes, seniors' apartments, schools, parks, the Montfort Long Term Care Facility and the Montfort Hospital, all of which would be severely impacted by noise, vibration and disease-causing air pollution; and

“(3) A truck and commuter route through neighbourhoods is a safety issue because of the increased risk to pedestrians and cyclists and the transport of hazardous materials; and

“(4) There are other, more suitable corridors further east, outside of the downtown core, which would have minimal impact on Ottawa residents;

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

“To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase two of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table via page Danielle.

#### MULTIPLE MYELOMA

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

“Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

“Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians diagnosed annually;

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

“Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice for patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

#### CHILD CUSTODY

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from the riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### DIABETES TREATMENT

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

“Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

“Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

“Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child’s school several times

throughout the day in order to test their child’s blood sugar levels; and

“Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

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

“(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

“(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child’s parent/guardian.”

As I’m in agreement with this, I’ve affixed my signature.

#### LUPUS

**Mr. Kim Craiton:** I’m extremely pleased to submit this petition on behalf of the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, which is located in Ridgeway, a part of my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas systemic lupus erythematosus is under-recognized as a global health problem by the public, health professionals and governments, driving the need for greater awareness; and

“Whereas medical research on lupus and efforts to develop safer and more effective therapies for the disease are underfunded in comparison with diseases of comparable magnitude and severity; and

“Whereas no new safe and effective drugs for lupus have been introduced in more than 40 years. Current drugs for lupus are very toxic and can cause other life-threatening health problems that can be worse than the primary disease;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to assist financially with media campaigns to bring about knowledge of systemic lupus erythematosus and the signs and symptoms of this disease to all citizens of Ontario.

“We further petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide funding for research currently being undertaken in lupus clinics throughout Ontario.”

I’m proud to sign my signature in support of this petition.

1600

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION  
DE LA PAUVRETÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 3, 2009, on the motion for second reading Bill 152, An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in



Ontario / Projet de loi 152, Loi concernant une stratégie à long terme de réduction de la pauvreté en Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** In a normal debate I would start by saying that I was pleased to join in the debate on Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act. Unfortunately, this is not a normal debate. Bill 152 is one of the most empty, most meaningless and most superficial bills introduced by this Liberal government. I would summarize it as a bill that requires the government to write a strategy and to write annual reports. No actual action or improvements to the lives of Ontario's poor are contained in the bill. What this bill really demonstrates is this government's reliance on "gesture politics." Instead of taking action that would help to reduce poverty such as improving education or cutting red tape so the economy can create jobs, the government aims to show that it cares, that it is on the right side of a political issue. It would rather get a good headline in a paper than do things that are needed.

The New York Times, in 2005, published an excellent article called "The Triumph of Gesture Politics." The article provides an excellent definition of the term: "The expression 'gesture politics' generally describes the substitution of symbols and empty promises for policy." This government has repeatedly demonstrated that gesture politics is their modus operandi.

Last year's Lake Simcoe Protection Act is a perfect example. Instead of spending money to clean up the lake, they passed a bill to set up committees and write reports. The status-of-the-artist act is another great example. All it did was declare a commemorative day for artists. In no way did it match the substantial list that many artists and their unions expected out of the government's 2003 election promise to them. All of these bills were gestures by the government, completely empty gestures.

So let's talk a look at the bill itself. The actual clauses of the bill take up less than two and a half pages—two and a half pages to fight poverty in Ontario. Now, to be fair, if you add in the preamble, you can get to an entire three pages.

The preamble of the bill trumpets the government's publishing of a paper on poverty reduction last December. They state their goal of achieving a 25% reduction in child poverty in five years; a worthy goal, although just as with this bill, it is only words on paper. No actual commitment of resources has come out of this December paper.

I also find the five-year commitment very interesting because it has taken the government five years to actually produce a paper on poverty reduction, five years in which it could have been taking action. The bill's preamble says:

"A principal goal of the government's strategy published on December 4, 2008, is to achieve a 25% reduction in the number of Ontario children living in poverty within five years. The initial focus of the government's strategy is on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by improving opportunities for children, particularly through the education system."

This leaves me with one question: Does the government not realize that pulling children out of poverty requires the government to help pull their parents out of poverty? Better education for a child who is five or 10 years old is a good thing, but is it going to help pull any of them out of poverty in five years? If the government cannot get this fact right, why should we trust anything else they are planning to do?

Let's move on to the rest of the two-and-a-half-page bill. Section 1 of the bill is the purpose: "to establish mechanisms to support a sustained long-term reduction of poverty." I have no problem with that.

Section 2 is where the empty gestures begin. The government is required to keep the current strategy or write a new one. The strategy must be based on a shopping list of nice principles: the importance of all Ontarians, the importance of communities, diversity, the importance of involvement, respect, co-operation. All the government seems to have left out of their two-and-a-half-page bill is a commitment to peace, friendship and everything nice. I do not object to any of these sentiments, but as they are written into this bill, they are meaningless. They are only gestures. The bill then moves beyond the nice sentiments to the contents of the strategy. It requires a poverty reduction target. It states that there should be initiatives and indicators.

Section 3 requires a new strategy every five years and a new target.

Section 4 requires an annual report starting at the end of 2009, in which the minister will tell us all how well she is doing in fighting poverty. Does anyone here expect that the report the minister writes about her own ministry will say anything negative? Imagine if the Auditor General's report were written by the Minister of Finance.

Section 5 states that the minister shall consult with a list of stakeholders whenever she feels like consulting with them, whenever she considers it advisable to meet with them.

Section 6 gets us back to the paper-writing thrust of the government's antipoverty strategy. The minister, after five years, must review the strategy, tell the public she is reviewing the strategy and consult those people she feels like consulting.

Section 7 requires the government to put its strategy and reports on a government website. That's it for the bill.

Let me restate what I think of this bill: It is gesture politics. The government believes it is more important for the media and the public to see it on the right side of an issue than actually to take action. I think that the minister and the government should be ashamed to have introduced such a meaningless bill in this House. Not a single person will be pulled out of poverty by this bill. The only beneficiary of its report-writing provision is the paper industry.

What penalties does the bill contain for governments that fail to meet their targets? The answer: There are none. Members will remember that Mike Harris passed legislation to penalize ministers who didn't meet their

budgetary commitments. The Liberal government repealed the legislation. Bill 152 contains no penalties for anything. The only accountability the government assigns is in the annual reports, and the minister will be writing the annual reports, reporting on herself and her officials.

The bill lets the government set any targets it wants for poverty reduction. They can then report back on whether or not they are meeting their own targets. Then the bill requires them to revise their strategy after five years, well after the next election. A better title for this bill would be the Reducing Poverty by Writing a Report Every Year and Sticking It on a Shelf Act.

#### 1610

If you want a real review of success, then at least amend the bill to send the annual report to a committee of the Legislature for review. You will still have the votes to pass it, but at least a committee can hold hearings, ask questions and hold you to account.

The sad thing is that everyone knows that poverty is a problem. Thousands of people are trapped in poverty in Ontario, most of them through no fault of their own. This bill is a betrayal of those who need help. It is wrong to offer false help to those who need a hand up. Liberal members should be ashamed that they have chosen gesture politics over real help.

I have to admit that I feel some sympathy for the minister. I am quite certain that she legitimately wants to help bring people out of poverty. I suspect that some clever staffer in the Premier's office has calculated that the government needs a good headline on poverty. They think that only a good gesture is needed.

So, let's talk about what needs to be done.

We all recognize that poverty is a problem in Ontario, and the economic downturn is only going to make poverty worse, increasing social problems throughout Ontario.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I pointed out to the minister in this House that the economic downturn is affecting the demand for children's mental health services. Since 2006, Windsor has lost thousands of manufacturing jobs, with unemployment soaring above 10%. Children's mental health cases in Windsor and Essex have increased 50% with that economic downturn, with the auto downturn. We can expect to see similar increases in many health- and social service-related fields.

The Welland Tribune reported recently that children's aid society caseloads usually increase up to 45% within six to 12 months after plant closures and massive job losses. We can only speculate when we hear about Hamilton and the area surrounding Hamilton, with the steel company closures—but these are real people and real issues.

These types of problems that hit in a downturn are experienced by those in poverty all the time. We all know that poverty makes social problems worse—another reason that this meaningless bill is such a mistake and an outrage. It's time for action instead of gesture politics from the government.

We know the problems. The experts have already studied this and told us where the problems are.

The Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity identified the specific groups most at risk for poverty in a paper it issued in September 2007 entitled Prosperity, Inequality, and Poverty. Through their research, they identified six high-risk groups who might find themselves in poverty. They include: high school dropouts; recent immigrants—those from the last 10 years; lone parents, usually mothers; the disabled; individuals between 45 and 64 who are living alone; and the sixth group, aboriginals. Government needs to take action to meet the needs of people in each of these groups. There is no one-size-fits-all solution.

