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**Official Report
of Debates
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(Hansard)**

Thursday 26 March 2009

Jeudi 26 mars 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 26 March 2009

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 26 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 moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2009, on the motion for second reading of 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.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good morning. On my way down this morning in the car I was thinking about debating Bill 155, and while I do have speaking notes, it occurred to me that there's not a lot in them that matters much, given the fact that later in the day one of the most important things, if not the most important thing, we've done here in the last year or so is occurring. In some way I would like to relate that to the bill, because the bill fits into an overall theme that comes down to the prioritization of what we're discussing here—legislation priorities.

What we're discussing, of course, is a bill that pertains in some regard to smoking. Smoking has been a recurrent theme of the McGuinty government in the 18 months that I've spent in this Legislature. It's kind of like peeling a very large onion: You can take a little bit away and there is another layer underneath. We've talked about everything from flavoured tobacco—which was a private member's bill, admittedly, but in a rare burst of speaking in this Legislature, the health promotion minister actually

addressed it. So I consider that to be more of a government bill. Then we talked about smoking in cars with people under 16 present, and we passed that. So smoking is recurrent.

This is great-sounding legislation; I have to say that first off. I'll tell my friends on the opposite side that I plan to vote for this bill. So I could, at this point, just sit down, but I think there's so much that feeds into this that I want to discuss it a bit. It is great-sounding legislation, like so many pieces of legislation that we have debated here. The Green Energy Act comes to mind most recently—still really in debate between second and third reading. It sounds great. The Green Energy Act: What could you argue with in that? We're going to fight big tobacco. This is what we're doing today, and we've done that a number of times. That sounds great. We passed a pesticides bill. That was certainly terrific. We're going to ban pesticides and we're going to save the children in the province. I heard that from the Minister of the Environment. We passed it and we exempted 98.5% of all pesticide usage. We're in the middle of a debate on cosmetic surgery so we can save some women from dying when a tummy tuck goes wrong—and I'm not making light of that. I think all of these pieces of legislation have some place. What I'm trying to underscore here is that the prioritization of these discussions, the prioritization of these debates, somehow doesn't sit well with me when you consider the problems that beset Ontario right now. So I have no problem at all with this legislation. In short, pass it, knock yourselves out; I will vote with you.

Let's just continue to jerk Ontarians around, thinking we are actually doing something in this beautiful and historic chamber that I personally think of as fantasyland. Then we can build a new building next door. What do you think of this? With more tax money, we can build a new building next door and we can call it—not the Mowat Block, we have that; not the Whitney Block, we have that—we'll call it the McGuinty block because of everything this government and this Premier have accomplished. The "McGuinty block," come to think of it, sounds like a play in football. The McGuinty block: he can do that while the team throws a screen pass. It happens every time.

Finally, fortunately, we'll get to this afternoon. The pass, in this particular case, is this legislation that you people want to debate. You score a touchdown every time because you pass it and some people out there, because they don't get into the intricacies of the legislation the way we in this chamber do, actually think that they got something.

You make smoking in cars illegal if kids 16 or under are present. Then you see a cop make the first arrest, the first one, and the 15-year-old occupant gets out while the driver gets his ticket, and the 15-year-old lights up a cigarette. You couldn't make this stuff up; you couldn't. A pesticide ban that exempts 98.5% of all pesticide usage from regulation: same stuff, different day. So sure, I'm going to vote for this bill, and every lawyer on Bay Street is going to buy me lunch as a result of it, because they're going to be able to buy me lunch for a year and never look back in terms of the kinds of dollars that they're going to generate. I bet I could go to Barberian's for that.

There is no question of the enormous cost of tobacco-related diseases. Families suffer: COPD, lung cancer, heart disease, second-hand smoke-related emphysema. Our health care system suffers, as the bill suggests—we have no argument. We have no argument, and I'm serious. Our economy suffers, just as it does when we lose taxes because half the darned cigarettes are sold to anyone who wants them, untaxed.

No one is really spared as a result of tobacco-related disease. That is a message all Ontarians should hear and have to hear. Tobacco control is a serious issue. It requires serious attempts at control by serious people, and you don't have any. You have dream weavers and spinmeisters, but serious people? Give me a break.

The spirit of Bill 155 is right on the money, absolutely. It's just the wrong time to be debating that kind of legislation in this Legislature, because we have more immediate fish to fry. We have bigger fish to fry. We have an imploding economy—that comes to mind—but wait, this bill and regulating cosmetic surgery seem to be the priorities. That's my point. What are your priorities? You see how this government does it? These are important subjects, but they're not immediate, and they're not urgent. The economy is, but they've stifled that debate—in here, anyway.

"But it is economic," you say. "We will sue those bums, big tobacco. We'll get that money." Do you know what this sounds like? It sounds like one of those cheap ambulance-chaser lawyer commercials on Buffalo television: 1-800-get-money. That's what it sounds like to me. The reality of the situation is that it is unlikely to result in any money for Ontario. So we're talking about something that we probably will never realize. The reality of the situation is that it is unlikely to result in any money. It is going to result in a lot of money for lawyers; in fact, I wouldn't be surprised if, on the day the minister announced the introduction of this bill, there was a parade on Bay Street. Can you imagine what the litigators will be thinking? It may become an annual tradition for decades to come—that's roughly how long it will also take for the government to get any proceeds as a result of any of these lawsuits, if it ever does. Lawyers love this stuff; they love this stuff. But case resolution? Not so much.

Why is it that every so-called solution this government proposes comes with either a significant price tag or a warning label that reads, "Impractical and unenforce-

able"? What does it cost per hour to run this palace, can anybody tell me? And this is what we do here because this is what the government of the day mandates. Kill me now.

0910

Illegal cigarettes sold in Ontario, for example, represent a real loss of tax revenue, perhaps as high as \$1 billion a year. You want to recapture money? Go there. The loss of regulatory control over product safety and quality—no-name cigarettes sold to children containing tobacco and insect bodies and larvae and feces—seriously. But, hey, don't try to recoup revenue by enforcing that; we might rile up the wrong people.

There are two sets of laws—at least, the application takes two forms—in the province of Ontario; most importantly, that loss of control over who purchases these illegal cigarettes. The McGuinty government had a choice to go after illegal smoke shacks, which according to some studies provide some 50% of cigarettes smoked in Ontario today, or introduce legislation that will yield nothing but the all-important headlines: "We're going to go after big tobacco. They're polluting our lungs, they're hurting our families, they're merchants of death, and they're going to pay." Beat your chest a little. Really, you cannot make this stuff up. Did I mention that you cannot make this stuff up?

Faced with the decision to go after illegal smoke shacks selling cigarettes to kids, the government chose to crack down on legal companies operating under strict regulations. When choosing who to target, (a) the small convenience store owner working hard to make a living, support a family, create jobs and pay taxes, or (b) the illegal smoke shack operator, this government chose to leave the illegal cigarettes alone. Why? What did the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association members ever do to you?

Why waste the energy trying to prevent illegal cigarette sales when the legal ones are all so conveniently located in the open—pardon me, behind \$2,500 doors that have been installed in front of those cigarettes. It's a hypocritical move, this getting-serious-about-tobacco stance the government pretends to have, first with the unenforceable smoking-in-cars law and now with Bill 155—oh yes, Minister Best supporting that private member's bill, if you can believe it, outlawing flavoured tobacco. But there was one good thing about that: Minister Best actually spoke in the Legislature—a rarity to be sure.

If Mr. McGuinty were serious about tackling the tobacco problem, he and his ministers would give some more thought to kids smoking illegal cigarettes sold in parking lots next to their schools. This is borne out by studies, known strangely as "butt studies" for the butts of the cigarettes, that prove that what they're smoking is the illegal stuff that is sold off government land. If they were serious about preventing tobacco-related diseases, they would be a lot more focused on preventing the sale of tobacco laced with larvae and feces and insects, and the government would not have a Minister of Health Promotion too afraid to answer questions pertaining to

her portfolio. That minister might tell you that she wants a tobacco-free province, but you're lucky if you hear her say anything during question period. How can a government be serious about tobacco control—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member for Thornhill may not make an allegation against another member. I'm quoting standing order 23(h), and he very clearly made one against the Minister of Health Promotion. I would ask that he retract the remark.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I didn't hear any allegation that was out of order.

Carry on.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker.

How can a government be serious about tobacco control when the minister in charge of that portfolio has made a career of deflecting questions to other ministers? That's not an allegation; look at the Hansard for the past 18 months. You have to be accountable in this chamber if you're going to take responsibility. The answer is, it is not serious and it won't tackle the real and immediate issues any more than it will tackle being in last place economically and sinking fast. When you have that kind of lethargy in the very ministry that should be tackling the tobacco problem in our province, how can you possibly hope to succeed? How can you possibly hope to succeed? You can't. You just can't.

Two weeks ago, when I asked that minister about what she plans to do about illegal cigarettes, which according to the RCMP do contain these—I can't even come up with a word for it, but I'll say it again—larvae and feces, she deflected it to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Now he's a nice enough gentleman, but I don't see how his portfolio relates to larvae in illegal cigarettes. That's his file of the Minister of Health Promotion. Hence it made sense to me to ask the Minister of Health Promotion about tobacco and what her plan was to prevent these disgusting ingredients mixed with the tobacco from getting into the hands of our underage youth.

What I got in response was a speech from the Minister of Correctional Services about the great authorities enforcing tobacco use in Ontario, at a level 10 times less effective than British Columbia does. I'm not lying. You can't make this stuff up. We'll pass this bill and maybe those responsible for Liberal legislation could put something forward one day that attempts to recoup the cost of health delivery for people infected with God knows what from smoking insect bodies. That's all I'm saying.

On the surface, Bill 155 seems to be a step in the right direction. I don't dispute that. But on closer examination, it constitutes nothing except—I hate to say it—blowing smoke. No Canadian jurisdiction has been successful—none—in getting any settlements from enforcing this type of legislation. Even Mr. McGuinty rejected it not so long ago. How quickly things change when you're faced with an \$18-billion deficit, and that's just the predicted level. Wait. Stay tuned for the real number, coming to a Legislature near you in the fall financial statement. This is an act of a desperate government grasping at straws.

The 1999 master settlement agreement between 46 US states, five US territories, the District of Columbia and the tobacco industry stipulated that tobacco firms would repay \$246 billion to those governments over 25 years. Reports show that most of those governments have spent less than 5% of their settlement proceeds on tobacco control. Interestingly enough, Bill 155 does not stipulate that any proceeds from these lawsuits would have to be diverted specifically to cover the costs of health care or used for anti-smoking programs or prevention programs. So it's a “they got it, let's get it” bill—and I repeat, 1-800-get-money.

Let's pretend for a moment that this type of lawsuit could be successful in a meaningful time frame. Theoretically, the government could recover the \$1.6 billion in health care costs it is spending on tobacco-related diseases. But according to its own legislation, it does not actually have to put that money back into health care. So this is new money.

Is this measure a desperate attempt to get some extra revenue? Why would I suspect that? Is this legislation before us so that the McGuinty government can use any of that revenue to patch up the holes it made in the budget? Why would I suspect that? The timing sure is curious, though, isn't it?

What better day to be in this debate than budget day? Who better to target than big, bad tobacco companies? After all, we all hate them. Never mind that they contribute maybe half of the cigarettes—only half of the cigarettes—smoked in Ontario. Not so long ago, even Mr. McGuinty said he was not about punishing big tobacco. What has changed? Perhaps the state of Ontario's bank account?

Does Bill 155 also mean that teams of government-hired lawyers will be descending on illegal smoke shacks? After all, as I've mentioned, illegal cigarettes do constitute about half of tobacco smoked in Ontario. That's a hefty market share, and this bill does say that any future settlement would be apportioned according to market share. Right, we'll go to China and find the tobacco and insect factory: “Hey, your share is \$200,000,” and they'll just write us a cheque. Do you think? Somehow I believe that is yet another fantasy.

How is this government planning to recover the health care costs for diseases caused by illegal cigarettes when they are clearly not interested in going after millions of tax dollars—maybe a billion in tax revenue—that Ontario is losing to the government's unwillingness to tackle the real and immediate illegal tobacco problem? The McGuinty government is willing to spend millions of dollars on lawsuits, pay millions of dollars to lawyers, wait years for any results, which may not yield proceeds at all. But it is unwilling to go after lost tax revenues on illegal cigarette sales and apply existing laws designed to protect our children in equal measure with the application on legal tobacco sales.

0920

This revenue is, in comparison with a lawsuit, just waiting to be collected. All it needs is a little bit of effort, just a little bit of effort from Mr. McGuinty and

his ministers. But, instead, they circle the wagons and refuse to live by a one-law-for-all philosophy. They set up a facade like Bill 155 to show how concerned they are about tobacco abuse. I am not making this up.

It's a great opportunity to utilize that fantastic relationship Ontario has with the RCMP—and I know it does because Minister Bartolucci told me so, and he's never wrong. Over the past two years, Ontario's investigators and inspectors have seized about 62.9 million illegal cigarettes. Our Auditor General has estimated that the tax gap resulting from sales of illegal cigarettes was at \$500 million in the period covering his last report, and growing from that point. The convenience store operators of Ontario, the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association have told me that they believe, and are estimating, that it is as high as \$1 billion per year.

So I'm going to bring this to a close in the same way that I opened. While in principle, Bill 155 is a well-intentioned piece of legislation, it only highlights this government's preference for the big bang, small impact approach rather than for making a meaningful dent in the tobacco problem that besets Ontario, which is indeed a very serious tobacco problem. But you know what? Vote for it. Hell, why not?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I listened with lots of attention to what the member from Thornhill had to say about Bill 155. There were parts of his speech that I could agree with. Unfortunately, they were small, few and far between, except for the end, where he said, "Vote for the bill." So I guess I'll hold on to the end and hope all goes well.

The part that I could agree with is—he's right—it's not the kind of bill that will do anything for health promotion. It's not the kind of bill that will help people quit smoking or that will keep our youth from picking up smoking, which is basically, if you want to have a significant impact on smoking, where you have to target your energy. So there are parts of his statement that we agree with. This is not going to have a large impact on making sure that youth do not pick up smoking and a new generation of smokers don't pick up the habit. There is work that needs to be done to do this.