Here are some of the principles that I think should guide the government in taking action.

Poverty reduction cannot be just an income issue. We must tackle the underlying causes, particularly education. The easy way would be to dramatically raise welfare rates, but this just discourages people from looking for work and creates a greater dependency.

Mike Harris and the PC government understood this and reduced the welfare rates to more reasonable levels. What was the result? According to Statistics Canada, the number of low-income Ontarians declined from 1,869,000 to 1,611,000 between 1995 and 2000. This means that there were 257,535 fewer people with low incomes under the first five years of the PC government. The percentage decrease went from 17% to 14%, an overall decrease of almost 19%.

I do not imagine that the minister was aware of this statistic when she said yesterday that no one was holding out much hope that the PC government of the day, 10 years ago, was going to act on poverty reduction. An almost 19% drop seems like a lot of hope to me. Also important in that was that, over a period of a couple of years of budgets, 750,000 Ontarians were dropped from the provincial income tax rolls, which meant an immediate increase of money in the pockets of those most vulnerable.

Our PC government recognized that the best way to cut poverty was to let the private sector create jobs, that the best way to get children out of poverty was for their parents to get jobs. The current government has lost sight of these facts. Good jobs end poverty in almost every case. It is the role of government to help people build the skills to get good jobs.

We should design government programs to match the needs of individuals in the six high-risk groups. Here's an example: Let's make sure a single mom gets quick access to the justice system, so she can get the child support she is entitled to, so she can afford to go back to work.

Let's make student assistance more flexible; universities and colleges should meet the needs of students of every age, not the other way around.

We should not see issues such as housing and income support as ends in themselves but tools to help individuals raise themselves out of poverty. They need to be effective, but they should also be there as short-term, temporary help in most cases.

The working poor and the disabled Ontarians who can work should not face the loss of medical and other benefits if they find full- or part-time work, and disabled people who cannot work should see their benefits increased regularly. Programs should be run as partnerships between an individual and the government, specifically tailored to deal with the reason or reasons the individual finds himself in poverty. As much as we can describe the poorest members of a group, we should always remember that we are dealing with individuals and families. Each is an individual case to be treated with respect and dignity.

This bill does none of those things. It will not bring a single person out of poverty. It is meaningless and an insult to poor people who are looking to us for leadership and help. It reminds me of an anecdote about Winston Churchill after he sent a copy of one of his books to a relative uninterested in reading. The relation told Churchill that he would simply put the book on the shelf with all the others. This bill will only produce reports that the minister will put on the shelf with all the others. Ontario's poor deserve much more.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

1620

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'll be speaking to this bill in, oh, I suppose, around 10 minutes' time.

I listened, of course, as I always do, very carefully to the Conservative member, the critic for this area, Mrs. Munro, from York-Simcoe. I listened carefully to her concerns about the effectiveness of this legislation. I share those concerns; New Democrats share those. I don't share her passion and fondness for the Harris years. We have a very different—we look at the Harris years through a very different lens. But I understand that's an ideological difference.

This is a very, very serious matter, and increasingly so as every day more working women and men in this province lose their jobs, and as increasingly it gets harder and harder for those people to find replacement jobs even at a fraction of the salary of the job that they had stolen from them.

One of the things we're concerned about in this legislation is that it addresses children's poverty—fine, good, of course—but what about seniors or a person with disabilities? What about single moms who were so busy raising kids that they didn't acquire career backgrounds and are left working at a hotel in Niagara Falls cleaning rooms from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. and then go to the shift at the 7-Eleven, working for the lowest of wages in each instance? What about workers in certain workplaces? Child care workers, by the very virtue of being child care workers, tend also to be very poor: caring for your children, one of the most important jobs in our society.

I'm looking forward to the chance to speak to this bill in my own right.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Certainly I too listened very carefully to the member from York-Simcoe and her comments on Bill 152.

She talks about gesture politics. I think it's very clear that this bill has a very concrete plan for how we will address poverty in the future. What this bill does is, first of all, state that we are going to move forward with our own plan as a government in terms of the strategy 25 in five years, but it also sets out very clearly that future governments are expected to do their part as well. They are going to have to come forward with their own strategies, and every five years they are going to have to make sure that they address that issue, if not sooner.

This bill is intended to make sure that future governments don't simply ignore the problem when it becomes convenient for them to do so or it's at their will. This is to clearly set out principles that will make sure that we have poverty reduction strategies in this province for future governments as well as our own. The principles talk about things like how the strategies should have very specific targets. It talks about initiatives that need to be developed to improve the economic and social conditions of the poor. It talks about indicators that would be linked to the determinants of poverty that would be used to measure the success of that strategy.

So the accountability is built into this, and who will hold us accountable? I think primarily the poor. The poor will come forward and say to us, as government and as future governments, either, "Your strategy is working," or it's not. I think they're the ones who will be the test for this. That is the accountability piece in all of this.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** I congratulate the member from Simcoe, who spoke eloquently on the subject and is very knowledgeable. She has worked in this area for some time, and her record is enviable in dealing with poverty and trying to solve those problems.

I think we would all agree that as far as the working-age population is concerned, a job is the best cure for poverty, and this government has done precious little in its five years in order to enhance the jobs that are available in this province.

As far as our seniors are concerned, I've heard it said that it's not a good thing, it's not a comfortable life, to be poor in this province, and it's not a very comfortable life to be old, but to be poor and old is the worst of all possible worlds.

This bill will do nothing, absolutely nothing, for the seniors in our society who are in such desperate need of some help, either in their living arrangements, their accommodations, or their needs for health care and their needs to be looked after in their so-called golden years. Whenever I mention golden years to a senior group, there's always one response: They're not so golden. The aches and pains that go along with age, of which I am beginning to develop a few myself, lead me to believe that perhaps that's good advice and that any government should be looking at enhancing the lot in life of our seniors. This bill will do nothing in that particular area.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I'm pleased to speak to Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act. I was speaking to someone this weekend on the whole thing about reading skills, which are so important and such a big indicator of what the opportunities for kids are. Reading skill at the end of grade 3 is a reasonable predictor of a student's future academic success. Education has to be tied in very carefully and very closely, and it has been in this act.

This chap has a company called BrainsInAction. They look at the brains of our kids, and his feeling is that this concentration on reading skills is of utmost importance. We must have spent over an hour together, him telling me that if we're going to be successful on poverty reduction education—and this has come out of the act. This is what we have been seeing here.

I do recall with my own kids at home how important it was. They grew up in French-language schools and total immersion. I was the only one at home who spoke French, so I would be reading with them and helping them out with reading skills. You could see how their achievement at school changed a great deal if I, as a parent, had the time. I was in business, and I didn't have enough time to really give this important feature. As I look back on that—my wife is an avid reader, and she had certainly helped them in the English language—it's so important, that parent attention.

I think we have to look at the education system. We have to make sure that we are giving our kids the right education so that they have opportunities.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for York-Simcoe has two minutes to reply.

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** Thanks to the members from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Halton and Ottawa-Orléans for their comments.

One of the comments made by the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was the question of accountability in this bill. That is the whole issue. There is no process within the bill, in fact, to have it as a public document, which is why I made the reference to it going to a committee or something like that as part of a public process, to be able to look at it with greater scrutiny.

The question that the member from Ottawa-Orléans raised about reading skills: I couldn't agree with him more, but that's not what the bill is about. It has only issues around writing strategies and setting those kinds of things on an annual basis.

I think that the member from Welland and I would agree that what we're looking for is far more specific and certainly a higher degree of accountability and that if one wants to have a piece of legislation based on the poverty reduction plan, it falls short of the kind of accountability that we would be looking for. More importantly, we're looking for actual action being taken. Whether it's under the guise of an economic plan or it's under the heading of poverty reduction, the point is still the same. We have many, many people in this province who are seeing themselves and their future becoming dimmer and dimmer. It's our job to create that hope.

1630

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Our critic on poverty issues is, of course, Michael Prue from Beaches-East York. Amongst other things he, along with Peter Tabuns, Andrea Horwath and Gilles Bisson, is running for leader of the NDP at the convention this weekend down in Hamilton, at the Hamilton Convention Centre. He can't do his lead this afternoon. The government is accommodating him by letting us stand down his lead until tomorrow morning at 9:05 or 9:10 or so, when he'll speak more fully to this matter than I'm allowed to; I have only 20 minutes this afternoon. So I'm grateful to the government.

What it does mean, however, is that the government might have to adjourn a little earlier than 6 o'clock. And because they're accommodating Mr. Prue, I promise not to taunt the government with the traditional cry of "Liberals don't want to work"—but this is a one-off. I promise not to taunt the Liberals with cries of "Liberals don't want to work" for adjourning early, and I won't. I will not do that.

This issue becomes more and more critical as our economy worsens and more and more people lose their jobs, because more and more people are falling into incredible poverty. One of the concerns that we have—look, child poverty is a very important matter. The bill seems to restrict the government's focus to only children, and we know that there are a whole lot of poor people out there who suffer equally.

I know that a whole lot of people watch the Legislative Assembly in the afternoon. When I'm back in Welland or Port Colborne or Thorold or Wainfleet, I hear from them, especially seniors. A lot of seniors are inclined to watch the legislative channel because they're tired of the soap operas. They just have no interest in the Hollywood entertainment celebrity gossip things. Paris Hilton means nothing to them. They're engaged in the political process. They use the legislative channel.

I know that Kathy Pendergast down in Kitchener-Waterloo, who is a delightful woman—I'm not going to tell you how old she is, but she is retirement age. But she's still certainly hale and hearty, and she watches, obviously eager to see the occasions when her daughter Leanna Pendergast rises and gets an opportunity to speak to any number of issues. I want to tell Kathy Pendergast that I'm grateful for her patience with us. I suspect that her thumb twitches occasionally on the clicker, but then she stops and says, "No, I'm going to spend five more minutes watching the legislative channel."

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** What kind of rates are they paying on cable?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I acknowledge that if Ms. Pendergast is getting cable service and getting her legislative channel, I'm sure she's annoyed from time to time by the outages and by the difficulty she has in reaching the cable company to make a complaint or have a service call. I'm sure she's frustrated from time to time by the bad picture. I assure her that Jim Bradley and I are

committed to major reform, especially when it comes to customer service of those industries.

I'm going to get to the bill in just a second, Speaker.

As a matter of fact, I was down—oh, how many months ago was it?—at the London convention where John Tory received his confirmation. He had 66%. I listened to his speech, and he talked about running government the way companies run, like Rogers, for instance. And I went, “Holy moly. Do you know the same Rogers I know?” Because all I know is that at Rogers, which is where I have to get my television from at the apartment here in Toronto, customer service is a dirty word. You want to reach for the phone and grab somebody and throttle them.

To be fair, at least when you call Rogers, you're at least likely to get a call centre in Canada, if not in Ontario. Bell Sympatico: I take great delight in asking the people—of course, I've waited on the phone for hours, because that's where I get my computer, right? You wait for hours, get cut off a couple of times and then you get to ask how the weather is in northern or southern India or in the Caribbean or wherever else it is. Bell Sympatico doesn't even use Canadian call centres.

I don't begrudge those people jobs, but when I order service from Bell, I think I'm getting something typically Canadian. Ms. Pendergast knows that. Bell is Canada. People like her would buy Bell stock if they had the means, knowing they could trust it, that they could rely on it. Some of them even bought Nortel, and they got ripped off badly, didn't they?

Look, down where I come from, just like everywhere else in the province, poverty is a very serious issue; it's a deadly issue. People die because they're poor; they do. There's just no two ways about it.

I visit the missions. I visit the soup kitchens—the Port Cares soup kitchen down in Port Colborne. I visit the Open Arms Mission down on Fifth Street, the old boxing club. I know Jerry Vanderklok. I go through their storerooms. The Open Arms Mission, down on Fifth Street in Welland, is getting 40 to 50 new families as clients every month—in Welland. That's smaller-town Ontario, population 49,000, give or take. An increase of 40 to 50 families a month—and I tell you, that larder is as often as not bare. They also run a small shop, called Redeemed Goods, over on Crowland Avenue, where they provide some modest employment for people who are having difficulty getting back into an employment mode, if you will, people who have had real, serious difficulties. They resell goods and sell new goods, especially things like clothing and some furniture.

The Hope Centre, down on East Main Street, with its residence on Division Street—again, increased load after increased load, and always struggling.

Joe Barkovich is an editor and columnist for the Welland Tribune, and an active member of the anti-poverty movement, the Out of the Cold movement and the church soup kitchen movement he's affiliated with at St. Kevin's church on Niagara Street. Joe Barkovich has written very articulately about the huge numbers of

people who arrive at St. Kevin's for their twice-weekly food bank.

Children are poor, and that's a tragedy. Although I acknowledge that this legislation has some appeal to some anti-poverty activists—I don't deny them their support for the legislation; that's up to them. But I say this bill does nothing in substantive means and substantive terms to address its goals. It says that the government shall report, and it will use a website, but it doesn't discuss any of the means by which it's going to achieve those goals.

Do you want to address child poverty? Make sure there's a child care placement for every child in this province. If Quebec can do it at, oh, \$6 a day, then we sure as hell can do it for \$6 a day in Ontario—the single most valuable tool, I put to you, to address children's poverty.

I don't have to repeat all the data. Everybody here is intimately familiar with it, I'm sure. The sooner children get into child care, the sooner they can have the issues that they have, whether it's health issues—you'll remember that I talked about the Niagara Peninsula Children's Centre a couple of weeks ago, at least a week ago. The sooner there can be intervention with things like hearing problems or speech problems—speech therapy—and they develop and acquire skills that give them the capacity to stay in school longer, the less likely they are to drop out before they get their senior matriculation, I think it's called—I'm showing my age. Child care.

Minimum wage, minimum wage, minimum wage. New Democrats say it's time for the minimum wage to be \$10.25 an hour. Don't forget that while this government tells minimum wage workers to wait—they already waited 12 years, from the point of 1995 through to 12 years hence. When the Tories didn't increase minimum wage one penny, was the business community in here lobbying, saying, “Well, I think we should give the workers a modest minimum wage increase so they at least keep up with inflation, with the cost of living”? No, they weren't. These workers have subsidized small business for that long; now it's time for small business to step up to the plate.

**1640**

And I want to make this clear: Most bona fide small businesses are family-run businesses—and I acknowledge they're important in our society. They're mom-and-pop operations.

All this silliness of the Martin-Florida report—\$2 million-plus for these guys to be brought here in a dog-and-pony show. And for Martin, I think it was, who said, “Wouldn't it be wonderful if the workers who lose their jobs”—I suppose like the ones at Stelco in Hamilton yesterday or the ones up in Sudbury at Inco or the ones at John Deere. He said, “Wouldn't it lovely if we could have training programs? We could help these people set up art galleries and beauty salons.” He actually said that. This high-priced help, this high-priced consultant, paid \$2 million-plus for the glossy-paged report, actually showed glee at the prospect of workers who lose their

jobs opening up a beauty salon or an art gallery. Good grief. And they said, "Or maybe they can learn how to become tax form preparers and work for H&R Block." Nobody's going to be paying income tax pretty soon. Nobody's got a job. You don't pay income tax if you don't make money, do you?—the silliness of it.

Seniors are, all too often, poor. They're impoverished by the assault on their savings that's occurred over the course of the gouging—Enron, Madoff. I suppose it all started with Conrad Black when he raided that pension fund.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** Where is he these days?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Conrad Black is doing easy time. How many people get to go to jail in Florida? Think about it. The National Post still buys his column. He's as disgusting a thief as one could ever find. He raided the pension plan of workers, pocketed the money. We didn't have the gumption to put him in jail for that. It took the Americans to throw him in the slammer for several years, where he belongs. I just hope he has a cellmate who's the meanest, toughest, biggest-bicepped, earringed, tattooed, mean guy who ever existed. I wish that on Conrad Black—a little bit of companionship.

Seniors are poor. Seniors are poor because they raise their children; they help raise their grandchildren. They've invested small amounts of money.

Look, where I come from, we've got some families down there in Welland, where they worked during the 1950s and 1960s—and to save \$50,000 was a big amount of money. It really was. It was a lot of money. Their bank manager said, "Oh no, don't put it in a savings account. We've got these new things called mutual funds. Don't worry; the stock market never fails. Capitalism has this resilience." Well, I know capitalism has this resilience, but what's happening now is capitalism at its very finest. I say to folks down where I come from, "Capitalism: How do you like it so far? Has free trade been good to you, too?"

There are still wealthy folks. The data tells us that there's more and more wealth being created, but it's concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, while the working middle class is all but disappearing, the working middle class who, in that post-Second World War era, built hospitals, schools, churches, factories and homes, and worked hard to save money, and sent their kids to college and university—the first generation in those families' histories to have kids go to college and university.

We know that seniors are poor because this government hasn't uploaded the download, and property taxes keep rising, and seniors who have paid for their homes are increasingly finding it unaffordable to live in them.