At the same time, this bill is here now, and we have to deal with it. This bill basically targets an industry that puts profits ahead of everything else, ahead of people's lives, ahead of a lot of heartache and ahead of staggering health care costs that have to do with people who pick up the habit and smoke. This bill has the potential to curb this, and in the long run would have a positive impact. So I disagreed with a lot of what the honourable member had to say; I agree with the end comment that he will vote in favour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to listen to Mr. Shurman, the member from Thornhill. He is so eloquent that at one time he had his own radio program, and I

thought this morning, with his melodious voice, that he was back on the air—which he was. He was on a bit of a rant, too, for the right reasons.

When he was talking about lawyers taking advantage of the government—I think the government is taking advantage of the lawyers. And honest to fact, he outlined in some detail all of the fallings and failings of this bill. It does nothing of the sort about stopping cigarettes; it's about collecting money.

Now, the problem that I find here is the inconsistency of the McGuinty government. They've done everything they can to stop smoking. But what has happened? They haven't stopped the illegal cigarettes. This is the point: If you look at the revenue year over year from tobacco, in 2004 the revenue was about \$1.7 billion and the revenue today is about \$1.1 billion. So where did the \$600 million go? The \$600 million has gone to the illegal, black-market, underground economy. It isn't going to help people or help with the poverty agenda.

The member from Thornhill points out a truism if I've ever heard it, and that is that this is a tax grab through the lawyers—they're going to spend millions on lawyers now. But here is the inconsistency: The federal government allocated \$300 million as a transition fund for those farmers in agriculture who were in tobacco. The provincial government hasn't given them five cents as an exit strategy. In my riding of Durham, I can name three or four, perhaps more, who have lost their livelihood through government policy, and there's no compensation. This isn't the first time and it won't be the last—

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

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened to my colleague Mr. Shurman, the member from Thornhill, and what he had to say. I think his anger was palpable. He seemed to be very frustrated with this place and how business is done, but I want to remind him that the whole issue of smoking has taken a generation. I want to remind him that when I first started in politics, back in 1988 at the municipal level, one of the key issues we started to talk about in those days was how to stop and curb smoking. We called it side-stream; we called it second-hand smoke; we talked about restaurants and how we could allocate only a small section of the restaurant in which one could smoke. There was all kinds of debate. People were angry about taking away their rights.

I remember in East York, and later in Toronto, just using those first small steps. Later, it built and built until we have legislation today in the province of Ontario where you cannot smoke in enclosed spaces or underneath overhangs. I was here in this Legislature and I was proud to vote for that particular bill. This is merely an extension. Is it a small step? Absolutely; I agree with the member. This is a very small step, but it is a step that will allow the province of Ontario to take necessary legal action. Am I going to vote for it? Of course I'm going to vote for it. It needs to be done.

The member from Thornhill is right when he is frustrated, but I'm not sure that he is frustrated at the

slowness of the process, because I think we're all frustrated at that. I think he is frustrated more because many people would stand in this Legislature, and many people have stood in this Legislature, talking about the momentous decisions that they are making. This is not a momentous decision, I would hazard a guess. This is, though, a necessary one. It is just one of a long group of acts, regulations and government initiatives that will eventually, one day, stop smoking in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member from Thornhill, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to the members from Nickel Belt, Durham and Beaches–East York for the comments. Thank you as well to the government for lack of same.

The fact of the matter is that the member from Beaches–East York is quite correct. There is obviously a frustration in me for having to debate a bill like this. Not because I don't agree with the bill; I have also been quite clear in the fact that I will vote for the bill, the same as I voted for the bill that banned smoking in cars for people aged 16 years and under. I try to use my debate time in this Legislature in a way that I feel can be most effective.

What I was trying to underline here, and I hope I did it clearly, is that while the bill is welcome and certainly part of the package that deals with, I'll call it "the scourge of smoking," because I certainly am not pro smoking or pro big tobacco, it is probably much like the bill on cosmetic surgery: something that needs to be done, but not necessarily at a time where this province is imperilled with much greater things than whether or not some year, some time, we collect some money—big money or otherwise—from big tobacco because of health care costs. It was also meant to underline the fact that there are so many aspects to tobacco control that can, on a financial level, recapture the money that is rightfully that of the people of Ontario and that can be used for health care or defrayment of any other costs related to smoking that it bothers me that we're debating a bill that has such small effect so far in the future.

0930

I want to make it clear as well that maybe that comes, as my friend from Durham notes, from my previous life in talk radio, where I find it necessary to rant. But I think that one of the things you do in debate in this chamber is overstate a case, exaggerate a little bit and underscore things a little bit so that you can bring to light the silliness of some of the things we do.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak about Bill 155, the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. The NDP welcomes the introduction of this bill and, as always, the NDP takes tobacco and its health effects very seriously. Actually, when we were in government we introduced the first comprehensive cancer care strategy for Ontario, and recently I

introduced a bipartisan private member's bill that will ban the sale of single-packaged and flavoured cigarillos, the cigarettes of choice for youth. That was done with the member from Brant, and we were the first to introduce a bipartisan bill.

The history of smoking is nothing short of tragic. It is tragic because five million people lose their lives each year because of it. It is tragic because the number will increase to 10 million in 2025. Most of us in this room have lost someone—a parent, a friend, a brother or sister, even a child—to tobacco and second-hand smoke. We know the physical pain, the emotional suffering and, most of all, the tragic waste of human life. We owe it to these friends and family members to do our utmost to stop anyone from taking up smoking and to stop people and industry from profiting from the sale of tobacco.

The history of tobacco smoking is tragic, because it has been known by scientists and the tobacco industry for 50 or 60 years that smoking kills, and yet we, as a society, have let tobacco companies continue to promote and sell cigarettes as desirable products. I remember, when I was young, seeing advertising on TV that said, "Tobacco helps you digest. You should smoke after you eat." They would promote all sorts of health benefits of tobacco, forgetting to mention that it will also kill you. Yet those products are still around in 2009, and it has taken government decades and decades to take significant action to reduce smoking rates. We have simply done too little to stop the epidemic of death and disease that tobacco leaves in its wake. Tobacco companies are to blame, that's for sure, but so are a range of institutions that have intentionally or unintentionally benefited from smoking or allowed themselves to be easily deceived and influenced by tobacco companies; namely, governments and medical associations, as well as the media.

But the final tragedy is that this history of tobacco is not unique. It has been repeated with other products to this day. The pattern of ignoring, hiding and denying growing evidence of chemically caused illnesses has happened and is happening over and over, even today. As Devra Davis writes in her book entitled *The Secret History of the War on Cancer*, it has also taken governments decades to control chemicals such as asbestos, benzene and vinyl chloride, while workers and other people die from exposure to those products. The problem is that we have given companies the benefit of the doubt for way too long. We have allowed companies and entire industries to introduce new products and chemicals without adequately testing and controlling them.

The deceitful and really sordid story of tobacco use is instructive. Davis shows that the link between smoking and lung cancer was well known by the Germans in 1930. This was almost 80 years ago. The tobacco companies themselves knew well of the health risk as early as 1950, but they suppressed the evidence, putting profit ahead of people's health. The same thing with the Royal College of Physicians: It delayed its 1962 landmark report on smoking and ill health due to the influence of the tobacco industry. Millions of dollars of taxpayers'

money from the US and the UK was spent in the 1970s and 1980s to develop what they would call—and I can't say this without laughing—a safe cigarette. Now, why would anybody want to spend millions of dollars doing this? I don't know, but this is how taxpayers' money was used.

US federal district Judge Gladys Kessler's final ruling in 2006 is also very instructive. Basically, she said that it is about an industry that "profits from selling a highly addictive product which causes diseases that lead to a staggering number of deaths per year, an immeasurable amount of human suffering and economic loss, and a profound burden on our national health care system." I think she hit the nail on the head.

We need to stop tobacco companies from profiting from sales by dumping the human and health costs on the government and on society, because once you pay for those costs, there is no profit to be made; there's only a loss, a loss at all levels. Tobacco companies continue to profit to the tune of billions of dollars a year while people continue to get sick and die, and governments continue to pay for the health care costs of those people suffering from smoking-related illness and disease.

This bill is an important step in calling tobacco companies to account. Other provinces have implemented legislation to allow lawsuits against tobacco companies on the ground that manufacturers failed to warn consumers about the dangers of smoking. Actually, it's British Columbia that has led the way, implementing their act in 1998, almost 11 years ago, and again in 2000.

We welcome the Ontario government's action to follow suit. Holding the tobacco industry accountable for criminal activity and civil misbehaviour is important. According to a report from the Smoking and Health Action Foundation, doing so will do many things. First, it deters future misconduct by these companies; it funds compensation for the victims; it protects public health strategy, which is the key if we ever want to win this battle; it raises tobacco prices, which we know has a direct effect on consumption; and it reduces consumption. Perhaps it will even force the companies into bankruptcy, or at least add significantly to their costs, which will reduce the despicable profits they make on the back of people's health. Tobacco companies must held to account for the suffering they have knowingly caused and profited from.

This bill is modelled after the BC Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. This act is important as it grants the government direct and distinct action against the tobacco manufacturer to recover the costs of health care benefits caused or contributed to by a tobacco-related wrong. It allows government to use population-based epidemiological data to prove that harm has been inflicted by tobacco. This is an important part, because if you have to show, case by case, person by person separately, how they have been affected, it becomes unmanageable. Using population-based epidemiological data will allow this to proceed.

Tobacco damage acts are important because they reduce the likelihood of behind-closed-door settlements,

because those settlements are always in favour of the tobacco industry and the tobacco company. An example of such a backroom deal is the federal government's settlement in July with tobacco companies for the smuggling that they did in the 1990s. The companies were required to pay \$1.2 billion, and that's over a number of years. That may seem like a lot of money, but really, it only represents 25% of the money that they made for smuggling. Is this really that big a disincentive? They'll still make 75% profit after—because they haven't yet—they've paid their fine.

We don't want the Ontario government to carry out a similar backroom deal that lets industry off lightly and doesn't fully consult those affected. Similar legislation in the US has allowed significant claims to be made against tobacco companies. In the US, under a 50-state settlement, tobacco companies must pay a total of \$250 billion. Those were awarded for damage done over a 25-year period.

0940

Ontario is by no means first off the mark with this bill, because other provinces, including Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Alberta and BC, have passed similar legislation. But it is important, nevertheless, for once Ontario steps up to the plate, the remaining provinces may decide to do so, to join in. I can tell you that British Columbia and New Brunswick have already filed statements of claim. With Ontario involved, there is an opportunity for a stronger, coordinated claim across many provinces and, I would hope to see, across this entire country.

This is not just about money. In the US settlement, there were significant non-monetary public health benefits. Those of you who were around will remember Joe Camel. Well, Joe Camel is no more. You will also remember the shutting down of phony tobacco company "research" bodies. Those research bodies were really marketing schemes trying to get kids hooked on smoking new tobacco products. It also put further restrictions on tobacco advertising. So yes, there is money to be recovered, but there are also strong health benefits and public health to be attained at the same time.

Some cynics will oppose and might take the argument that this is simply a tax grab. I can see how this argument could be made, but those members should remember that tobacco companies have reaped billions of dollars in profits from tobacco sales as they have for years intentionally concealed the ill effects of their products and actively sought to promote the uptake of smoking among Ontarians, particularly our youth. Before opposition members get their knuckles up too much about this bill—I think I'm a little bit late on this, following the member from Thornhill, but anyway—they should remember that Mike Harris himself launched a \$40-billion recovery suit against tobacco companies in New York court in 2000.

This bill is silent on the impact on tobacco farmers, even though the Canadian tobacco industry has 95% of its growers right here in this province, in Ontario. It is important for the government to consider the impact that this bill may have on tobacco farmers and work with

these farmers to cement a future livelihood as tobacco sales decline. These farmers deserve the ability to continue to provide for their families.

It is clear that there are limits to what this bill will achieve in terms of lowering tobacco use, and we should all be aware of these. Lawsuits and cost recovery alone will do very little to stop youth from taking up smoking or to stop people from dying from smoking. If we turn a blind eye to the limits of this bill, we risk losing ground in our fight against tobacco, because tobacco will continue to kill 13,000 Ontarians each and every year, smoking will continue to account for 30% of all cancers and a staggering 85% of all lung cancers, tobacco use will continue to cost Ontario taxpayers \$6.1 billion in premature deaths and disability in the future, and above all, smoking will continue to cost untold human suffering and the loss of loved ones.

Most of us in the room today have lost loved ones to cancer, and we know too well what this is like. We recognize that some progress has been made in reducing tobacco use in Ontario, partly due to some of the steps that this government has taken. But the reality is that since 2003 smoking rates have flat-lined. We have not made any more progress. Although this government speaks to the contrary and is eager to pat themselves on the back, citing declining smoking rates, in order to see a declining rate you have to ignore the epidemic of contraband cigarettes which the member from Thornhill talked eloquently about. The reality is, when contraband cigarettes are included, smoking rates have not gone down at all since 2003, although significant health promotion programs have been put forward by this government. In fact, the rate of smoking of Ontarians aged 15 and over has increased slightly from 16% and up. Groups like the Canadian Cancer Society indicate that the government of Ontario needs to take further action to reverse this worrying increase in tobacco use.

One of the first ones I would say is to quickly enact my bill, Bill 124, that controls the sale of cigarillos. The sale of cigarillos has skyrocketed in recent years. Cigarillos are what the industry calls “starter” cigarettes. They target youth because you are able to buy them in singles, often for about a dollar or a little bit more. They also target youth because of their flavourings. You can find all sorts of flavourings directly targeted at youth and adolescents. We're looking at chocolate flavour, peach flavour, all sorts of drinks from appletini to—

Mr. Michael Prue: Bubble gum.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —to bubble gum and rum. You name it.