I've made this comment before and I think the observation is valid again: When I was a kid, people used to talk about not living long enough. Now, sadly, I talk to folks, whether it's in my constituency office or down at the Hungarian Presbyterian Church, where I was on Sunday afternoon past with Rev. Lallouet and her congregation as they did their spring lunch—cabbage rolls, chicken soup with csiga noodles, roast chicken, mashed

potatoes. Good thing I had to get in the truck and get to Toronto, because the dessert was inevitably one of those cream pastries with the powdered sugar on top that Hungarians love.

The folks that I talked to there are increasingly concerned not about living long enough but living too long—isn't that a tragedy?—because they're not sure that their resources will carry them through to their final days. They can't afford the taxes on their modest homes because, oh, well, politicians give themselves raises every year, from time to time spend an extra week here, giving themselves—oh, jacking it up by 30%, as we did a couple of years ago. You talk to these same seniors—the indignation that they're getting a three-cent increase in their social security cheque. You can't talk about poverty unless you talk about addressing the needs of seniors. We need to make it more affordable for them to live in their own homes, and now this government's promising them more and more expensive electricity—the most expensive in the world.

People with disabilities are poor. We don't have any employment equity regime in this province. That was dismantled in 1995, when Mike Harris was elected. It was a very modest one. Being disabled almost inevitably means being poor. When I talk to people who identify themselves as disabled and their advocates, I point out that "access" doesn't mean getting a ramp to the back door; "access" means access to every part of a society: to the economic part, to fair and decent housing, to the recreational part, to the social part; not just a ramp, a makeshift ramp so they can go in through the back door.

Minimum wage, child care, support for seniors—we can't talk about poverty unless we talk about restoring the cuts that were made to social assistance rates by the Harris Tories. I don't relish those days: a 22% cut—twenty-one point something per cent, to be fair—in social assistance rates, like that. Meanwhile, this government can talk about the modest increases it has given social assistance recipients over the recent few years; they still haven't caught up to where they were before the 21%-plus was cut from them back in 1995-96. These people are poorer than they've ever been. So this isn't about a sort of moist-eyed staring off into the horizon and wishful thinking.

**Affordable housing:** Unless this government supports the development of affordable housing—I'm talking about not the private sector subsidizing private and for-profit landlords; I'm talking about social housing. We had a strong social housing movement in this province. Down where I come from, in the Niagara Peninsula, it's Niagara Peninsula Homes. As a matter of fact, Andrea Horwath, in her early years, worked as an organizer for Niagara Peninsula Homes. She helped organize co-ops; that's what she did. She brought people together. She worked with them so they could build their homes together and run them together and with mutual respect. Co-op housing has all but disappeared from the surface of the Ontario landscape. If you want to talk about poverty, you've got to talk about affordable housing, and

this bill doesn't talk about affordable housing, just like it doesn't talk about increasing social assistance rates, just like it doesn't talk about increasing ODSP disability rates, just like it doesn't talk about increasing the minimum wage.

If you want to talk about addressing poverty, you've got to address another class of people who are very poor in our society, and that's post-secondary students, who have to pay more and more tuition for fewer and fewer teachers and who now find themselves—we have food banks on university campuses here in Ontario, not some Third World country. These are bright young people who are, in increasing numbers, dropping out of post-secondary education because they simply can't handle the debt load or are not going into post-secondary education because they contemplate an unconscionable debt load.

I'm very interested, and I hope you are, in listening to Mr. Prue tomorrow morning as he addresses this bill more fully. Thank you, Speaker, for your patience with me, and best wishes to Kathy Pendergast down there in Kitchener–Waterloo. Take care of yourself.

1650

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** I'm pleased to rise and comment on Bill 152, a bill put forward by the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Children and Youth Services. The act, as we have learned, is An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario.

It does ask for some specific things to be done into the future. A specific poverty reduction target should be established, which brings about accountability for the actions that a government would take. They actually recognize that there should be some targets met over time to achieve these wonderful goals of reducing poverty in Ontario.

In the future, the government of Ontario is required to establish a specific poverty reduction target at least every five years, modernizing and looking back at what has been achieved to date. Then, at least every five years, the government of Ontario must review the long-term poverty reduction strategy that is in effect to ensure that it's appropriate for the time, I suspect, and that your targets have been met.

I know that the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will recall, as I do, the joint meeting we had in Chatham with caregivers and others who are concerned and provide services to those living in poverty. It was an excellent meeting. There was no turf protection amongst the groups. They worked very, very well. We were impressed with that, both the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and I, that they genuinely wanted to work together to eradicate poverty in our province. They gave us excellent recommendations, which we forwarded to the minister. It's all part of her consultation program taken some time ago.

Now we're moving forward, along with the initiative of our Premier, to achieve the goals that will be set to help those who need and deserve that from their government—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** Here we are talking about a poverty bill in Ontario, and perhaps it's very appropriate, because there's going to be a lot of poverty in this country, in this province. I'm not sure the government understands the depth of the recession-cum-depression that we could be looking at here.

A lot of the recessions that happened in the past—1991, 1981, back in 1971; it seemed to happen every 10 years back in the last century. A lot of those recessions happened because people thought, "Oh, there's going to be a downturn," and the psychology of thinking about a recession caused the recession. Things were backing off a bit. There might have been a little instigation. In 1971, the recession was probably caused by the end of the Vietnam War; the Americans took billions of dollars out of their economy. That was the end of the war effort. That may have caused that.

In this case, it's a very real factor that has caused this recession. Something in the order of \$20 trillion to \$25 trillion disappeared out of our economy, out of the American economy, when the sub-prime mortgages came due and people walked away from their houses. That's a very real reason. You can't wash through \$20 trillion to \$25 trillion in a matter of months. This recession is going to be very long; it's going to be very deep. This government had better start doing something to condition Ontario to, first of all, survive the recession, and secondly, to be in a position to build on the way out.

I don't see this government doing anything about that, particularly when we stand here in the House and we talk about a poverty bill which, I say, may be appropriate, because there's going to be a lot of it around. We talk about plastic surgery; we talk about young offenders' housing; we talk about green bills; we talk about anything but the economy, which is going to be the end of it all.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments? The member for Stormont–Dundas–East Glengarry.

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** South Glengarry, that is.

It's a pleasure to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to speak on Bill 152, the Poverty Reduction Act.

I would like to commend the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews, for her advocacy and her work. I know the work she has done in the past, coming to my riding, where we have a very strong poverty reduction team in place led by Dr. Mehroon Kassam. She's certainly working hard with the Social Development Council of Cornwall and Area to tackle the issues. I know the member from Welland suggested many things here this afternoon and spoke on many different aspects of poverty and where we're seeing it in colleges and universities and whatnot. This is what Mehroon Kassam and her team at the Social Development Council of Cornwall and Area are doing: They are out in the community, discovering and understanding where the needs are.

I think this is a bill that challenges us to set goals, and it moves us to the opportunities to achieve those goals. It also gives future governments the opportunity and the necessity to keep tackling those problems with regard to child poverty and all the issues related to poverty.

So I know that in our government and on our side we're looking at long-term strategies and opportunities to achieve those ideas and achieve those goals that we've set in place in the future and in future governments.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. Questions and comments.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I am pleased to comment on the discussion initiated by the member for Welland in regard to Bill 152. This should be a concern to all of us, the widening gap between the rich and the poor in our province. This has been a trend for almost 15 years. Perhaps this recession will change it, but I'm concerned that it will not.

I think you can measure all of our societies in history, those that were successes and those that worked. There has to be some degree of egalitarianism in economics and distribution of funds between the citizens of a province and a country. When the gap widens, that leads to all sorts of problems within. However, this bill unfortunately does nothing to assist the concerns with poverty in this province. It is in fact a recipe for failure.

Why do I say that? This government has been spending future governments' money for quite a while now. I still recall a big announcement about \$80 billion of infrastructure money, but then I looked at it and it was over 30 years. The down payment by the government was only I think 20 or 30, but somehow they were making an announcement for \$80 billion, and I couldn't figure that out.

They're doing the same thing here. They are spending other people's money; in this case, the federal government's. If the federal government doesn't come through to fund the program they've set forth, they will of course, fail and they'll announce, "It's not our fault." But this bill, by tying it to funds that are not readily available and not agreed upon, is a recipe for failure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Welland has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** What better time for the government of Ontario to finance the co-op housing movement so that it can build co-op housing—co-op housing, non-profit housing, social housing, affordable housing across Ontario? The jobs it would create and the value it would provide for local economies would be the creation of affordable homes.

What better time for this government to expand daycare facilities so there's a daycare space for every child in the province? It would involve construction. It would involve hiring more daycare workers who, as I indicated to you before, are a class of people who are inherently poor because they traditionally earn low wages, notwithstanding that they perform some of the most important roles in our society: working with our littlest of kids at that most important time in their lives.

**1700**

What better time to raise the minimum wage? Because what did I tell you before? Small businesses—mom-and-pops—rarely pay minimum wage; they usually pay above minimum wage. As a matter of fact, one of the CFIB's spokespeople told me that in a private conversation. It's the Tim Hortons, the McDonalds and the Burger Kings that pay the minimum wage. Don't tell me they can't afford it. That's baloney. We know that bona fide small businesses, mom-and-poppers, rarely pay only minimum wage. It is the chains, the franchises, the big, deep-money operators who can well afford to increase the wage of their workers. Because that money is spent in the community. Every penny of it is spent; they don't save it. When you're making \$10.25 an hour, you don't save money. You don't stash it away in Nassau bank accounts. You spend it in your community; and you usually spend it close to home, in your own neighbourhood. You spend it with small business people. What better time to increase minimum wage than now? You want to address poverty? Do real things.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to enter the debate on Bill 152. I hardly know where to begin. Do I start with a speech from the candidate of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock? I heard the comments that the members from across the way made, so I felt that it was very important to start there, so that they could hear what their potential member had to say about poverty, because I know they're anxious to hear this.

When we talk about a strategy, we say why it's so important. Part of the strategy is to work with our providers to develop a comprehensive program in going forward. We on this side of the House, and across on that side as well, we understand that. We get it. But you know who else gets it? The candidate from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Here's what he has to say. He says—

*Interjections.*

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Yes, he says, "We're in trouble when you have 50 poverty reduction programs but it's too complicated to help people." He gets it. He understands that we need to come forward with a strategy. So when I hear the members in the House stand up and the comments that were made from across the way, I don't think that he told them what he was thinking. I don't think he shared the thoughts that he was having on poverty reduction.

When I hear the comment from the member from York-Simcoe—"gesture politics"—I really must say that I just don't think that she took the time to really read about the strategy and to get her mind around how that encompasses the people of Ontario. The consultation that went into this strategy was very comprehensive. And you know what? The potential member gets it. He understands that. Hey, he might even have had a meeting. I don't know; I think he might have, because that's what we heard.



So people recognize that there is a lot of work to do. They recognize that when the child benefit that we put in place is in its maturity, 1.3 million children in low-income families will get up to \$1,300 a year. That is incredible when we think about the difference that that makes in each individual, in a family and in the children's lives, the potential for that.

Then I say to myself, how could the candidate from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock say something like that and then what happened when they came forward to vote on the child benefit? What do you think happened? It was voted against.

When we think about what we need, what we can do as a government to ensure that the foundation for our children is strong, that that fabric remains strong, we understand that a financial tool has to be used. We understand that. We understand that it's part of a comprehensive strategy. The candidate from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock understands that too, but they voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, I can't remember. Was he in the House?

*Interjections.*

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Oh, that's right, yes. He's not a member yet, so I can say that, I guess, Mr. Speaker.

So we recognize that a five-year strategy will come back to the House. It's putting into legislation the consultation with Ontarians. This will keep the conversation going, because all of us working together will ensure that the strategy remains strong, that it remains relevant in all of our communities in Ontario, and that we continue the conversation to make sure that all of our groups are working at their maximum, because that's what the children need.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Which candidate is it?

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Which candidate is it? That's a good question. Mr. Tory, candidate; yes, that's who.

One of the things that I wanted to share with the House as well: As you know, I represent a rural riding. Oh, yes, that reminds me. Before I get on to the rural communities, I did have to share just for one minute—I know that there are some pieces of advertising that we have seen—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** I'd just like to ask the member for Huron–Bruce how this relates to Bill 152.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Well, I'm getting to it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for clearly zoning me in.

One of the things from that postcard—it is with someone who was just elected recently in Washington who has made significant investments for the United States people. We think about, and we've all heard him speak on numerous occasions about, the work that needs to be done for our children to ensure that they do have a strong foundation. So if one chooses to have your picture beside that and one chooses to have that as part of your advertising, you then would make the quantum leap to think that that, in fact, it was a shared strategy.

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** If you get permission to use it.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** Well, that would be another question.

And then, when I refer to the speech from ROMA, we do see a linkage, so I know that there is support. We know from this side of the House how important it is for our future, because our children are our future. We must ensure that they have the educational opportunities, the strong family connections, good food and a home; all of that is all part of the poverty strategy. So we know, in order to give them all the tools that we can, that is what they need. We recognize that they will need higher skills in today's economy.

But I digressed, and I wanted to speak about, specifically, rural communities. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we face different challenges in rural Ontario. The minister had the opportunity to come to the most beautiful riding in the province of Ontario, that being Huron–Bruce. We had the conversation with our providers and with the people from my riding.

Some of the things that they talked about: Poverty in rural Ontario looks different. It doesn't have a face. You can't see it the same as you can in our large urban centres. What we have referred to—the homeless in our area are called “couch surfers.” It's when our young people don't have a place to live and they surf from couch to couch, from home to home. In rural Ontario, we take the kids in, but then they keep moving around and moving around, so it tends to be faceless. We don't see it, but that doesn't mean that it's not there. I know that because we are the breadbasket of Ontario, we also don't have this same lack of food. Our food banks have access to a lot of—now, it's certainly seasonal, but we do have access to food at a lower rate because we're not transporting it from greater distances. That does give the facelessness even more emphasis.

**1710**

Another barrier in rural Ontario is that we simply don't have public transportation. We don't have the numbers to ever make it viable. So when we think about how much money it requires in order to hold down a job—you have to have a car; you have to have a means of transportation. That can be quite costly, whereas public transportation, for a young person starting out, is much more cost-effective than the actual purchase of a car by the time you insure it, gas it and everything else that's connected to moving a car down the road.

The other thing is that we just don't have the same educational facilities as our urban counterparts as well. Even the services that are available in our rural communities are difficult; we just don't have as many.

The other thing that makes it difficult in rural communities is that we all know each other so well that there's sometimes an unwillingness to come forward and to take those services that are put in place for people in need because of the stigma that is sometimes attached to them. We have a tendency of doing without rather than getting a hand up.

I do want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Poverty Reduction Act. This is a piece of legislation

that is important for the people of Ontario. It's important for the economy of Ontario as well. It's ensuring that we have a strong foundation and the ability to adapt to a new environment that will be created, coming out of what we are in today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. James J. Bradley:** I heard the previous speaker make reference—of course she dwells on the issue of poverty, which is very important, but she made reference as well to an event that is taking place this week that you would be familiar with, Mr. Speaker, in a very wonderful part of the country. No doubt one of the issues that will be discussed on that occasion would be the issue of poverty.

I was looking at one of the cards or pamphlets. We cannot use them as props in this House. I can read them, but I can't hold it up as a prop in the House. It has the leader of the Conservative Party on it, and he does not have a grey hair. I want to know how he can do that, because my hair is turning grey, and all the stress of a campaign usually does that. But there are four people on this: Prime Minister Stephen Harper, President Barack Obama, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and Premier Gordon Campbell are all on it. I don't know whether they're endorsing him or what, but I always thought you had to have the permission of these individuals to be able to use them on a pamphlet.

Now, all of these individuals have had to deal in one way or another with the issue of poverty, which is why I make reference to the card that I was talking about that I won't use as a prop. But I know that one of the difficulties for those of the previous Conservative government—not the newer members in the Legislature—and some of them probably were concerned at that time, was the issue of the treatment of the poor at that time. I believe that the allocation of funding—in other words, for welfare, for disability—was cut by 22% by the previous government. When this government is trying to help people out, it remembers, as members of the Conservative caucus get up to talk about poverty, that when they had the chance, instead of lifting these folks up, they cut that by 22%. So that's where we have to start in trying to assist these individuals.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** It is, I think, a delight in this House to hear the rather articulate remarks that are always put forward by the member for Huron–Bruce. I think she certainly framed the argument very, very well. She compliments the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews, who went out throughout the province and consulted with groups north, south, east, and west, to really get their input on what they're seeing on the ground.

I know she had the opportunity to visit Peterborough on two occasions. There's the poverty reduction committee that was spearheaded by my good friend the mayor of the city of Peterborough, His Worship Paul

Ayotte—Deb Matthews was there to listen to that group and get their ideas, and then came back a second time. That's how one can go about developing, I think, positive public policy in the province of Ontario: by reaching out to people on a wide basis to get their opinions.

It was great to hear the member from St. Catharines talk about the 21% reduction in benefits for those people who were on OW and ODSP during the eight years of Tory rule. I was still on city council in those days, as chair of social services, so I know the impact it had on those individuals. They were just devastated by those cuts. They were trying to work through their personal difficult situations, and to get that cut just wasn't appropriate.