According to a University of Waterloo study, 35% of grade 10 and 12 students have tried cigarillos. It doesn't take long after they smoke those sweet, candy-flavoured cigarillos that they don't want the sweetness anymore; they want the tobacco that is in there and they make the switch. For a non-smoking youth, it's easy to go to the store and spend a dollar on a cigarillo; it's not a big amount of money. You do it over and over, and you become the next generation of smokers, you become the

next generation of people at risk of cancer. So bringing forward Bill 124 will go a long way toward making sure we don't have a new generation of smokers in Ontario.

We also need to at least double the funding for the smoke-free Ontario strategy. We need to increase tobacco taxes, which are actually \$15 less a carton in Ontario than they are in Manitoba, and we have to take swift action to curb the availability of low-priced, contraband tobacco to youth and others; an issue that both opposition parties have been talking about in this Legislature. The spread of illegal cigarettes costs the Ontario government half a billion dollars a year in lost tax revenue, according to the Auditor General. It makes cigarettes more affordable and accessible, especially to youth and to aboriginal youth; and we all know that if our kids get hooked on cigarettes when they're young, they become the next generation of smokers. Cheap cigarettes are often advertised and easily available in many of Ontario's communities. The statistics say that about 30% of cigarettes in Ontario are produced illegally, and Ontario has fallen behind other provinces in controlling contraband cigarettes. We have seen what the British Columbia government has done and we should draw not only on their experience for Bill 155 but also on some of the novel ideas they have put forward.

For example, in Manitoba, New Brunswick, and British Columbia, they have offered First Nations bands the right to collect PST on cigarettes through innovative tax treaties, because we know that if the cost of cigarettes remains high it is a deterrent, especially to young people. B.C. and Alberta have also developed effective electronic monitoring of sales which requires store owners to pay the tax up front—a youth deterrent, and it makes cigarette prices go up.

0950

In closing, we need to learn from the history of tobacco and apply those learnings to better control other deadly and dangerous products and chemicals. Yes, let's move ahead and hold tobacco companies responsible for devious marketing of dangerous products, but let's remember that they are not alone. We look forward to this government's toxic use reduction action as a step toward reducing exposure to other dangerous chemicals, and we hope that it will be strong, effective and comprehensive. New Democrats will support that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? The honourable member from Durham?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was very supportive of the member from Nickel Belt and her very patient and reflective comments on the bill. I have to show some respect. I have a lot of regard for the things she says as the critic for health in this Legislature.

She did exactly allude to the intent of the bill, but if you look behind it, if you look at the purpose clause here, there's a whole section on the Limitations Act. The Limitations Act really entitles the government to go back into history—right back, perhaps to the first tobacco farm, and tax them, fine them, sue them.

I would say it's only in recent memory—perhaps, scientifically, the last 50 years—that we've known

conclusively that tobacco causes cancer, so many of the people who grew tobacco or carrots or potatoes did it with the best of intentions, not knowing whether it was causing a human health issue. How can they, in all good conscience, go back in history? Because that's what the Limitations Act does. It says: "In an action that does not involve the recovery of the cost of health care benefits... the court may apportion liability of two or more defendants if certain criteria are met. The act sets out factors for the court to consider in apportioning liability," and this has to do with the Limitations Act. It allows them to go back in history.

That being said, she makes a very good point. But they're going to spend inordinate sums of money putting together this team of corporate lawyers—probably billing about \$1,000 an hour—to talk about smoking. We all know it's wrong. If they know tobacco is bad and causes cancer, why don't they ban it? They banned sushi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened with great intent to my colleague from Nickel Belt and what she had to say. In the two minutes allotted to me, I really want to reiterate the point that she made about the flavoured cigarillos.

We can see what the tobacco companies are up to; we can see how they're trying to market. They understand that they are losing market share amongst those who are older, and they understand that people who are older have seen the ravages of tobacco. They have seen their friends and loved ones die of cancer, they have seen the scientific tests, and they understand that.

So the tobacco companies, in order to keep going and in order to make sure that their product continues to sell, are not looking to the people who have been hooked in the past but who have finally seen the light and got off it; they are looking to hook a new generation. And they're not hooking them with the same cigarettes that hooked the previous generation; they're hooking them with flavoured cigarillos—everything, as was said, from apple to cranberry to bubble gum and all of the flavours that a young person would want to taste for the first time and would think that it was really cool to be smoking, one of these cigarillos that you can buy for a dollar in the corner store, that are meted out one cigarillo at a time.

She is absolutely correct. If that's what the tobacco companies are willing to do to hook people, we have to be aggressive as a government. We have to be aggressive in this Legislature to make sure that we can stop companies from doing that kind of thing, but also to take them to court when necessary, to try to recoup some of the enormous cost that cigarette consumption has had, and will continue to have, upon the people of Ontario.

My colleague from Nickel Belt has made an eloquent plea, but she closed her remarks by stating that New Democrats would support this bill. I understand the Conservatives will support this bill, and I encourage speedy passage so that we can get on with protecting the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is one of those bills which you're torn over because of the possibility of success. In my mind, the possibility of success is questionable. We're going to spend a lot of money when lawyers get involved in lawsuits and go to court. It's not about getting a quick decision, as the member from Beaches–East York points out; it's about extending the period of decision so that more billable hours are put together. Anyone who reads John Grisham novels knows that billable hours are the Holy Grail of the legal process, at least from John Grisham's perspective. I think that probably he's not too far from the mark, since he was a lawyer at one time. So I'm torn between whether this is a bill that you want to see the taxpayers of Ontario fund—literally millions of dollars in chasing the possibility of recouping perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars from the tobacco companies.

Although a lot of the high-profile cases that have gone to court in the past, particularly in the United States—some in other provinces—have had initial success in winning the cases, they have lost the cases in appeal. And the amount of money that tobacco companies have actually had to pay out in this area has been either manageable or it has been extended over long periods of time, so that the company may in fact not exist by the time that payment schedule has to be.

The good thing about this bill is that it does put pressure on tobacco companies. It focuses their attention on that what they're doing in today's world is wrong. However, it may not have been wrong in the world that they existed in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

If none, the honourable member from Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes for your response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: First, I'd like to thank the member from Durham for pointing out the Limitations Act within this act.

Certainly, if you go back, the scientific link between tobacco and ill effects are well documented and go back 80 years. In Canada, there was a landmark report in 1962, and since that date we know the scientific community has accepted the direct link between tobacco use and ill effects.

To the member from Beaches–East York, I appreciate your support. Yes, I would like to see my bill, Bill 124, which has received royal assent, become enacted as quickly as possible. Every day that goes by that those single-sale flavoured cigarillos are still on the market, other kids become hooked, other kids become smokers and go down the path of high risk of developing all sorts of horrible diseases: mouth and throat cancer, not to mention lung cancer.

To the member from Halton, there are certainly a few lawyers who will benefit when this act gets enacted and tobacco companies are brought to court. I hope that this can be done in a way that is respectful of the taxpayers' money. It's certainly not my area of expertise, but it is something that we need to keep in mind. This bill is still an important small step.

1000

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak today to Bill 155, the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. Although our party will be supporting this legislation, we have some grave reservations, not about this particular bill, but about the lack of action on the part of the government in dealing with the issue of stopping the sale of illegal tobacco on the First Nation reserves. It's regrettable that they haven't brought forward changes in legislation or pursued the action to stop those sales.

This bill would allow the government to sue the tobacco companies to recover damages for the costs sustained by our health care system for illness and injury to Ontario citizens by virtue of the fact that they use tobacco products. Currently, individuals can attempt to sue tobacco companies for damages as a result of illness or injury, and we're certainly aware of that. But until this time, the government has not been able to seek damages for the costs to our health care system. This bill would enable us to do so. I want to, in a few minutes, make reference to the fact that this has been tried before, when I was Minister of Health. We did hit a roadblock at that particular period in time. This bill would hold the companies accountable.

But I do have some reservations about this, because what this is going to mean is that we are going to incur some huge—and I say “huge”—legal fees as we pursue this. It probably is going to take a substantial amount of time if—and I stress the “if”—we are ever going to see results. There's absolutely no guarantee that after the expenditure of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money we actually will be reimbursed in any way. That's why I have some concerns about what's happening here today.

I would have liked to have seen, at the same time, movement on the part of this government to stop the sale of illegal tobacco on First Nation reserves. Regrettably, that is a problem that is increasing. As we heard earlier, despite any initiatives that we might have in place to stop smoking and encourage young people in particular from ever starting, we are not seeing great results and young people are not stopping in the numbers that we would want them to be stopping.

We all know that there are huge health care costs associated with smoking. Obviously, we need to do what we can to prevent it, and so we have this bill today.

It was British Columbia that in 1998 became the first jurisdiction in Canada, and the Commonwealth as well, to launch a lawsuit against the tobacco industry for the recovery of tobacco-attributable health care costs related to allegations that the industry did not disclose in a timely way what it knew about the effects of its products. The tobacco industry challenged the constitutionality of that legislation. In September 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously upheld the province's right to sue the tobacco industry and concluded that the Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act is consti-

tutional. In September of 2006, the British Columbia Provincial Court of Appeal held that BC courts have jurisdiction over foreign tobacco companies named in BC's action.

That's what brings us to where we are today. As I said at the outset, when I was Minister of Health in 1999, we had the privilege of introducing similar legislation. We introduced Bill 23, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act. It amended the Health Insurance Act to allow the plan to bring an action independently of any subrogated right of action against a person to recover costs incurred to pay for insured services rendered as a result of the person's negligence for wrongful act or omission. In 2000, we spearheaded an initiative whereby Ontario filed a medicare cost recovery lawsuit against the tobacco industry in the United States under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. This came about because many of the American jurisdictions had been successful in suing the companies and obtaining settlements. We did so on the basis that there wouldn't be any legal fees that we were going to incur unless we were successful in our suit so there was no cost to the taxpayer. We were seeking US\$40 billion. However, on August 7, 2000, the case was dismissed by the court on the grounds that a foreign government such as Ontario could not sue in US courts. So that brings us to where we are today.

I would say to you that everybody in this Legislature supports initiatives to eliminate and reduce smoking; if at all possible, eliminate it, but in the short term we have to take whatever steps we can to reduce it. The NDP have certainly indicated their strong support, we've seen this government indicating its support, and when our government, the Progressive Conservative government, was in office from 1995 to 2003, we did move forward aggressively. We worked with stakeholders in order to ensure that we did what we could to help Ontarians quit smoking. I remember that in 1998 we initiated a project to help Ontarians quit smoking. The announcement included new projects to prevent and reduce tobacco use. These projects included the Program Training and Consultation Centre in Ottawa, the Health Behaviour Research Group in Waterloo, the Commit to a Healthier Brant program in Brantford and the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit in Toronto, just to name a few. But it was a province-wide attempt to encourage and help people to quit smoking.

In 1999, in light of recommendations put forward by a panel of experts we had assembled that had convened in 1998 to study tobacco initiatives in other jurisdictions, the Progressive Conservative government of the day announced significant enhancements to Ontario's tobacco strategy. Certainly, the unveiling of those enhancements made Ontario's anti-tobacco initiative at that time, 1999, one of the most ambitious tobacco control programs in Canada, because we had assembled this panel of experts to take a look at what was going on elsewhere and we wanted to make sure that ours was the best as far as encouraging people to quit smoking tobacco. Then the next year, in 2000, we continued to revitalize Ontario's

anti-tobacco initiative and we invested an additional \$10 million. So that's part of what we did. I know the NDP are committed to doing what they can, as is this government.

We need to recognize, though, that a lot of the recent efforts, particularly when it relates to young people, haven't been successful, and that is reason for concern. If you take a look at some of the statistics today, if we have young people who are smoking at a young age, it means that some of the information I'm going to share with you is going to have a devastating impact on those young people. We know that, according to Health Canada, more than 37,000 people will die prematurely in Canada this year due to tobacco use. That is a huge number. Unless they quit, up to half of all smokers will die from their smoking, most of them before their 70th birthday, and only after years of suffering a reduced quality of life. The average smoker will die about eight years earlier than a similar non-smoker. There is strong scientific evidence that smoking is related to more than two dozen diseases, and we all know the two—heart disease and cancer are two frequently talked about diseases that obviously have a connection to smoking and early death, or certainly a decreased quality of life for those people who suffer. Most of these conditions, however, and I think this is important for anybody who is a smoker who might be watching, start to reverse after that smoker quits smoking. So there is still hope, for the individual who has been smoking and makes a decision to quit, that some of the diseases, the conditions and the decreased enjoyment of life can be reversed if you quit.

1010

It is concerning to know that we aren't having the impact on encouraging young people to quit that we might have. Part of the problem is because this government has been totally silent on doing what it can to decrease the sale of illegal tobacco in Ontario. We know that many of the young people throughout this province smoke cigarettes that are illegal.

In fact the Auditor General last year, in 2008, said that Ontario could reduce its deficit—at that time we thought we had only a \$500-million deficit, and we know now that it's probably going to be \$18 billion over the next two years—that they could reduce that deficit of half a billion if they were to collect the tobacco taxes. Contraband tobacco usage has grown from somewhere in the neighbourhood of 24% to 49% of the Ontario market in the past three years. This is very alarming, it is very concerning, and this government is taking absolutely no action. Also, the information says that it can be found in the homes of every one in three smokers. So in your neighbourhood, if you take a look, some of your neighbours obviously have contraband tobacco.

Last year, the Auditor General said that problems persist with smuggling and the sale of illegal cigarettes. He encouraged the government to crack down and make sure that purchases of tax-free cigarettes and cigars on First Nation reserves don't exceed their tobacco allocations. But again this government took absolutely no action. I

think in some ways the bill we are speaking to today is an attempt to divert attention away from this very serious issue of contraband tobacco and its increased use, and the fact that over the past three years it has grown from 24% to almost half of the Ontario market. That is very alarming.

Yet this government, under Premier McGuinty, sits on its hands. In fact, I'm sometimes quite surprised that some of the individuals, who are strong advocates of the quit-smoking campaign, don't encourage and prod the government more to take action on this front. How can they be happy with what this government is doing when these are the numbers that we can take a look at? I mean, an increase in three years from 24% to almost half, 50%? It is very, very alarming.