This bill is about lifting people up and providing them with a new beginning. The member from Huron–Bruce, I think, articulated the arguments extremely well.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I want to stand up and congratulate the member from Huron–Bruce on her speech. I think she outlined very well our strategy for reducing poverty in the province of Ontario, and she mentioned many different elements. At the beginning, I was confused about who she was talking about until she said it was about talk and action. Some people talk, and our government acts. This is what Minister Matthews was doing, after she went across the province of Ontario, engaged all the members of this House from both sides in the reduction strategy and then invited everyone—stakeholders, concerned citizens in the province of Ontario—to get involved and give her advice in order to help us, as a government, to reduce poverty in the province of Ontario.

All of us know that this is a very, very complex issue. That's why the debate is taking place in this place. That's why we need any advice possible. That's why we went out, to the north, to the south, to the east, to the centre, seeking advice, listening to many people who have great experience in this regard. It gives us the tools we need to reduce poverty in the province of Ontario.

Also, it would be the first time ever in the province of Ontario—under the leadership of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and the direction of the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who is the chair of the cabinet committee to reduce poverty in the province of Ontario—that we will create a task force to commit to reduce poverty in the province and create a wave, a movement, in order to help the vulnerable people among us.

I'm glad to see our government taking charge in this regard, and I'm happy to see Minister Matthews taking the lead on it, because she's a great person, she's a great advocate on behalf of vulnerable people in the province of Ontario. Under her leadership, we're going to see a reduction very soon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** Certainly, I want to express my appreciation to the member for Huron–Bruce

for her comments on Bill 152. When she spoke about rural poverty—I think that she and I have probably had very similar experiences. Her children are about the same age as mine. She has probably experienced having friends of our children come into the house and they're there for an overnight, and then the overnight becomes a second one and a third one and on. As mothers, we have a suspicion about what's going on, but we don't ask. We just make sure that the visiting friend is comfortable and has clothing and is properly fed. Then, one day, all of a sudden that child has a sense that they've overstayed their welcome, and they go on to someone else's house. As the member said, in rural Ontario we tend to be very quiet about it. We suspect what's going on, but we never really quite confront it. We never say to the child, "Do you have a home to go to?" We just simply make sure that while they're in our care, they get the best that we can offer them and from there we see them move on. The couch-surfing phenomenon is something that we see very often in rural Ontario. It is something, like I say, that all of us, by not confronting it, actually support. But that's all we can do at times. It's all we know how to do, to make sure that those who come into our homes are welcome and we take care of them the best we can.

1720

In rural Ontario, we also have a large number of what we refer to as the working poor. These are people who are seasonally employed. They have employment for part of the year, then it's gone. They add to the rural poverty that we see, another part of poverty that we don't address very well in rural Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** The member for Huron—Bruce now has two minutes to reply.

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell:** I want to thank the Minister of Transportation, the member from Peterborough, the member from London—Fanshawe and the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

I can tell you that the members on this side of the House and around the other side stand strong to address poverty in this province of Ontario. Speaker, I know you haven't had the opportunity to sit in on any of our caucus meetings, but I can tell you that it warms your heart when you hear the commitment to the children of this province. To me, the poverty strategy coming forward addresses the need for a comprehensive strategy on going forward: identifying targets, identifying timelines and making a commitment to it and a process when we will consult, when we will speak, when we will report.

You know what? You just wouldn't know it was me if I didn't stand up and say something like this: Because none of the members from the opposite side of the House want to comment on my comments, I guess I have to assume that the Leader of the Opposition's comments are the only comments that I can take from my comments that I received from ROMA, and certainly from that it is my sense that the Leader of the Opposition supports the poverty reduction strategy by a comprehensive strategy going forward, as identified from his ROMA speech. I didn't hear anything or any debate coming from that side of the House, even though they had an opportunity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It really is my privilege to rise and support addressing poverty in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I rise in the House today to share with my fellow members my commitment to the issue of reducing poverty in our province, but also to let you know about my disappointment in Mr. McGuinty's approach.

In November 2007, I was a signatory to a multi-partisan letter called To Make Poverty History. One of the key action items in this letter included investing additional resources into subsidized housing. Mr. McGuinty has a disgraceful record on this issue. He had the nerve to sit on millions and millions of dollars given to our province by the federal government to build affordable housing units in Ontario. Mr. McGuinty just sat on that money. He did not invest in this crucial sector, which for many is just one step away from homelessness.

In the city of Toronto alone, the affordable housing waiting list still sits around 70,000, and that number increases every day. One man who shared his reason for affordable housing spoke with greater realism than I could ever offer on this issue, so I would like to quote from what he said:

"Without a place to live, you can't do anything with your life. You can't get a job, go to school or take proper care of your health. You also become very isolated. So your social and employment skills don't develop properly. It's like being locked in a closet for several years and then being released.

"When I moved into Houselink, my life turned around. I've developed skills I didn't even know I had.

"The bottom line is that without supportive housing, I would not be alive today," he said. "Supportive housing saved my life and the lives of thousands of others" like me. That's the end of the quote.

The lack of affordable housing is one of the root causes of poverty, as this gentleman so clearly stated. Without a permanent home, it is difficult, if not impossible, to get your life back on track and break that poverty cycle. In addition, 28% of Ontarians spend over 30% of their income on shelter alone. Our food banks are busier than ever because people are forced to choose shelter over food, and that choice is getting harder and harder every day.

Although the Ontario government committed in 2003 to build 26,600 affordable housing units, only a mere 6,400 units have been built to date. On a person-to-person basis, Mr. McGuinty's government's spending on housing is amongst the worst of all provinces, well below Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Over 124,000 households remain on the waiting list for social housing, where the rent is geared to income. The wait time ranges from five to 12 years. Of the 250,000 social housing units in the province, most of them are aging and in dire need of repair and maintenance. Perhaps the Premier could have invested some

of that money into these buildings instead of his private slush fund and cricket fields. Why not address the root causes of poverty instead of creating yet another stigmatizing report?

The PC Party has a solid track record on reducing the number of Ontarians who live in poverty. This government cannot make that claim. In our first four years in government, our government reduced poverty by 19%. This was done through proactive initiatives designed to address the root causes of poverty, and we pulled a quarter of a million people out of poverty in five short years. What has the McGuinty government done in six years? Nothing, with more nothing on the horizon.

Poor families do not need another report to tell them that they are poor. They need a real plan and they need real action. Unfortunately, Bill 152 is yet another example of how the McGuinty government's symbolism is stronger than its substance. Forty-one per cent of all children who currently live in poverty have at least one parent working full-time all year and yet do not earn enough to lift their families out of poverty. A meeting that convenes the next meeting to discuss a report that may or may not see the light of day is not going to help these parents feed their children. A solid economic plan where businesses see Ontario as a place to invest and can continue to afford to operate their businesses without being hamstrung by red tape and high taxes is what creates jobs that can offer these families a living wage. Creating a plan, not a report, is how Mr. McGuinty can address this situation now.

I have been involved in the Halton Food for Thought program for a number of years, and they are proudly celebrating the expansion of their high school initiative. As proud as I am of this commitment and how it is growing, I truly wish that this program did not even have to exist. This is not a realistic dream, I know, as I am sure that this year and next we will see a greater number of students who are not getting enough to eat before they come to school.

Thirteen thousand Burlington residents live below the poverty line, including one in 11 children under the age of 14. This breaks my heart as a leader in the community, as a member of this Legislature and as a grandmother, because there are actions that we can take to fix this, and Mr. McGuinty has to begin taking the right initiatives now.

**1730**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a meaningful statement on poverty that is particularly salient to our debate here today, and I'm going to quote again: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

Our party has always believed that our most vulnerable citizens must be supported and protected, and we put our actions where our mouth is.

As a society, we're only as strong as our most vulnerable citizens. If Mr. McGuinty's government continues without an economic plan and refuses to take action to stem the tide of this current downturn, more jobs will be lost and more people will slip below the poverty level.

Keeping people employed is one active way that we as a government can help prevent poverty. It is not a complete fix, but it is a key ingredient. The McGuinty government can accomplish this goal by reducing tax strain on businesses that are already struggling in these difficult times. If they can maintain their labour force, their employees may have to buckle down, but the impact on their families and our communities will not be as significant.

The Ontario Association of Food Banks released an important and very timely report on the economic cost of reducing poverty in Ontario. The report concludes that the economic cost of poverty in Ontario comes to \$32 billion to \$38 billion a year. Yes, I say "billion." So when Mr. McGuinty says that tax cuts to businesses to keep their employees working is not an affordable option, I say that the cost to families and to the province to not cut taxes is far higher.

Bill 152 is an embarrassment. There are no details. There are no strategies. There are no direct actions that will be taken to lift our citizens out of poverty. It simply identifies that we have poverty in our province.

What I do not understand is that if this government were truly committed to reducing poverty, they would support the groups that are already on the ground, working and helping these families. If the financial toll that poverty takes on our province is over \$30 billion, then it makes economic sense to me to invest in the organizations which are already set up to support our poor.

It is disgraceful that in a country with such affluence we cannot seem to reduce or even eradicate poverty. Poverty rates for children in aboriginal, racialized, new-immigrant and lone-mother-led families are at least double the national average. Quebec has cut its child poverty rate by 50% or more during the past 10 years. Why is Mr. McGuinty not conferring with Mr. Charest to find out how he accomplished that? My guess is that it took action and leadership, something our Premier is lacking.

Ontario has lost more than 235,000 manufacturing jobs just in the last six years, and they have not been replaced. Every plan has failed. Three out of every four jobs created in Ontario between December 2007 and October 2008 were part-time jobs. Most people face a 25% drop in income when they go from a well-paid manufacturing job to other employment.

I ask you, could the writing on the wall be more clear for Mr. McGuinty? We need a jobs strategy and we need it now; we need tax reductions to keep current businesses operating, and we need that now. Because if actions are not taken, and if they're not taken soon, it really will be too late for many Ontarians.

Our safety nets have some pretty big holes in them, and that needs to be addressed immediately. To those who are hoping for employment insurance should anything happen, don't hold your breath. Due to the changes in eligibility requirements, only 29% of Ontario's unemployed were eligible to receive EI in 2007.

Last year, Environics commissioned a poll that demonstrated that 81% of Ontarians believe it's more important than ever, in a recession, for government to make it a priority to help poor Canadians. Investing in Ontarians means, in part, keeping our businesses competitive through tax cuts so we can at least maintain our labour force. But what about those people living in poverty who are not able to work? Seventeen per cent of all female seniors and 6% of all male seniors have an annual income of less than \$10,000. These seniors have lived in, worked in and contributed to our communities. They have helped build our quality of life, and we cannot let them live their lives in abject poverty.

We have a duty to our seniors, to the youth of tomorrow and to families in this province to address the root causes of this issue and move forward with a concrete plan to make a visible reduction in poverty in Ontario.

Bill 152 will not get us there. It simply lacks the substance we need to be anything more than a bureaucratic bungle. I know my colleagues are willing to help. They're willing to help this government create a working strategy that actually addresses these issues, and we hope that the government will be receptive to our ideas in the committee process.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I listened carefully to the member for Burlington. This is interesting: Burlington is certainly perceived by the rest of Ontario as perhaps one of the most affluent communities in this province, and Mrs. Savoline reveals to us that poverty is pandemic, that it isn't just in downtown Toronto and that it takes many shapes and forms. Indeed, when she identified who is poor in Burlington, she spoke of the very same things I did about who is poor in Welland, a small industrial town.

It is simply not enough to produce these saccharine pieces of legislation that are all fluff. It's like cotton candy, you know, that gooey, sticky stuff you used to get at the carnival. I'm sure the cotton candy was a real lure to you as a kid at the agricultural fairs up on Highway 6 where you live. But when you bite into it, it's like there's nothing there. There's just sweet; there's no substance. This is, I suppose, a cotton candy bill; it gets the poverty activists all excited. But if you want to address poverty, you do it in concrete ways.

I didn't get a chance to talk about homelessness. Homelessness isn't just a Toronto phenomenon. Homelessness is a small-town phenomenon.

The issue of rural poverty—think about this—where you don't have access because you're not in close proximity to a food bank or even a church out there in the country, and especially seniors in rural poverty. You

don't have access to a food bank; you don't have access to a soup kitchen. You don't have access to the Open Arms Mission or to their second-hand store, yet another very important facet.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Let me first of all say that I'm a firm believer that everyone obviously brings into this House their good intentions and their knowledge of their community and wants to do the best for the province of Ontario. Having known the member from Burlington in another life, when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and she was chair of the region of Halton, I do respect her. I take issue, though, with a number of comments she made early on about affordable housing.

I can well remember back in 1995, when they were first elected, that one of the very first things the Harris Tories did was cut down every affordable housing project that was in the planning stages and just got rid of the whole program completely. It wasn't really until 2005 that I had the privilege, on behalf of our government, to sign an affordable housing agreement with the then-government of Canada—I think it was the Chrétien government, and it could have been the Martin government as well. We actually signed, in May 2005, a \$600-million joint agreement with the federal government that contributed \$300 million of provincial funds and \$300 million of federal funds; of course, it's all taxpayers' money. That created some 20,000 units of affordable housing. So I honestly don't know where she gets this notion that somehow we haven't done anything about affordable housing. There is much, much more to be done.

1740

We spent \$100 million just last year on the refurbishing of the affordable housing that's out there right now, and much of it's very old, about 30 or 40 years old. I do believe that we have to stick to the facts of the situation.

Can more be done? Absolutely. Should more be done? Absolutely. But we have to start with the kind of strategy that's contained in this bill so that we can reduce poverty once and for all in the province of Ontario, which is to everyone's benefit.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** I'm pleased to be able to comment on the comments of my distinguished colleague the member for Burlington.

When we're talking about long-term care or affordable housing, it seems to me I remember that Premier Peterson put a freeze on long-term care. He picked on the most vulnerable of our society, the seniors, and he put a freeze on long-term-care facilities and he didn't build any. The reason I mention that is because the Minister of the Environment doesn't want to talk about now; he goes back to Genesis; that's where he usually starts his harangue.

We presently have a freeze, and have since this government was elected some four years ago, on long-term-

care facilities. Just like Premier Peterson, they're keying in on the most vulnerable—I'm looking for a room and a bed, so this is from my own heart. They are keying in on the most vulnerable of our society, our seniors, who have contributed so much to our society. This heartless McGuinty government has picked up the term of Peterson, that heartless Premier Peterson of the old days, and frozen new beds for long-term-care facilities. They can't deny that because they know it's a fact, and they've also caused a huge problem in our hospitals as a result.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Questions and comments? The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale?

**Mr. Shafiq Qaadri:** I'll accept Etobicoke-Rexdale, Speaker, although it's officially known as Etobicoke North.

I'd first of all like to commend the member from Cambridge from the Conservative side: To actually blame current poverty on Premier Peterson is like the current American administration actually invoking the errors of Ronald Reagan. I would invite him to perhaps slightly update, at least by perhaps two, three or four administrations, bringing forward.

I'd also like to just echo the comment of our Minister of the Environment, Mr. Gerretsen. While we would at no time, for example, with reference to the MPP from Burlington from the Conservative side, question her personal commitment to poverty reduction and the heart-felt gesture of compassion with which she speaks with great energy here, I think her characterization of her own party as being pro-poverty reduction is, to put it mildly, a bit rich.

I think those of us who were outside of this Legislature watching internal workings can remember, for example, \$100 million being committed by the Conservative government, fed to a consulting company, Andersen Consulting, for a review of welfare and social assistance. We can remember their essential dismantling of any number of programs, whether you consider it affordable housing or social assistance, and essentially kind of putting into suspended animation a whole host of programs that might have helped modest-income Ontarians.

In particular, we remember the tuna gambit, where a former minister, I believe of social services, at the time essentially counselled, instead of "Let them eat cake," to "Let them eat tuna." That's really our, I guess you could say, gestalt take on the Harris engagement with poverty communities.

So I would hope that there's some update of perception and therefore support of the McGuinty government's deep commitment to poverty reduction in Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time for questions and comments. The member for Burlington has two minutes to reply.

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** I first want to start by thanking the members from Welland, Kingston and the Islands, Cambridge and Etobicoke North for their comments.

This report, I think, is very heavy on bureaucracy. It's got a lot of mechanisms to support a poverty reduction strategy, but mechanisms aren't actions. There are targets

here which depend heavily on actions by other levels of government. That does not mean that this government is moving towards some kind of action on poverty reduction.

The bill is very vague. What is poverty? What are the determinants of poverty? Nothing in this bill tells us what that is.

The Conservative government introduced legislation which penalized governments who did not meet their budgetary commitments. The Liberal government repealed this legislation, which would have penalized any government that failed to meet its budgetary commitment to reduce poverty directly or indirectly. To me, that's sidestepping the issue. So once again we're into symbolism instead of substance. This is all glitz and glamour.

How can anybody argue with a poverty reduction strategy? You can't argue with the intent of that, but what you can argue with is the fact that there is absolutely no substance in this report. There doesn't seem to be any will on the part of this government to move forward in a meaningful way, and I think it has done this issue a tremendous disservice. What's more, it's embarrassing, in my opinion, for the poor in this province.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** Further debate?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** I like that word "gestalt." I think we've got to use that word more around here. Dr. Shafiq Qaadri I think put some new vocabulary into the Hansard here, and the reporter from Hansard's looking all over trying to figure out how to spell the word "gestalt."

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** She knows how to spell it.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** She does. I know. She's probably the only one who does. Anyway, "gestalt."