The Auditor General in his 2008 report said that government computer systems, policies and procedures are still inadequate to make sure the proper amount of tobacco, gas and diesel taxes are remitted despite similar shortcomings that he pointed out in a 2001 audit. That "is a lot of money," McCarter said in his statement, "that the province could be missing out on during these difficult economic times." He noted that the tobacco tax shortfall has increased significantly in the past seven years, and he said, "The existence of this tax gap remains a major issue for provincial tax coffers."

My colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition have previously called on this government to shut down illegal smoke shacks, including the one, by the way, on government-owned land which is currently operating with apparent impunity in Haldimand county. In fact, the leader of our party, Mr. Runciman, has stated, "In tough economic times, with families and communities suffering, food bank lineups growing, this government is looking the other way as illegal activities siphon off at least \$500 million a year." Surely, Premier McGuinty and his colleagues must enforce the law. They must collect this money.

As I said before, today we're going to learn about an \$18-billion deficit, a burden on taxpayers today and a burden for our children and our grandchildren. It is unbelievable that we have gone from zero to \$18 billion in just one short year. My newspaper, the K-W Record, also found the fact that \$500 million wasn't being collected appalling. In fact, this is what they said: "And the Ontario government is misleading the public when it says it has no choice but to run a \$500-million deficit this year"—that was before we knew the truth. "Fact is, and facing this fact is uncomfortable for the Liberals as walking naked in a December blizzard, it could lay its hands on \$500 million more each year if it simply had the resolve and the guts"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'm sorry to interrupt the honourable member, but it is 10:15 of the clock or just past that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): This House stands adjourned until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to welcome to the Legislature my slightly older sister, Susan Houghton, living in North Bay—

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: She's the only sibling—and my brother-in-law, Roy Houghton. Welcome, Susan and Roy.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce constituents of mine who are here to listen to the budget this afternoon: David and Sharon Meader from Newcastle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity on behalf of page Noel Smith and the member from Whitby—Oshawa to welcome his mom, Dena Smith, and his father, Sheldon Smith. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Back in June of last year, the Premier suggested it would be crazy for anyone to raise taxes during an economic downturn. You said that even the NDP wouldn't do that. As we know, the economy has worsened since June. Premier, how do you rationalize what you said in June—you'd have to be crazy to increase taxes—with the massive tax grab that you're announcing later today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Like my honourable colleague, we're very much looking forward to the presentation of the budget in this chamber this afternoon. What I can say in the interim is that there are two principal objectives we are seeking to achieve through our budget. The first of those is to provide support to families and help them better shelter during the course of this economic storm; and secondly, we want to do more to strengthen the foundation that supports our public services, generates our jobs and creates our wealth, which is the economy. So the budget will be focused on those two overriding objectives in particular: help our families today, and strengthen our economy for tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess we can construe that as an admission he's crazy. Premier, that's what you said in June: Anyone would have to be crazy to bring in a tax increase, given the current state of the economy.

The Premier can use as many clichés and comfort quotes, dramatic pauses—he has unequivocally, without a doubt, earned himself the title of serial promise breaker.

Premier, once again you're breaking a solemn election promise to the people of Ontario that you wouldn't increase their taxes. How can you stand in your place, hold a straight face and attempt to tell Ontarians that this

isn't a tax grab at the worst possible time, when hard-working families are reeling from the current financial crisis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it would be helpful to all of us if we were to await the budget to be delivered this afternoon in the House. We'll get a good sense of what it entails, from a comprehensive perspective. I think once we have the full picture, Ontarians will be in agreement that it suits the times and it consists of the right decisions, wise decisions, that speak to our present-day needs and at the same time give us reasons to be hopeful about our future. Again, it's designed to help our families today and to invest in a stronger economy for tomorrow.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: A bully is someone who picks on someone who's already down. Ontario families are losing their jobs under this government. Over 130,000 jobs have been lost since November. People are struggling to hang on to their homes, feed their families and put their kids through school. Seniors have seen their life savings decimated. Now, Premier, you and the yes-men and -women around you who apparently don't have the intestinal fortitude to stand up for their constituents are choosing the worst economic downturn in 70 years as a springboard for a radical tax policy change that has the potential of further depressing this economy. Premier, how can Ontarians have any confidence or trust in your leadership?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't share the perspective and, I guess, the outlook of my honourable colleague. One of the things I want to draw to his attention and to Ontarians' attention as well is that there was some great news in the Kingston Whig-Standard today that talked about a Toronto-based company, Everbrite, that is going to invest in the city of Windsor. They're going to build a \$500-million manufacturing facility. It talks here about some 1,200 jobs that might come from this. The principal of the company specifically says:

"The Green Energy Act is a clear signal to global lenders that Ontario is serious about solar power, and that has proved helpful in our financing efforts. We have strong interest from investors both here in North America and in Europe."

The fact is, we are doing things and we will continue to do things to strengthen this economy and create jobs for Ontario families.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again to the Premier: We have to wonder if the Premier understands that his new tax is going to raise the cost of almost everything that families need each and every day, things like daycare for working families, gasoline, home Internet, laundry, car repairs and oil changes, appliances, cable TV and newspapers, and activities for kids like hockey and soccer. Premier, which of—and I named just a few—these basic needs are you suggesting that Ontario families do without because of your promise-breaking tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that if you take a look at the record and what we've done, that represents our commitment to our families. We do everything that we can to allow ourselves to be informed by their values, their hopes and their aspirations. If you take a look at what we've done during the course of the past five years, whether it's investing in our families' schools, our families' health care, in environmental protections and doing what we can to support our most vulnerable families, I think the record speaks to a firm commitment and conviction on our part that those kinds of things are the right things to do. This budget will once again demonstrate our commitment to our families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The cover of the Toronto Sun sums up what the Premier is really trying to say: "A \$1,000 Bribe." Premier, to add insult to injury, you're doing it with the taxpayers' own money. This is very, very cynical stuff. Once again, this Liberal Premier and his sheep-like backbenchers are treating the electorate like rubes. Does the Premier, with an \$18-billion deficit, really believe that he can get away with this type of bogus payoff?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'd encourage my colleague to wait for the budget, look at it in a comprehensive manner and get a good sense of what it's all about. I hope that he'll come to the conclusion that we're doing what needs to be done, both for our families and for the economy.

I know that families want us to find a way together to make the necessary investments to shore up the foundation, so to speak, to invest in our economy so that it continues to generate the jobs and create the wealth to do what we really all want to do in this House, which is to provide better support for our schools, our health care, our most vulnerable people in Ontario and, at the same time, do what we can to ensure we have environmental protections in place.

1040

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The very fact that the Premier feels the need to buy off Ontarians with their own money is an admission of guilt that this is a massive tax grab and nothing more. It's clear the Premier is shifting the tax burden at the expense of hard-working families.

The timing of the instalments couldn't be more suspicious. According to the media, the first instalment is July 2010, to try and keep Ontarians quiet when they're paying more. Even worse, the last instalment comes July 2011, weeks before the provincial election. Premier, it's as they say: If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a Dalton duck. Premier, how do you explain the appearance of this being a pre-election bribe?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw his last comment, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs, I don't need your help. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure the inflammatory rhetoric is ever helpful, but let me say something: We're very clear as to what we want to do and what we need to do, and that will be disclosed momentarily when we have the budget in this House.

But I'm still not sure where the opposition wants to go, because on some days in the House they're asking us to spend more on not unimportant matters, and other times they're telling us that we ought to be making dramatic cuts. Recently, Mr. Hudak said that we've overspent by \$17 billion.

I get the sense that, were they in government, what they'd want us to do and what they would be doing would be making dramatic cuts to our health care, to our education, to our environmental protections—supports for our most vulnerable. We're not prepared to do that. I understand there is a stark contrast in approaches; I accept that. We will continue to stand up for families, good-quality public services and a strong economy

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: Today, we are finding out even more about this Premier's latest tax grab. It's a tax grab that he has cooked up with his new best friend, Stephen Harper. During a worsening economic crisis, why is this Premier joining with Harper to tax Ontarians' basic essentials?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to encourage my colleague from the NDP, as well, to wait for the budget and to see it in its fullness, and I'd ask her to keep in mind some of the things that we've already done.

For example, together with Prime Minister Harper, we're investing \$1.2 billion in social housing and affordable housing. I don't know whether she's for that or against that. On our own, we have dramatically enhanced the Ontario child benefit so that it no longer pays \$50 a month per child; it's now going to go to \$92 per month per child. We think that is the right thing to do to support our most vulnerable families.

Again, I don't know whether my honourable colleague supports that measure or not. I know what she stands against, but I'm not sure whether she stands for those kinds of things, which I'd assume that she would support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty-Harper sales tax grab comes at a time when Ontarians can least afford it. The province is losing more than 30,000 jobs a month. Just yesterday, 140 workers at Timken Canada in St. Thomas received their pink slips. These same workers and their families are going to have to pay more to heat their homes with heating oil. How does this Premier justify picking the pockets of already hurting Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to those supports that we've put in place for our most vulnerable families,

enhancing the Ontario child benefit and investing in social housing and affordable housing—by the way, that last program, that \$1.2-billion investment in social housing infrastructure, will create 23,000 jobs. I think the member knows that through our Green Energy Act, we're going to be creating tens of thousands of jobs in that area as well. I think she knows as well, because of the \$32.5-billion investment we're going to be making in infrastructure over the course of the next couple of years, that represents some 300,000 jobs. I can tell you, if there's one thing that Ontario families continue to say they want, it's jobs, so our policies continue to help those who are most vulnerable and do what we can to create jobs as soon as possible.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier has no shame. He repeatedly vowed that he would not raise taxes. In September 2007, he said this: "We will not have to raise taxes, because we are in charge. We know exactly where we are." The truth is that the Premier has no clue where he is. My question is this: Why is he making Ontarians pay for it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the enthusiasm, as usual. But I think, again, we should wait for the budget in its fullness, and we'll get a much better sense of what it specifically will do. I think that Ontarians will understand where we're coming from and where we're going. Perhaps more than anything else, what we want to do for Ontarians is to give them a sense of hopefulness and understanding that what we're doing with our resources that we have together, as taxpayers and Ontario families, is investing in supports for families today and at the same time investing in a stronger economy for tomorrow.

We've already spoken in large measure to that through our announcements that will create new jobs and provide more supports for our families. Again, if you take a look at the beginning of the consequences of our Green Energy Act, it's pretty clear that's going to be very helpful to families, too.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again to the Premier: You know, the most insulting part of this tax grab is the \$1,000 so-called rebate. Why does the Premier think that he can bribe Ontarians with their own money?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the leader to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've spoken to this already. I'll try to find a new way to say the same thing. If you take a look at what we've been doing during the course of the past four and now five years, we've demonstrated time and time again that we are in sync with Ontario families and their values, their aspirations. If you take a look at the investments we've made in our schools, for

example, we have smaller classes and more teachers, higher test scores and higher graduation rates. We have made more spaces than ever available in our colleges and universities and through our apprenticeship programs. As a parent, I can tell you there's nothing more important to me than ensuring that my kids have all the opportunities they need to succeed and to achieve their potential. I think that speaks in very large measure to our commitment to Ontario families, making sure that we have good, quality opportunities in terms of education and skills training, and we intend to continue that kind of support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier knows very well what this is. He's taking the hard-earned dollars out of the back pocket of every single Ontarian and then he has the gall to say that he's going to give you some of your own money back in three instalments. When is this Premier going to admit that this is just a shameful attempt to buy votes from Ontarians with their own money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I would encourage my colleagues to wait to get the full picture and get an understanding of what this in fact entails and the consequences to the Ontario treasury. I hope that when my colleague has a good understanding of what the budget provides for, there's going to be a coming of age in terms of recognizing that this budget is going to do what we talked about it doing, which is lend support to our families today and strengthen our economy for tomorrow.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The last rebate cheque is going to be delivered just before the next election, but between now and then Ontarians are going to be coughing up extra cash for basic essentials. They realize that they're being taken to the cleaners yet again and they're going to be paying for it. Why does the Premier think he can fool Ontarians so easily?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of comments on this: One is that, again, I encourage my colleagues opposite to wait for the presentation of the budget to get a sense of what it provides for in its fullness.

Secondly, I have never underestimated Ontarians, their wisdom in making judgments when it comes to public policies and actions taken by governments. Also, we've certainly worked hard never to underestimate their values. Ontarians are ambitious, hard-working, successful people, and this budget will speak to that record of success, those ambitions and those values. We will do what needs to be done at this point in our history. We won't forget who we are, where we've been, nor will we forget where we want to go. We want to go to a brighter future in Ontario with a stronger economy that supports those good jobs and our public services.

1050

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I would ask the Premier to answer this question for my

constituent, Alice Sheridan, who is a senior on a fixed income, facing property taxes that she's having a difficult time dealing with, escalating electricity costs and an eroding income because of our current economic circumstances. She's asking the Premier this question: Can you guarantee, as a result of this harmonization proposal, that she will not see any increase in her ability to pay the most basic bills that she is facing as a retired person in this province?

Will he do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, I appreciate the question. Let me just assure my colleague's constituent that we will not take our eye off our seniors, nor their contribution to the quality of life we enjoy together here in Ontario, nor the circumstances in which they find themselves today. That's one of the reasons why we put in place a \$500 seniors' property tax credit, to recognize those needs and that contribution, and their challenge that they have today. Again, that speaks to our commitment to our seniors, and our budget, once again, will give evidence to the fact that we understand where seniors are coming from, their special challenges and our continuing support for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Alice Sheridan is watching the proceedings today, along with many of her neighbours and family, and she heard the specific question that I asked: Will the Premier stand in his place and guarantee to her that when she goes shopping, when she goes about paying her monthly bills, that this harmonization proposal the government will bring in will not result in an increase of her daily living costs as she tries to make her way financially through the month? Will the Premier just stand in his place and say, "Alice Sheridan, I guarantee you, you will not have any increased costs as a result of this harmonization"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's important—I understand the interest, and in just a few more hours, all of that will become very clear. But I can certainly make this assurance: We will not do what has been party policy for the Conservatives in Ontario, which is to make dramatic cuts to health care. We will not do that. We know that as we get older and our bodies begin to fail us, we have much greater call upon our health care resources. We will continue to make investments in our health care system to support our seniors in the province of Ontario.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. At the hearings for Bill 139, there was clear support—Skills for Change, OCASI, Campaign 2000, CUPE, the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, among many others—for Ontario to make the necessary and possible amendments to the bill following Manitoba's lead in licensing and regulating nanny recruitment agencies, including a ban on the charging of placement fees. This is a change that the Minister of

Labour himself can make to his own bill immediately. If the minister is so committed to putting an end to the exploitation of nannies in this province, why won't he stop the stalling and make the necessary amendments to Bill 139?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First, I'd like to say to the member opposite, we are very proud of Bill 139 and what we are doing for workers that work through temporary help agencies. We're getting rid of many of the barriers that are in front of those workers, like some of the upfront fees. We are addressing many of the concerns when it comes to employment standards and providing them with that information.

When it comes to the live-in caregiver program, this is something that we are working on actively. It's very unfortunate that there are some unscrupulous individuals out there, but what we are doing is working with our federal government to close those loopholes.

I have been in conversations with Minister of Labour Nancy Allan to see what is happening in Manitoba. Their legislation has actually not yet come into force. We will be seeing how it rolls out. But what I can say—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Nancy Allan says you could make this change immediately. When it comes to protecting vulnerable foreign caregivers and workers, we need it now.

The minister's actions, not his words, show an appalling lack of concern. First, the minister drags his feet trying to pin the responsibility solely on his good friends the federal Tories. Now the minister is leaving it to his colleague Mike Colle to propose required changes through the long and uncertain process of a private member's bill. These are changes that the minister can make immediately to Bill 139. All the stakeholders say so. Why won't you act?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We all join together here in stopping exploitation of workers. That's what we brought forward with Bill 139, to help workers who work through temporary help agencies.

Now, I have asked officials within the ministry. They say it is outside the scope of that legislation. We are working actively to close the loopholes in this federal program, the live-in caregiver program.

The member may not be aware that we do have differences between ourselves and Manitoba. Our program here is 20 times larger in terms of the number of caregivers who come through Ontario, but we are doing all we can to get it right. This will be a made-in-Ontario program to address the concerns that are out there and stop these unscrupulous agents and agencies—

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

YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Your legislation aimed at completing the transformation of the youth justice system was passed recently and received royal assent.

I think we all agree that youth must be held accountable for their actions but that youth have different needs from adults in the correctional system. Creating a framework that enables us to hold youth of all ages into one system is important, but it's just as important that steps are taken to actually remove the youth being housed in centres co-located in adult institutions. We need to physically move these youths so that they can be in places that support their unique needs. Can the minister provide an update of when all the youth will be moved in dedicated facilities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member for this very important question. As the member said, the passage of Bill 103 was the final step in the creation of the legal framework to hold all youth under one system, a very important step in this province, but actually moving the youth out of facilities co-located in adult institutions will make the most difference for our youth, and in the end, for the safety of our communities as we reduce the risk of their reoffending.

I'm pleased to report that, as of yesterday, all youth in our custody have now been moved out of units co-located in adult facilities and into dedicated facilities for youth. We are now able to provide the type of support these youth need while, at the same time, holding them accountable for their actions. We're confident this will result in better futures for our young people and safer communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think we're all very glad to hear that all youth have been moved into dedicated facilities where they can get the services they need to reduce the risk of reoffending.

Northern Ontario has unique challenges when it comes to providing social and justice services. It's crucial that the government ensure there are enough resources placed in the north to serve the population. The expansion of services in the north also has a positive economic impact on our local communities.

I'm aware that the government is planning new facilities for youth in northern Ontario to serve youth currently in adult facilities. Could the minister please outline how she plans to serve youth in my community of Thunder Bay and what the economic impact will be?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course, we recognize the challenges that communities in northern Ontario face when it comes to providing services. In fact, three of the four new youth justice secure custody centres that we're opening are in northern Ontario: in Sault Ste. Marie, Fort Frances and Thunder Bay.

1100

This past summer, we opened the Donald Doucet Youth Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, named after a much-beloved slain police officer. And just this past Monday, we opened Ge-Da-Gi-Binez—that means “spotted eagle”—in Fort Frances, Canada's first secure custody facility for aboriginal youth.

Interjection: Why weren't you there?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Unfortunately, I couldn't be there because of the ice storm.

That facility will create 40 full- and part-time jobs in Fort Frances. The new youth centre facility in Thunder Bay will create 30 full-time jobs and 175 construction jobs.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier inform this House who were the people who were in this chamber on Tuesday night when the Minister of Finance had his secret budget dress rehearsal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm in your hands here with respect to the appropriateness of my commenting on a matter which is under your consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not aware who was in here; I wasn't even aware there was such a practice. But I've learned since that there has been a practice spanning all three parties to rehearse their speech, as finance ministers, in this chamber. That's what, in fact, happened. I just don't see anything wrong with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Premier has shown himself to be a serial promise breaker, and now we see that he is also a serial budget leaker. We know that day after day, as part of a concerted political strategy, major budget initiatives, including tax measures, have been leaked. Now we know that there were unidentified individuals in this chamber listening to the budget speech as it was rehearsed, while at the same time the doors were locked to elected members.

With his utter disregard for budget secrecy, why has this Premier locked the door on one of our most important and long-standing parliamentary conventions, while at the same time leaving it wide open to unelected Liberal spin doctors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just want my friend to know what we're talking about here. The Minister of Finance came to this legislative chamber, stood in this chair and rehearsed his speech. Undoubtedly, some other person must have been here as an adviser with respect to the delivery of that speech. That only makes sense. I gather that on every occasion where they've had these kinds of speech rehearsals in the past, the doors to the chamber have been locked for the appropriate reasons.

Maybe the appropriate thing to do in the future is to give notice that the assembly will be barred to members at that particular point in time for reasons of confidentiality. Maybe that's a lesson that we can draw from this. But again, I emphasize that this is a long-standing practice, and I see nothing wrong with the Minister of Finance rehearsing his speech.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

The home care sector is in crisis. It cannot recruit and retain personal support workers because of the poor working conditions in home care. The former health minister, Minister Smitherman, said, "I agree with the sentiment that says that we haven't done well enough by our personal support workers.... Enhancing their compensation, giving greater acknowledgement to benefits and to travel costs, is a very important step." Wasn't that eloquent? Let me quote again, this time from a government response to Minister Caplan's report, Mrs. Caplan's report: "In addition, personal support workers will be compensated for mileage and travel." Will the minister live up to the commitments of his government to home care workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague raises a good issue, and I believe those were in fact the statements made by the former Minister of Health. But it's important to understand that we addressed that. We provided additional funding. In fact, in 2006-07 we increased funding for base wages by \$30 million annually, to speak specifically to transportation compensation and for training initiatives for our personal support workers. So she raises a good point. There was a real issue that had to do with the transportation matters. We have provided additional funding for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France G linas: The transportation issues have not been settled. Three thousand home care providers, represented by SEIU across Ontario, are on the picket line. I joined 70 of them on Tuesday in my riding. While they earn \$12.50 an hour, a third of their time is unpaid time, as they travel from client to client. In my riding, that means 900 kilometres every two weeks. It takes a long time to drive 900 kilometres every two weeks when you don't get paid for it. Because of competitive bidding between service providers, agencies that attempt to improve working conditions and to address high turnover rates are placed at a competitive disadvantage. Our home care sector is in crisis.

Will the Premier end competitive bidding and ensure that home care workers are compensated fairly for the important work that they do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me start by saying that there's always more that we can and should do with respect to better support of home care, but I just don't have the perspective that my honourable colleague has. I think we've made some significant progress. When it comes to transportation issues, we've provided 30 million additional dollars. I think the results speak for themselves: 220,000 more Ontarians have been receiving home care since 2003. I know there's still a need, and because of the demographics of an aging population, there will be a growing need. So we need to find a way to do more. But I think it's important to recognize that we have made some real and meaningful progress, not only for families that are beneficiaries of home care but also for those workers who do such a fabulous job for our families, by making sure there's money available for some of their transportation costs.

CLEAN TECHNOLOGY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement has recently released a groundbreaking report on Ontario's clean technology industry. The report analyzed Ontario's clean technology industry and identified best practices to help Ontario's clean technology companies improve their go-to-market strategies. Over 60 of Ontario's leading clean technology companies were surveyed, and 32 CEOs were interviewed about their strategies for growth and their companies' commercialization capabilities. According to this report, world-class technology alone will not guarantee commercial success. To grow and be profitable, these companies will need sufficient risk and growth capital, top management talent, strong market demand for their innovations and effective marketing and sales strategies.

My question, Minister: What actions is the government taking to act on this advice?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my good friend from York South-Weston for the question. In the 21st century, we're going to have to figure out a way to live sustainably within our own environment, and clean technology is a great expression of that desire to be able to meet that need. Right here in Ontario, because of the work done by OCETA and the report, we can report that there is world-class clean technology that is being developed each and every week in the province of Ontario. What we need to do is to ensure first that we have enough brains, enough money and the right policy. I am assured that we have the research capacity and the generation of new knowledge. We worked very closely with the markets to ensure that we have sufficient venture capital. But particularly, we have to have the right policy.

For example, I want to acknowledge my friend the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure for the new Green Energy Act. It is a great example of how we are setting the right policies that will attract global investment to this jurisdiction and make sure that great Ontario ideas become great Ontario jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Global demand for clean technology solutions is already estimated at US\$1 trillion annually. Supporting innovation is part of our government's five-point plan for growing Ontario's economy. Our government has passed legislation that allows new businesses that commercialize ideas from Canadian colleges, universities and research institutes to get a 10-year exemption from corporate income tax in Ontario.

1110

Although the report says that Ontario is doing a good job commercializing these technologies, it also says that the government can do more to help these companies become globally competitive. What steps is the ministry going to take to ensure that Ontario captures a piece of this \$1-trillion global market?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We're working very closely, our team of economic ministers, to ensure that the world

knows that Ontario is open for business, that we have groundbreaking clean technology right here in Ontario and that we're open for the commercialization of that.

It's why I was pleased to accept an invitation from the Cleantech Forum and Nicholas Parker to attend their recent forum in San Francisco. I was the only elected politician who was asked to present, because those 800 industrialists, venture capitalists and researchers from around the world wanted to hear about Ontario's story. They wanted to hear about the Green Energy Act and the things we're doing.

I think you just have to read the Toronto Star today about a new company called Everbrite, which is interested in making a \$500-million investment to help create 1,200 green tech jobs right here in Ontario. And why? Because our government believes in the future of clean, green renewable energy, as led by Minister Smitherman. We're making sure that we're sending a signal around the world that Ontario is—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: I want to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that he was not prepared to guarantee Alice Sheridan that her cost of living would not increase—we can conclude that it will; I now would like to address by how much.

According to reports, there will be three cheques sent out to taxpayers in this province, totalling \$1,000 a year, and this is apparently a rebate. From that we can conclude that the additional cost of his new tax will be at least \$1,000 a year. Will the Premier confirm that in fact the implementation of this tax could well result in at least \$1,000 a year of additional costs to seniors and others in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not going to speak to the issue that was raised by my colleague. I think we should wait for the budget in the House.

I know that there are many seniors who pay attention to question period. I want to reassure them right now that we will not adopt the position proposed by the Conservative Party that we make dramatic cuts to health care in Ontario. We will continue to find ways to support our health care. We will continue to find ways to reduce wait times. Now we've taken on a new challenge, which is to reduce wait times in emergency rooms. And we will continue to find ways to build new hospitals. One of the fastest-growing hospitals in the province is in my colleague's riding. We will continue to find ways to lend financial support to health care services which our seniors in particular have come to rely upon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's interesting that the Premier doesn't want to reply to my questions. Would he at least reply to Ms. Sheridan's questions? But he won't do that either.

We do know that government sources confirmed last night that there will be a harmonization contained in the budget, and that there will be at least a \$1,000 rebate to taxpayers. What I would like the Premier to do—in light of the fact that his government has told the media what's going to be in the budget, would he now at least confirm for us that the rebate will be a rebate of taxes that will be in addition to any tax that people are paying today? Will he at least agree to that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I very much look forward to entertaining this question and related questions after the presentation of the budget in this House.

What I can say to my colleague's constituent, once again, is that we will proceed with our seniors' property tax credit, which will benefit seniors by \$500, something which my honourable colleague voted against.

We will continue to put forward budgets in this Legislature that provide more support for our hospitals, with more support for human resources in our hospitals—doctors and nurses—and new technologies and medications alike: again, the kinds of things that my honourable colleague has voted against.

We will stand four-square in the camp of Ontario's seniors when it comes to meeting their needs.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. It is very clear that the Employment Standards Act is a provincial responsibility. It is also very clear that Bill 6, an amendment to this act, would not cost jobs in Ontario but would protect workers' earned pay, severance and vacation pay during a layoff. It is equally clear that this government is not fulfilling its responsibility to the many workers in Ontario who are facing layoffs because of plant closures. CAW leader Ken Lewenza, reflecting the opinion of laid-off workers, said it best yesterday—and I believe that many workers would like to see that kiss.

When will this government stop being passive letter-writers, stop blaming everyone else, and finally take action to fulfill its responsibility to protect Ontario workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Let's be clear that our government is concerned with the rights of employees when the employer is facing receivership or bankruptcy. Let's also be clear that the solution is not what the NDP is advocating for, which is a tax on all Ontario businesses. That is definitely not the answer, I say. Instead, the answer is to work with the federal government to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act and to ask them to enrich the wage earner protection program. The solution is to move workers from the bottom to the top when it comes to bankruptcy and insolvency. That is what we're advocating for, that is what we're pushing for. The answer is not what that member is asking for, which is a huge tax on all Ontario businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, the minister is wrong. I'm asking the government to finally show some lead-

ership. Don't wait for the federal government to act on bankruptcy laws. The tool to provide support now is right at hand. It's Bill 6. This government has deliberately forced Bill 6 from the committee agenda, from public consultation and from the implementation to protect laid-off Ontario workers.