I was just listening to a number of members referring to their ridings and the situation in their ridings. As the member from Welland has said many times, I think here we're sometimes too caught up in the notes given to us by people in central offices, and I think more of us should start talking about real people in our ridings and not read from notes all the time. If we can't speak about real people without notes, we've got a problem. That's not to say we shouldn't consult with notes and get the data—that's fine—but I'm just saying we should talk about real people in our ridings.

As members were talking about rural poverty and things going on in the Niagara Peninsula and everything, I was trying to relate it to my own situation in Eglinton-Lawrence. If we look at real poverty, I was thinking, you know, I've got a Toronto Housing building in my riding called 855 Roselawn. There are a lot of seniors in there; there are a lot of people who have problems—they're developmentally delayed, etc.—but they are all people trying to get by. They have very small little units, meagre furniture, but it's interesting sometimes. When you go door-knocking or visiting people during elections and at other times, it's amazing: You'll go to one of these little apartments with this poor little person there who's got maybe some furniture that they picked up at Goodwill or something, but when they come to the door and open the

apartment door, they smile and are glad to see you and say, "Thanks for coming. Can you sit down? Do you want a cup of coffee?" But sometimes it's a totally different reaction.

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You go to some large houses in my riding even—I'll go to the door and there's a BMW in the driveway, there's a Mercedes-Benz in the driveway—a big, huge home, 4,000 square feet, and they've got a swimming pool in the back. I go to the door and they snarl at you even before you get there. They don't know who I am or whatever it is; there's a snarl. I say, "How are you?" and introduce myself. They don't even want to talk to you. And it's got nothing to do with the wrong party or whatever it is. But it's amazing how these immigrants, workers, the newcomers that come from the Philippines, for instance—a lot of them are the most fantastic caregivers you'll ever want to meet. They live in the Bathurst Street area. Again, they live in small walk-up apartments, but you go to their door, no matter night or day, and they greet you with a smile. They are pleasant and say, "This Canada's a great country. Toronto's a great place. I've got this job, I work hard and my kid goes to school." They meet you with a smile and with a sense of welcoming, yet they're poor. Some of them have nothing but those sticks of furniture.

Then you can imagine what happens in some cases. We've had a very serious problem in Toronto with bedbugs. I know many of you think bedbugs are something you have jokes about, but this is a serious health issue in the city of Toronto. I remember—I think she was about 88 years of age; she had a bedbug problem. This poor lady had to get rid of all her furniture, had to get new furniture and had to get fumigators in. Not once, not twice, but three times she had to fumigate her little apartment to get rid of bedbugs. As you know, with bedbugs, if you get rid of them out of your unit, they may go to the next unit. So everybody in the building lives with the reality of these awful things that bite you. They get into your clothes. You're embarrassed about it; you don't know what to do. Toronto Public Health has been trying to help. I know we've got St. Clair West Services for Seniors. They're in a number of buildings right now trying to help people cope with this struggle.

You can imagine coming home every night to your little apartment. You can't really sit and watch television and you can't really go to bed at night because you're infested with these bedbugs. That's the face of poverty, real poverty, that people sometimes don't get a chance to experience—but that's one of the realities.

The other thing about poverty that tells us why we have to have a comprehensive strategy like we have here is that it's not just about increasing social assistance rates, which obviously we need to, and it's not just about minimum wage, which we're increasing, and more affordable housing; it's also that in many of these areas there is a concentration and they're part of the 13 designated neighbourhoods in Toronto. There are old project areas like Regent Park, which you've heard of, and others

where there are people living in poverty in these public housing units. Sadly, what happens is that along with the poverty come the by-products of poverty, sometimes violence, because these people may not have a job, they may be desperately looking to buy clothes for their kids and to send their kids to school.

One of the by-products that they have to live with is not only coming home to a very meagre place to live that is not up to what we would call Canadian standards, but they're also faced with the reality of fear and violence. They say, "I can't send my kid to the recreation centre because the gang members are there trying to recruit him. I'm afraid to send my child to that school because there are too many gang members in that school. I'm worried about my child. Every night, I worry about whether my child will make it home at night." That's poverty combined with fear, and it's not the type of fear you walk away from and you lock the door on. People live with this deep-seated fear because in too many cases there are situations that are difficult to control, where there's violence and people living in very difficult housing situations.

That is part of the reality of poverty that we sometimes don't see in statistics. These are people in many cases who, through no fault of their own—they may have been ill; one of the partners was ill; there may just be one parent; they lost a job. They're in this situation and they can't get out. They feel really trapped. This is why whatever we do to invest in our schools, to make our schools safe hubs where children get a breakfast program, a lunch program, an after-school program—so it's not just about housing. You also have to have a very supportive school system.

In Lawrence Heights in my area, which is one of these designated areas of high need, we also have an amazing community health centre. I don't know if members have them in their ridings, but there's nothing better than having a community health centre in your riding. They are hubs of health care and nutrition. They give moral support. They also have fitness classes. They teach people how to eat nutritionally. They deal with the by-products of drugs and violence. So there is a need to invest in community health and community health centres. That's why what our government has done—for the first time in about 10 years there are substantive increases in expanding community health centres and building satellite community health centres.

Community health centres and schools are critically important in dealing with poverty. We just can't look at this strategy in terms of one act. We can't look at this strategy just in terms of the Ontario child benefit, which is a great new advance in helping people cope because every child will get up to \$1,100 eventually; that \$1,100 will help mothers and fathers. It takes all these components to get people to cope with poverty.

Poverty is something that people sometimes relate to and say, "Well, there are poverty challenges perhaps in this part of Canada, maybe in the Maritimes. There are poverty challenges in the north. There's poverty and un-

employment in certain cities in Ontario.” But sometimes we tend to look at Toronto and say, “Toronto’s a place where there’s Bay Street. Toronto’s a place where there are all those jobs and people and they have amazing activity.” We’ve got the new Frank Gehry AGO, which is an incredible piece of Canadian architecture. We’ve got these wonderful things, but within Toronto we have some of the poorest areas in all of Canada.

If you go in the Jane Street corridor of Toronto, to different parts of Parkdale, to different parts of Mimico, to different neighbourhoods, you’re going to see some of the deepest poverty in all of Canada. That’s why for many years we’ve been trying to tell the federal government, the Martin government and the government of Stephen Harper, “You’ve got all these programs, like unemployment insurance that is readily available if you’re out of work in Nova Scotia. You don’t need to work as many weeks, and then you can stay on longer if you’re in Nova Scotia and you’re out of work. Yet if a person is out of work in one of these poor areas in Toronto, in one of these poor areas in the Niagara Peninsula, they can’t get unemployment insurance; they don’t qualify. They have to have more weeks. Then if they do qualify, they stay on for fewer weeks and months.”

That’s one of the other factors that I think contribute to poverty in certain parts of Ontario that all of us have to speak out on a lot more. Why should a person who pays unemployment insurance, who works for 10, 20 years and pays into the EI fund, be told, because they live in Ontario, “Sorry, you don’t qualify”? Over 60% of the people who apply for EI in Ontario don’t qualify. Can you imagine, if the people of Quebec were discriminated against in the same way, what the hue and cry would be from Quebec?

The thing I wanted to remind everybody of, whether it’s Ottawa down by LeBreton Flats and these areas, where there has been deep-seated poverty, that is an area

for investment. We invest in people; that’s why I think getting rid of poverty is about investing in people. We use our schools, first of all, and our health care system.

Thank God we live in Ontario and Canada, because if you talk to people in the United States, they tell you they’re deathly afraid because they know if they lose their job, they lose their health care system. If they lose their job, they lose their health care. So if their kids get sick, if grandmother gets sick in the United States, they have no doctor, no hospital. If they have to go to emergency, they won’t go because they need a Visa card and they don’t have a Visa card. At least in Canada and Ontario, if you do need health care, it’s available to you whether you are out of work or not. But in the United States that kind of protection disappears when you lose your job because the job is twinned with your health care.

That’s why we need to invest in our health care system, and especially in people who sometimes do need extra help in these areas, who are suffering from the consequence of poverty.

Health care, education, assistance, housing: It’s a very complex series of issues. Minister Matthews has taken this upon herself, and it’s a job that many people probably wouldn’t want to do. Day in, day out, she’s been fighting for the poor. She’s come forward with this legislation. That’s why it’s very disconcerting when I see members of the Conservative Party standing up and trying to demean the minister or demean her attempts, when she’s trying her very best, especially with the legacy of Mike Harris, which basically devastated most of Ontario for eight years.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):** It being 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

*The House adjourned at 1802.*



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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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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	
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Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)</b>	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
<b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)</b>	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	
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Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)</b>	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
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Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Maria Van Bommel  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial



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