When will this government stop playing games with the lives of Ontario workers? When will it move Bill 6 onto the committee agenda for public consultation and passage?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, what the member is proposing is a huge tax on Ontario businesses, which would have the complete opposite effect of what we're trying to do here, which is create jobs. He would cost Ontarians thousands of jobs.

Let's be clear also on this: We are asking the federal government to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. We want to move those employees from the back of the line to the front of the line, to make sure that they get super-creditor status. I would hope that the NDP and the Conservatives would support this. This would be the right move.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Minister, it is no secret that Ontario is currently caught up in a world economic challenge. When economic times are tough, people often begin to look outside of their homes for help and assistance. Ontarians turn to government, social organizations, not-for-profit agencies and faith-based organizations to find the tools, support and resources they need to weather this current economic storm.

Minister, you often rise in the Legislature and tell us your ministry recognizes that close to five million Ontarians volunteer annually in the province, but you have not told us how your ministry works to support these organizations which rely on volunteers in their day-to-day operations.

Hon. Michael Chan: My thanks to the honourable member for raising this important question.

The honourable member is correct: During times of economic hardship, volunteers and the organizations on whose behalf they work become more important than ever. Non-profit organizations are often caught between a rock and a hard place: Charitable donations decrease at the very time when demands for services are at their highest. For this reason, my ministry is committed to helping these organizations provide the services Ontarians rely on.

Since 2003, my ministry has invested annually in a strategic partnership initiative which helps non-profit organizations better manage their risks and improve their governance structures, and has invested in numerous social enterprises. We believe that promoting volunteerism and helping non-profit organizations will help Ontario move forward.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to learn about the strategic partnership initiative and how many people the non-profit sector employs here in Ontario. Minister, like most members here, I know that the promotion and support of volunteerism is the responsibility of your ministry. However, how does the wider government rely on volunteers to deliver programming and services? Is there a measurable economic benefit for our volunteers' work?

Hon. Michael Chan: Again, my thanks to the honourable member from Huron-Bruce. She is a true supporter of Ontario volunteers, and I would like to thank her for attending the Volunteer Service Awards ceremony in her riding.

The provincial government, like all governments in Canada, relies heavily on volunteers for the delivery of programs and services. In fact, over 200 government programs, valued at \$5.6 billion annually, are delivered through the dedication and hard work of volunteers. When one adds up all the contributions of volunteers to this province, there is an economic benefit of over \$10 billion annually. Ontario's non-profit sector is important to the province at any time, but during times of economic hardship, and as part of our moving forward plan, it is simply vital.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, I've received many e-mails and calls about your new proposed tax, and I'm just wondering if the Premier can advise the Legislature what businesses he consulted with before he brought in this new harmonized sales tax.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What I can say to the members, the e-mailers and the callers is that we will be providing this budget later on this afternoon in the assembly.

But I think my colleague knows that there are in fact many, many businesses—in fact, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce I think is most noteworthy, along with many economists, in saying that a single sales tax is a model that we should adopt. I think my colleague is aware of that.

Again, let's wait for the budget, and we will have greater detail.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm sorry, Premier, "Let's wait for the budget"? The budget has been out for days, for crying out loud, based on everything I've read in the paper. It's ridiculous. I remember a time when my father was the Treasurer, and if anything was let out, it was front-page news.

But I also wonder if the Premier caught the John Oakley radio show this morning, because I think it would be logical to consult with business about your new tax. Judith Andrew, vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, was on the program. When asked about the new HST and the leaks and the various exemptions and applications, she said, "Well,

there wasn't any consultation. I can tell you that." She continued to say, "If you think small business is in favour of it, we have members that have concerns."

Premier, why are you not consulting with small businesses in this province and listening to their concerns?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't agree with my colleague. I'm not sure if there has ever been any more extensive consultation undertaken in preparation for this budget than ever before. I know that Minister Duncan met with countless groups of Ontarians representing businesses, taxpayer groups and social groups in many communities right across the province of Ontario. We have worked hard to distil the wisdom, the values and the aspirations of Ontarians in this particular budget, and we look forward to presenting it this afternoon.

TRILLIUM DRUG PROGRAM

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est encore pour le premier ministre. The Trillium drug program is supposed to help families pay for the prescription drugs they need. The deductible is determined by the income of the families, but as thousands of Ontarians face unemployment, they are learning that they must continue to pay the same deductible based on income that they no longer have. They are expected to pay until they are reassessed because Trillium only assesses them once a year.

How does the Premier suggest Ontario's families should pay for medically necessary prescription drugs when they are out of work and have no money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the first thing I'd like to say is that we're proud of this program. Not every province offers this program. There is a considerable expense to taxpayers when it comes to funding the program, and I know that taxpayers are proud to have this kind of a program in place.

The member raises a good issue about some of the challenges faced by our families who have encountered difficulties and lost their jobs because of this worldwide recession. I would ask her, as well, to wait for the budget and to see the support that we make available to our families, in particular to families who have lower incomes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I look forward to the afternoon's changes to the policies that Trillium works under. But the Stewart family in Hamilton is hurting right now. Both Mr. and Mrs. Stewart have been laid off. Mrs. Stewart has a chronic life-threatening condition and requires expensive medication. They are living off of one EI claim and cannot afford the almost \$700 deductible. This family is about to declare bankruptcy, and we all know that Mrs. Stewart will end up in the hospital if she cannot get the medication that she needs.

Given the economic situation, will the Premier agree to amend the regulation of this program to ensure that families whose economic situations have plummeted can get reassessed when needed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is on to something here. My understanding is that the program relies on income tax data, which is collected on an annual basis, and if there's a change in that, that determines whether you qualify or don't qualify for this drug program. But my colleague makes a good point: Changes can come about rapidly, particularly propelled by the recession. So what I will do is, I will ask the Minister of Health to review that program with these particular considerations in mind and undertake to have him report back to my colleague.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Next week marks the beginning of Earth Month, when we refocus and redouble our efforts to learn about our environment and reduce our ecological footprint. One of the most tangible ways we impact on our environment is through the waste we create and how we dispose of it. While in the past waste was left to be disposed of in landfills, we now know that these ways are simply unsustainable.

Last week, I saw that new numbers from Waste Diversion Ontario have come out, showing that Ontarians are doing better at recycling. I was proud to see that residents of York region were ahead of the curve. Our waste diversion rate was 6% above the provincial average. Residents in my community want to do more to reduce the impact they have on their environment. They not only recycle through the blue box program, but we are also now using green bins to divert organic waste.

My question is, what is the minister doing to further increase waste diversion in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all compliment this member on being an excellent medical officer of health in the region of York a number of years ago and on the environmental leadership that she has shown around so many issues, not only waste diversion but also around the Lake Simcoe issue, which of course was a bill we passed recently.

As she knows, earlier this year we came out with the household hazardous waste program. That program alone, in a matter of five years, will divert an additional 33,000 tonnes of hazardous material that would have ended up in our landfill sites and will now be diverted so that those toxic materials will not go into those particular sites.

We will also start, on April 1, the electronic waste diversion program. That is to make sure that the toxic materials that are contained in old computers and television sets and monitors will not end up in the landfill sites. I will elaborate that in the supplementary that undoubtedly will follow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I look forward to these new programs continuing to come online in my community. I know that my constituents will be pleased to have even more options to do the right thing for their environment.

These programs are important. They help our families to take steps to properly dispose of the waste that we create in living on our everyday lives.

But there's more to it: We need to reduce the amount of waste we are creating in the first place. Waste costs us all, through higher prices for raw materials, money spent on diversion and disposal, the environmental impact of disposing of waste, the health costs associated with hazardous materials, and the value lost when products are left to waste in disposal sites.

Minister, something needs to be done to address waste diversion at the front end, to recognize that nothing should be wasted; everything has value. Minister, what are you doing to change the way our businesses and families look at the materials we use?

Hon. John Gerretsen: What we need more than anything else is a cultural change, the way in which we approach the end of the life cycle of various products. That is why we have come out with the document called *Toward Zero Waste*, which places a much heavier onus on and extends the producer's responsibility: that he who makes the product should be charged with the proper recycling and reusing of the materials that that particular product is composed of.

We've gone a long way with respect to the new programs that have come out, whether we're talking about municipal hazardous waste, the review of the blue box program or whether we're talking about the electronic waste program, but we can do a lot more. The only way we're going to be successful in this is if we all change our habits of the way in which we dispose of articles and materials that we no longer need. We all need to do it collectively. We've come a long way; we've still got a long way to go.

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, people were quite surprised and shocked to hear you boast about your ability to slap the hard-working taxpayers of this province, without repercussions, with your \$900 annual health tax. Do you think that at this difficult economic time you can do this again to taxpayers with your new, massive tax increase of at least \$1,000 as a result of harmonization?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will always continue to be respectful of taxpayers and Ontario families. We will do, as well, what is necessary to strengthen the foundation of our success here and of our fabulous quality of life that we enjoy in Ontario, which is to find ways to strengthen the economy.

Again, I want to assure Ontarians that we will not do what the Conservative Party wants us to do, which is to take billions and billions of dollars out of the Ontario health care system. We are not prepared to do that. We will continue to find ways to support our hospitals, support our nurses, support our doctors, support shorter wait times, support broader health care deeper into the heart of our communities. Those are the kinds of prior-

ities we will continue to bring to our public policy-making here in government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Premier, is your final instalment of your \$1,000 bribe just before the 2011 election intended to convince Ontario taxpayers to vote for you?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the perspective that has been brought by my colleague. She has a long-standing career; she has done much good, I must say. I'm sure she would understand that in the end there is a tremendous wisdom to be found in our electorate. I firmly believe that what they want us to do is what we believe is right in the circumstances. We will always find a way to do what is right in the circumstances. Broadly speaking, what is right is to support our schools, support our health care, support environmental protections, support our most vulnerable, and find ways to strengthen this economy so we can create jobs and support the standard of living and the quality of life that we have come to know here in this, the greatest province in the best country in the world.

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

The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Randy Hillier: For six years, Elden Ruttan and his family have waited for this government for assistance. Elden has autism. His parents are aging and in failing health. They need our help.

The pressures and priorities committee red-flagged Elden's case as urgent, but that was two years ago. I have written to the minister on behalf of Elden and his family and I've received the standard form letter response: more rhetoric, more excuses and more of the runaround. Is this the true wait-time strategy of the Liberals: Wait people out and eventually the problem will go away?

I'm asking that we help the Ruttans with meaningful action, not more hollow words in empty form letters. When will this government get their priorities right and get them straight? When will this government recognize that people's priorities must be their priority? We have a duty to serve and protect our most vulnerable. Madam Minister, they're not going away and neither am I.

SNOWMOBILING

Mr. Joe Dickson: As the snow finally melts away and the spring season begins, Ontario's snowmobilers are bitterly putting away their sleds until next year. Snowmobiling is a sport that calls for strict adherence to safe driving rules. When snowmobiling, safety always comes first.

Our Ontario trails are maintained and patrolled by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, who are

volunteers, and, of course the Ontario Provincial Police, and they are the safest areas to ride in Ontario. Only 6% of all serious accidents occur on open OFSC snowmobile trails. That means 94% of accidents are not on our provincial trails.

This past December the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Monique Smith, reminded us that our Ontario government has invested \$12 million over the last five years to improve the systems. This has boosted the economy throughout not only northern Ontario but anywhere above the 401 by a few kilometres. Grocery stores, hardware stores, gasoline stations, garages, motels, hotels, snowmobile outlets and sports outlets, to name a few, all benefit from the influx of business dollars. In my cottage area of Apsley and Chandos, it's not unusual to see more snowmobiles than autos pull into the gas station for fuel on a Sunday. In the famous words of that great country singer Gene Autry, "Happy trails again."

SIR WILFRID LAURIER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm proud to rise in the House to bring great news from my riding of London-Fanshawe. Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School has won an international award of \$25,000 in technological upgrades.

Out of the 300 schools that entered the contest by submitting a student-made video about why they should be the ones awarded, Laurier secondary received the grand prize. The interactive classroom makeover, which is proudly sponsored by Interwrite Learning and eInstruction, provides the school with a variety of interactive classroom tools that make learning stimulating and enriching. These tools include projectors, computers and software learning aids.

This project was spearheaded by teacher Vicky Gough when she proposed the idea to her communications class. Initially, the classroom students were the only participants, but the idea grew with popularity to well over 120 students.

Learning methods are constantly changing, and educators need the best tools to deliver the best graduates. Organizations that modernize education are some of our greatest assets. I would like to thank Interwrite Learning and eInstruction for their generous contribution, and I would like to congratulate the faculty and especially the students of Laurier secondary school for their contribution to future generations.

EARTH HOUR

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to remind government members and people throughout Ontario of this week-end's Earth Hour, in which we'll all have an opportunity to participate. It's a worldwide symbol of our potential for energy reduction. This will be the third Earth Hour since the World Wildlife Sydney office launched the concept to prod action on climate change, asking people to do a very simple thing: Turn out the lights.

Last year, 371 cities in 35 countries joined the show, and the number of participants leapfrogged to around 53 million. This year, 1,500 cities in 75 countries have signed on, and there is the potential for a billion people to turn out the lights this coming Saturday night.

I am heartened to see that this government is somewhat involved. The lights will be out from 8:30 to 9:30 in the evening. It's something to think about 365 days of the year. I'm not talking about sending in environmental police and energy audits and things like that.

I also wonder why there is not more this government could do to publicize. I know they sent out a three-paragraph news release, but we're looking for a bit more.

There are risks. In Calgary last year, energy use actually spiked during Earth Hour, and we don't want a repeat of that here, hence my call for this government to boost it a bit and take a bit more leadership on "no power during Earth Hour."

GREAT NORTHERN GETAWAY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today to inform the House that we have now completed what I guess would be the third annual great northern getaway. You would know that every year the press gallery has an event here to fundraise dollars for various charities in and around the Toronto area.

One of the things that each caucus is asked to do is to put forward a prize as a way of fundraising money for these great charities. This year we did again, for the third year in a row, the great northern getaway. It was Maria and Rob Mangoni. Everybody here knows Maria. She is one of our security staff. She was the successful bidder on the package and got a chance over the weekend to fly to Timmins by way of Air Ontario, courtesy of none other than myself and some other businesses in our riding, and I'd like to talk a little about what she did.

We flew her up to Timmins, courtesy of Air Ontario, so we want to thank Air Ontario for having arranged that. We also arranged hotel rooms by way of Cedar Meadows. M. Lafleur and his family were good in providing great rooms at that facility. She had a great time, along with her husband.

The mayor of the city of Timmins, Tom Laughren, took her out for five hours and toured her around the city of Timmins, along with her husband. They got to visit the Shania Twain Centre, have the underground gold mine tour and others and also had a chance, with Gilbert and others, to participate in snowmobiling events on Saturday.

I know that she had a great time, and I say to people, stay tuned for the great northern getaway next year. We'll be putting together another package for people to enjoy the hospitality of the city of Timmins.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FAIR

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: One of the most important roles of an MPP is to provide information to our

constituents. As elected officials, we have the resources to help residents navigate the services available from the Ontario government and also to answer their queries. It is for this reason that I, along with Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, recently hosted a government and community services fair at Cloverdale Mall. This event brings together government and community organizations to inform the residents of Etobicoke about the important services available to them from a variety of sources.

Ministries, agencies and not-for-profits were all in attendance, including groups as diverse as the Canadian Cancer Society, our public libraries, Arts Etobicoke, Ukrainian Canadian Social Services, the Dorothy Ley Hospice, the Parent Education Network, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of the Environment, just to name a few. All participants donated their time to update the community on their important work. This information provided by these and over 100 other organizations is invaluable to our communities. Now in its fourth year, the turnout was the best yet.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that you and all members of the Legislature will join me in thanking the organizations that took time out of their Saturday to help the residents of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and Etobicoke Centre.

I also want to thank Minister Chan and his ministry, who took the time to personally attend the event and learn about the great resources and community we have in Etobicoke.

I look forward to another successful fair next year.

1310

EPILEPSY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm honoured to rise today to speak on behalf of the PC caucus in support of Purple Day for epilepsy.

Purple Day is a day to bring to the forefront the issue of epilepsy. It's a day to raise awareness and to promote education surrounding this neurological disorder, which affects over 50 million people worldwide.

Purple Day was founded in 2008 by 9-year-old Nova Scotia native Cassidy Megan, who also lives with epilepsy.

Today I would also like to recognize Epilepsy Durham Region, which has taken the lead in this campaign for the province of Ontario. My constituents are supported by this great organization, which operates without traditional funding sources. Nevertheless, through a strong team of dedicated volunteers and minimal staff, Epilepsy Durham Region has worked tirelessly to coordinate events in support of Purple Day. Thanks to this organization, students in many schools, staff at corporations and community centres, and city councillors will all be wearing purple today to promote awareness of epilepsy.

Further, the CN Tower, Niagara Falls and Sudbury's Big Nickel will be among the major attractions cast in purple-hued light this evening.

Epilepsy Durham Region has also launched the You're Not Alone campaign, which urges 36,000 Durham residents to donate \$5 each in an effort to raise a total of \$180,000 to support people living with epilepsy in Durham region.

This is an important day to focus attention on this neurological disorder that affects so many people in our community, and this is an important day to raise awareness and support for the people who continue to suffer with this disorder.

KEN SHARP

Mr. Jeff Leal: In Richmond Hill on Saturday, March 21, Mr. Ken Sharp was awarded the Gerd Krick Achievement Award. Mr. Sharp, a constituent in my riding, has lived for 32 years on dialysis—my colleague Dr. Kular says this is very, very rare. This prestigious award was named after Dr. Gerd Krick, a pioneer in the Fresenius Medical Care dialysis family. He, like Dr. Krick, has been a tireless advocate in promoting research and innovation for the advancement of renal patient care.

Mr. Sharp, through the help of dialysis, lives a very full and productive life. One of his passions is singing and playing the guitar. Because of the excellent health care system that we enjoy in this province, Mr. Sharp has been able to remain close to home while being on dialysis. One of the participants at the celebrated event, Dr. Ted Toffelmire, a Canadian nephrologist, noted that the normal survival rate for dialysis patients with end-stage renal disease is 50% after five years. His longevity is truly remarkable. Dr. Toffelmire commented that Mr. Sharp's medical history of home and community-based therapy contributed in a significant way to his extended life.

I want to offer my congratulations to Mr. Ken Sharp and encourage him to continue the fight for renal research in Canada. He is truly a visionary in this field and an example of encouragement for others facing this life-altering disease.

STEFFI D

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise in the Legislature today to pay tribute to our "Orléans Idol." Ottawa–Orléans native Steffi DiDomenicantonio, better known as Steffi D, came in fifth place during season four of Canadian Idol, when she captured the hearts of Canadians from coast to coast. As you'll see, she is in the east gallery with her mother, Sandra Toscano, from Orléans.

After the show, Steffi enrolled at the George Brown College theatre school here in Toronto, and soon auditioned for the national Broadway tour of Spring Awakening. Less than a week after auditioning, she was flown to New York City, where she was offered the role of Ilse, a free spirit who runs away from home to live as a bohemian. After weeks of intense rehearsals, the show opened for a pre-tour engagement at the Balboa Theatre in San Diego at the end of August. Tour stops soon

followed in San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, Tempe—

Interjection: And Thunder Bay.

Mr. Phil McNeely: —and then on to Houston, Des Moines, Minneapolis, Columbus, St. Louis, East Lansing and Cleveland.

Now the tour featuring our amazing idol lands here in Toronto for a five-week tour at the Canon Theatre that started on March 17. I encourage all members to head to the theatre to experience Steffi's outstanding performance in Spring Awakening.

As the member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa—Orléans, I wish Steffi the very best of luck in her performances and in all of her future endeavours. She is making her entire community in Orléans very proud.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Since we have this incredible Canadian here with us with a great singing voice, I would like unanimous consent to have Steffi D sing her favourite song in the Legislature right now. Agreed?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2009

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2009

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009 / Projet de loi 161, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2009.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I don't have a statement at this time.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding presiding officers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the member for Parkdale—High Park be appointed Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House in place of the member for Hamilton Centre.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the good people of Milton.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to my page, Jackson, who will take it to the table.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY FRANCHISE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly signed by people from Hamilton.

"Whereas Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment has the highest average ticket revenue per game in the National Hockey League; and

"Whereas the Toronto Maple Leafs are ranked the most financially valuable team in the NHL; and

"Whereas many Hamilton and greater Toronto area hockey fans are unable to attend professional hockey games due to a lack of adequate ticket supply; and

1320

"Whereas the Hamilton and greater Toronto area boast the biggest and best market in the world for hockey fans,

with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment bringing approximately \$2.4 billion to the local economy over 10 years; and

“Whereas a new franchise in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area is valued at \$600 million by some economists; and

“Whereas competition in both business and sports is healthy for both the Hamilton and greater Toronto area economy and sports team performance; and

“Whereas despite having the most loyal fans in the world, the Toronto Maple Leafs have not won the Stanley Cup in over 40 years; and

“Whereas Hamilton and greater Toronto area fans deserve competitive professional hockey teams;

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

“To request that the government of the province of Ontario express its strong support to the board of governors of the National Hockey League for the relocation or expansion of a second NHL hockey team in the Hamilton and greater Toronto area in order to realize the economic advantages to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and to provide healthy competition to the existing Toronto NHL franchise.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of the member from Mississauga, Mr. Delaney. It reads as follows:

“Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to present this on behalf of the member from Mississauga, Bob Delaney.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: Now on behalf of the people of the great riding of Durham, I am presenting a petition. I

have thousands of these petitions on my desk, I might add, in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the municipality of Clarington passed resolution C-049-09 in support of Lakeridge Health Bowmanville; and

“Whereas area doctors, hospital staff and citizens have raised concerns that Bowmanville’s hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients ... outside the municipality; and

“Whereas Clarington is” indeed a recognized “growing community of over 80,000; and

“Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site services, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take all the necessary actions to fund our hospitals equally and fairly. And furthermore, we request that the clinical services plan of the Central East Local Health Integration Network address the need for the Bowmanville hospital to continue to offer a complete range of services appropriate for the growing community of Clarington.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this, and present this petition to Jackson, one of the pages here.

PENSION PLANS

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

“Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

“Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts”—they are their own money; “and

“Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

“Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

“Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member’s bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts.”

I encourage the Legislature to pass Bill 116 on its debate on May 7. I sign this petition because I'm in agreement with it, and I pass it to page Renée.

SALES TAX

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

"Implement a Sales Tax Holiday for Vehicle Sales"—how appropriate? It may even be in the budget.

"Whereas potential automobile customers in North America are having trouble accessing credit and loans; and

"Whereas the automotive industry is having difficulty selling vehicles" in a difficult economic climate;

"We, the undersigned, petition" the provincial government, in the next budget—and implement it today—to "implement a sales tax holiday on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and present it to the table.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and since this Legislature has not passed my bill since the last reading of this petition, I'd be glad to read it again.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts ... ; and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm in favour of this petition. I'm pleased to sign my name and pass it to my page Sarah.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very surprised that some of the members aren't taking advantage of petitioning on behalf of their constituents as Mr. Chudleigh and I are.

This petition is presented to me by Jack Logan, Laura O'Neill, Jim Park, Scott Mooney and a number of other people in the auto shipping field, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the recently passed Bill 41 with regards to speed limiters on heavy trucks was passed without considering the effect on traffic flow, safety concerns and interstate trucking; and

"Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour;

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

"That the Legislature suspend enforcement of the speed limiter law until the Legislature can review all studies conducted pertaining to the effect of this law and road safety concerns; and

"That the Ontario speed limiter law be amended from 105 kilometres per hour to 120 kilometres per hour to remove the increased risk of collisions on our highways and to prevent infringement on interstate trucking out of province and country."

There is one small caveat here. It's the inconsistency with the 100 kilometres per hour versus the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I remind all members that these are petitions, and petitions should be read as presented, with no editorializing by members.

There appearing to be no further petitions, pursuant to standing order 58(b), this House is recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1330 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2009

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Duncan has moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to deliver the budget. I just ask that you keep all the aisles clear as they're delivered.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'll have to wait for the official time count. I will inform the members next week if a new record was set.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise to present Ontario's 2009 budget.

Our province is in the middle of a global economic and financial storm.

L'Ontario traverse actuellement une tourmente économique et financière qui s'abat sur le monde entier.

Our communities are caught in it.

Many of our families and our friends are hurt by it.

No place in the world is immune from it.

We need to confront this challenge head-on, and together build a stronger future.

We know that only a strong and growing economy will create the new jobs of the 21st century.

Only a strong and growing economy will allow us to maintain and enhance our public services.

Only a strong and growing economy will help create a green society.

Only a strong and growing economy will yield a better quality of life for all of us.

Building a powerful Ontario economy is our top priority—so Ontario will act.

We are taking immediate steps to create jobs now and to prepare for future growth, future employment and future opportunity for all Ontarians.

For the past five years, the McGuinty government has been strengthening Ontario's economy by investing in the skills and education of our people, creating partnerships with business, making investments in research and innovation, cutting taxes for businesses and investing in the infrastructure that keeps our economy moving.

This five-point economic plan has led to a stronger economy that supports stronger public services.

We have higher test scores, smaller class sizes, more students graduating from high school—all of which helps create one of the most advanced and competitive workforces in the world.

We now have more doctors and more nurses and shorter wait times—giving us a competitive advantage over much of the world.

Working together, Ontario built an economy and a quality of life that are second to none.

Like other governments around the world, we have seen a serious deterioration in our fiscal position since last fall, caused by the biggest downturn in the global economy since the 1930s.

This has been accelerated by the devastating impact of the financial meltdown in the United States, our largest market.

Simply put, American consumers and businesses are not purchasing as many Ontario goods and services as they used to.

Devastating job losses are hitting many Ontario families hard.

In my hometown, Windsor, I have witnessed, first-hand, friends and neighbours cope with job loss.

I know I speak for all members of this assembly when I say that these are not just statistics.

When a family suffers a job loss or when a business closes, it affects all Ontarians.

And while no single industry or no individual government is responsible for this global crisis, each of us has an absolute responsibility to act.

The global crisis has reduced our government's revenues significantly.

For 2008-09, Ontario forecasts a deficit of \$3.9 billion. This deficit reflects a \$3.5-billion decline in revenue since the 2008 budget, with more than \$2.6 billion happening just since last fall.

Every private-sector forecast sees further contraction for the Ontario economy in 2009.

An economic decline of this nature and of this global magnitude, plus the need for an aggressive stimulus plan, means that we now project a deficit of \$14.1 billion for 2009-10.

History has shown that governments cannot simply spend their way out of recession.

Returning Ontario to a balanced budget will take time, and it will require difficult decisions.

As we move back to balance, our government will be guided by a number of principles.

First, assumptions about expenditures will be cautious, prudent and transparent. We will provide quarterly updates to the public.

Second, our government will reduce the size of the deficit in each subsequent year to this. In 2009-10, we will ensure that Ontario's relative deficit and debt are in line with most other provinces and our own historical performance. The 2009-10 deficit-to-GDP ratio, deficit-to-revenue ratio and debt-to-GDP ratio are in line with Canada today and below the United States now, as well as Ontario in the 1990s.

Third, our government will control expenditures in a balanced and comprehensive way to protect and deliver services more efficiently. Going forward, the rate of growth in government expenditures will be contingent on growth in the economy. For the past five years, our government has worked hard to keep that rate of growth and expenditure below the rate of growth in revenue.

For the year just ending, total tax revenues declined and will likely do the same in the coming year. In the years ahead, even the most optimistic forecasts do not project revenue growth to resume at the pace it did from 2005 through 2008.

Today, our government is introducing a number of restraint measures to build on our previous efforts.

This budget proposes that MPPs lead by example and that our pay be frozen for a year.

Our government is also planning to make OntarioBuys mandatory and permanent. This program will require our hospitals, our schools and broader public-sector partners to leverage their buying power and save money on the products and services that they buy.

1610

Finally, our government will become more efficient by reducing the size of the Ontario public service by 5% over the next three years through attrition and other measures.

The final principle that will guide us as we return to balance is equity.

All Ontarians must have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Ontario's strength comes from its people and so we need to ensure that all Ontarians can participate to the fullest in the new economy.

To confront the current economic challenge, our government has designed a stimulus package that creates jobs today and enhances Ontario's future competitiveness.

Pour relever le défi économique actuel, notre gouvernement a élaboré un ensemble de mesures de stimulation visant à créer des emplois aujourd'hui et à accroître la compétitivité future de l'Ontario.

Today's budget commits \$32.5 billion over the next two years for new infrastructure that will support more than 300,000 new jobs.

This budget increases training support for the unemployed right now.

In addition to creating more than 100,000 summer jobs for students, we will expand training and literacy programs and propose to make the apprenticeship training tax credit the most generous in Canada.

At the same time, we recognize that average federal benefits for unemployed Ontarians are more than \$4,000 a year less than in other provinces.

Ontarians demand their fair share of employment insurance benefits from the federal government so that the people of this province are treated the same as people right across Canada.

We are taking immediate steps to help manufacturing and small business. For example, we are extending the writeoff for new machinery and equipment and providing a 100% writeoff for new computers.

This budget also provides assistance to the agricultural sector and to northern communities, with investments to improve infrastructure, and supports the forest products and mining sectors with initiatives to help increase our exports.

Our budget will create jobs now all around Ontario.

Notre budget créera des emplois maintenant aux quatre coins de l'Ontario.

The next task we have is to ensure that we are ready for the jobs of tomorrow.

Ontario's economy must become even more competitive, innovative and sustainable.

The Green Energy and Green Economy Act, if passed, will make it easier to bring renewable energy projects to life and, most importantly, would create some 50,000 new jobs in the first three years.

To take advantage of Ontario's emerging green economy, this budget proposes more than \$300 million in initiatives. These would include an emerging technologies fund; enhancing the innovation demonstration fund; a strategy to help prepare workers for tomorrow's green-collar jobs; and new research dollars to promote green economic development.

Innovation is the key to unlocking tomorrow's jobs.

To build research infrastructure and support things like life science research, green technologies applied research and genomics research, we will invest more than \$700 million.

We will also invest in our successful creative and entertainment sector, helping with tax credits and support for the digital media.

Ontario is open for innovation and Ontario is Open for Business.

Open for Business is our plan to make government faster and friendlier for families and businesses while at the same time protecting the safety of our communities.

Our plan is to reduce the regulatory burden by 25% over the next two years. We will continue to work towards a single securities regulator for Canada and promote the further development of Toronto as a global financial centre.

Ontario can only move forward when all of us move forward together.

The McGuinty government has launched a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty.

Today's economy makes the uphill trek to achieve that goal steeper and more rugged.

Accordingly, to ensure that each of us has the chance to reach his or her full potential, this budget proposes investments in people, children and families, in social housing, in social services and in low-income tax relief.

As announced last week by my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services, we are proposing to raise the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child, effective July 2009, fully two years ahead of schedule.

In addition, the government is proposing to increase social assistance rates by 2% in 2009-10. To help families, we have raised these rates by 11% since 2003.

The budget also provides improved funding for rent banks—which will help thousands of families stay in their homes.

To help build new homes and improve existing housing for families, seniors and persons with disabilities, the government plans to invest more than \$1 billion.

When we do return to growth, these investments will help ensure that every Ontarian has the opportunity to participate in the new economy.

As a government, as a province and as a people, our attention must turn to building the next generation of growth.

The generation of growth that will attract and create the jobs of the new economy.

The generation of growth that will preserve and enhance the public services that we all value.

The generation of growth that allows Ontario to better leverage its enormous advantages to the benefit of all our people.

Getting through the challenges that face us will not be easy.

Returning to the economy we had will not be enough to secure the future that we want.

To maintain and enhance the public services that Ontario needs, we must build that next generation of growth.

This will not be easy.

It will not happen overnight. It's going to take all of us, working together.

Ontarians have a great track record of success when we work together to build a better future for our children.

Our goal is a better future powered by a stronger economy. The next step we must take to get there is tax reform.

Specifically, today we propose three significant tax changes.

Nous proposons aujourd'hui trois importantes modifications fiscales.

First, a single value-added sales tax for Ontario.

Second, permanent personal tax relief and three direct payments to Ontarians as we transition to a single sales tax.

Third, comprehensive corporate tax reforms to permanently and significantly reduce business taxes for large and small enterprises across the province.

More than 130 countries have adopted a value-added tax. Every other country in the OECD, save the United States, has a value-added tax—as do four other Canadian provinces. It is the way modern, globally competitive jurisdictions do business.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, many experts, research groups and sector associations have called on us to reform our tax system and create a single provincial-federal sales tax.

Over the next 15 months, we plan to implement a single provincial-federal sales tax of 13%. The single tax would begin July 1, 2010.

1620

Let's be clear: Overall, provincial government revenue would not increase as a result of this reform package. In fact, government revenues will be reduced by \$2.3 billion over the next four years.

Let me also be clear: This reform package provides significant tax relief for Ontarians right across the board.

We need to take this step.

It is fundamental to building a powerful economy capable of supporting strong public services and a good quality of life for all of us.

During difficult times, Ontarians expect their governments to work together. This single tax is a result of the provincial and federal government working together to foster job creation and economic growth. To support this arrangement, the federal government is providing Ontario with \$4.3 billion over two years, as well as considerable flexibility in the construct of the single tax.

We know that for some items and for some people, it will mean price increases, and that is why we will help Ontario families with the transition to a single tax.

Today I'm introducing a \$10.6-billion package of tax relief for people that includes permanent personal tax cuts and direct payments to Ontarians.

We plan to cut the tax rate on Ontario's lowest tax bracket from 6.05% to 5.05%—a decrease of 17%.

This means Ontarians would pay less on the first \$36,848 of taxable income, and Ontarians with modest incomes will now pay the lowest income tax rate in Canada.

Ontario families earning less than \$80,000 a year would see an average 10% cut in their personal income tax.

In addition, to protect low- and middle-income families, the province would also introduce a permanent value-added sales tax credit of up to \$260 for every adult and child. This sales tax credit would be one of the most generous in Canada.

Taken together, these initiatives would provide average Ontarians, middle-class and lower-income Ontarians, with an ongoing, permanent tax reduction of more than \$2.3 billion per year.

In addition to this tax relief, we would exempt a variety of goods from the provincial portion of the single sales tax: children's clothing and footwear, all infant and child car seats, diapers, books and feminine hygiene products.

Finally, to help with the transition to a single sales tax, every eligible family in Ontario with an income below \$160,000 would receive three cheques from the provincial government totalling \$1,000. The first cheque would arrive in June 2010, the second just before Christmas that year, and the third in June 2011.

Single Ontarians earning less than \$80,000 a year would receive three cheques totalling \$300.

Competing in a globalized economy demands that Ontario businesses be more competitive than ever. We need our businesses to grow stronger and to hire more Ontarians.

The single tax would make Ontario more competitive and cut paperwork costs for businesses by more than \$500 million per year.

While our proposed single sales tax will do much to increase business productivity, we need to do much more.

And we will.

Small businesses are the backbone of this economy, so we propose an 18% cut to the corporate tax rate for small businesses effective July 1, 2010—taking that from 5.5% to 4.5%.

We will also eliminate the small business surtax. This clawback is a barrier to growth. Ontario will be the only jurisdiction in Canada to end this barrier to growing businesses, and we hope the others will follow with us.

We also propose to strengthen our businesses by reducing Ontario's corporate income tax rate.

Starting on July 1, 2010, Ontario's general corporate income tax rate would be reduced to 12%—a 14.3% reduction. The general rate would be reduced to 10% by 2013—which is a further 16.7% reduction.

Ontario's manufacturing and processing rate—which includes all manufacturers, as well as forestry, farming,

fishing and mining—will be reduced to 10% starting July 1 next year—a 16.7% cut in their taxes.

This unprecedented business tax reform will make Ontario businesses better able to compete and succeed in the global economy.

Once fully implemented, this reform would cut Ontario's tax rate on new business investment in half, making Ontario one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the industrialized world for new investment.

Overall, this is the most important tax reform we can make to inspire growth across all sectors and kick-start the rebuilding of our manufacturing and resource industries.

The result of this will be a stronger economy to spur job growth, create a green economy and provide us with quality public services as we come out of this global recession.

And make no mistake: We will come out of this recession bigger, better and stronger.

Finally, I need to address three key features of the single sales tax.

To support new housing, new homebuyers would receive a rebate on this tax on homes up to \$500,000.

To help ensure that our tourism sector has the resources it needs to attract more visitors and alleviate the impact of the single tax, we will also provide \$40 million annually for destination marketing to Ontario tourism regions, once they are established.

We will ensure that Ontario's municipalities, universities, colleges, schools, hospitals, charities and qualifying non-profit sectors will be kept fiscally whole.

This comprehensive tax package is simply the single most effective step we can take to create jobs in Ontario and position our economy for future growth.

The tax reforms proposed in this budget are an essential step towards a powerful Ontario economy—one that will thrive in the global economy.

This reform will help Ontario create the wealth we need to support the best publicly funded schools for our children and the best public health care for all of our families. It will help ensure that we have the strongest environmental protection for all our communities and the most compassionate support for our most vulnerable citizens.

Now is the right time do this.

Now is the right time to signal to Ontario businesses that they have a bright future.

Now is the right time to signal to the international investment community that Ontario is a great place to do business.

1630

Now is the right time to signal to Ontarians that stronger businesses will create more jobs—and more jobs help fund quality schools and quality hospitals.

This tax reform is a step we must take.

Infrastructure is important for jobs now, and it will increase our productivity over the long term.

It is not enough.

We need to go further.

We need to move forward.

And today, we are doing just that.

Speaker, after the recession of the mid-1890s, the harnessing of Ontario's rich water resources for hydro-electric power and the discovery of significant mineral resources helped create a new, more vital economy in this province.

After the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Ontario economy became more diversified and manufacturing grew exponentially after a long slump.

A Canada-wide recession hit Ontario in the early 1980s and Ontario bounced back faster than the other provinces—we saw GDP rise from recession levels in 1981 to 7.9% growth in 1984.

After the sharp recession in the early 1990s, Ontario entered a long era of solid economic growth and high employment.

Each generation of Ontarians has risen to the challenge of its day.

I am confident that our generation will rise to this challenge.

Because I am confident in Ontarians.

We have seen economic setbacks and, on every occasion, we have risen above them.

Once an outpost of a distant empire, Ontario has become one of the largest sub-national economies in the world.

The task of leading Ontario through this recession to the next generation of growth falls to all of us.

The task of ensuring that Ontario's children go further and reach higher falls to all of us.

The task of building a powerful Ontario economy falls to all of us.

We will take up that challenge confidently and with determination, just as those who came before us did.

Much is at stake.

We can do this.

Nous pouvons y arriver.

We have much going for us: We are diverse and strong in every meaningful way.

We have the skills. We have the expertise. We have the drive.

We can do this.

We're Ontario.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Parry Sound—Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, I seek consent to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009
LOI DE 2009 SUR
LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES**

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I've already given it, sir.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House.

All in favour, say "aye."

This House stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1635.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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

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Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
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Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziatti
Joyce Savoline
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Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
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Continued from back cover

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School	
Mr. Khalil Ramal	5667
Earth Hour	
Mr. Toby Barrett	5667
Great northern getaway	
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5667
Government and community services fair	
Ms. Laurel C. Broten.....	5667
Epilepsy	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5668
Ken Sharp	
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	5668
Steffi D	
Mr. Phil McNeely	5668

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Supply Act, 2009, Bill 161, Mr. Duncan / Loi de crédits de 2009, projet de loi 161, M. Duncan	
First reading agreed to.....	5669

MOTIONS

Appointment of House officers	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	5669
Motion agreed to	5669

Pension plans	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	5669
Professional hockey franchise	
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5669
Hospital funding	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5670
Hospital funding	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5670
Pension plans	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	5670
Sales tax	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5671
Pension plans	
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	5671
Road safety	
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5671

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

2009 Ontario Budget / Budget de l'Ontario de 2009	
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	5671
Debate adjourned	5675

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Budget Measures Act, 2009, Bill 162, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2009 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 162, M. Duncan	
First reading agreed to.....	5676

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 26 March 2009 / Jeudi 26 mars 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, 2009, Bill 155, Mr. Bentley / Loi de 2009 sur le recouvrement du montant des dommages et du coût des soins de santé imputables au tabac, projet de loi 155, M. Bentley

Mr. Peter Shurman	5647
Mme France Gélinas	5650
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5650
Mr. Michael Prue	5650
Mr. Peter Shurman	5651
Mme France Gélinas	5651
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5653
Mr. Michael Prue	5654
Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	5654
Mme France Gélinas	5654
Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5655
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5656

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Michael Gravelle	5657
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5657
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	5657

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	5657
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5657

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	5657
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5658

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5658
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5658

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	5659
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5659

Taxation

Mr. Frank Klees	5659
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5660

Protection for workers

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5660
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	5660

Youth correctional facilities

Mr. Bill Mauro	5660
Hon. Deborah Matthews	5661

Ontario budget

Mr. Ted Arnott	5661
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5661

Home care

Mme France Gélinas	5661
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5662

Clean technology

Mrs. Laura Albanese	5662
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	5662

Taxation

Mr. Frank Klees	5663
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5663

Protection for workers

Mr. Paul Miller.....	5663
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	5663

Volunteers

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....	5664
Hon. Michael Chan	5664

Taxation

Mr. Norm Miller.....	5664
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5664

Trillium drug program

Mme France Gélinas	5665
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5665

Waste management

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5665
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5665

Taxation

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5666
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	5666

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Autism treatment

Mr. Randy Hillier	5666
-------------------------	------

Snowmobiling

Mr. Joe Dickson	5666
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Continued on inside back cover