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Monday 30 March 2009

Lundi 30 mars 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 March 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 mars 2009

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Dave Levac: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: On February 17, I made a statement in the House about Mary Welsh, who was the recipient of the Order of Ontario, and I need to correct the record. In that speech, I inadvertently referenced the four people as the nominators, and I have to make sure that it's understood that the four people who were named in the statement were supporters and wrote letters of support. Cheryl Corke, along with Lois Chowhan, were the actual nominators, and I wanted to correct that record. I hope I did not offend anybody; I had inadvertently missed those other two names. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Simcoe–Grey and page Lisa Di Vona, we would like to welcome her mother, Josie Di Vona, and her grandmother Pierina Gianetti, both sitting in the west members' gallery today. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Ahsan Shahzad: his mother, Kausar; his father, Shahzad Hussain; his brother Anas; his brother Rafeh; his friend Fayyaz Akram; his friend Khurram Makhdoom Pasha; his teacher, Marilyn Wyatt; another teacher, Brenda Potts; another teacher, Lee Roe-Etter; another teacher, Mrs. Snyder; and her friend Paul Chabot, sitting in the public gallery and the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery Mr. Geoffrey Kelley, a member of the National Assembly of Quebec. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

And a special welcome to a group of guests of mine visiting the Legislature today, they are from the Golden K Kiwanis Club in St. Thomas, and other members and friends who are with them. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, including a number of former teachers of mine. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sure it might be a point of order that I was a

bit late to introduce two guests from London in the east gallery: Lucy Shilton and Zack Shilton. Welcome.

ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Wednesday, March 25, 2009, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, having given proper notice, rose on a question of privilege concerning budget secrecy and a separate but related question of privilege concerning access to the legislative chamber. The government House leader, Ms. Smith, the member from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson, and the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Mr. Klees, responded to those concerns.

According to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the government had been deliberately releasing budget information outside the House in the days leading up to the budget in contravention of the parliamentary convention of budget secrecy. The member referred to submissions that were made on a question of privilege concerning budget secrecy in 1983. In the ensuing May 9, 1983, ruling, at pages 37 to 39 of the Journals for that day, Speaker Turner found that, "Budget secrecy is a political convention, as is the practice that the Treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege." The Speaker went on to add that the "disclosure of information relating to the budget has to do with the conduct of a minister of the crown in the performance of his ministerial duties." The Speaker found that ministerial conduct is addressed through other avenues and remedies, but that parliamentary privilege is not one of these avenues. In his Magna budget ruling of May 8, 2003, at page 47 of the Journals for that day, Speaker Carr accepted the thrust of Speaker Turner's ruling.

I also note that on March 20, 2008, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills raised a question of privilege concerning a newspaper article that contained information about the forthcoming budget. In ruling that possible disclosure of budget contents cannot amount to a breach of members' privileges, I made the following remarks at page 2 of the Votes and Proceedings from March 25, 2008:

"A successful question of privilege must convince the Speaker that the peculiar rights that are accorded to members of Parliament to permit them to discharge their parliamentary duties have in some way been violated. These rights are extremely narrow and specific—for in-

stance, the right to speak freely in this place; or to attend here without obstruction. They relate to the member's functions in the chamber."

The absence of the necessary connection between the incidents in question and a member's parliamentary duties is as compelling in the case at hand as it was a year ago. For these reasons, the prima facie case of privilege has not been established with respect to the matter of budget secrecy.

However, I do not want members to be left with the impression that there is nothing to the concern raised by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. In my 2008 ruling, I indicated that it "is undoubtedly at minimum a matter of courtesy and respect for this institution that all important announcements be made here first."

To this, let me add that I've heard many members on both sides of this House lament the erosion of public interest in and consciousness of the work of members and this chamber. It behooves the government to give careful reflection as to whether staged pre-budget media events outside the House contribute to that erosion. Ours is a representative system of democracy. When the members of this House are treated with indifference, so too are the citizens they represent.

As for the member's concern about his inability to access the chamber, and in particular the papers in his chamber desk, it is clear from the member's submission that he was seeking access to the chamber well after the House had adjourned for the day, not for the purpose of attending a sitting of the House. In other words, this is not a case where the member was obstructed or interfered with in the performance of his parliamentary duties, or where he was being prevented from physically accessing a sitting of the House.

Moreover, the chamber has often been the venue of government preparations in advance of budget day, regardless of which party has formed the government of the day. Of course, such non-legislative functions could only be scheduled for times when the House is not actually sitting. In the case at hand, the scheduling of the use of the chamber for non-legislative purposes on Tuesday evening, after the House was adjourned for the day, was consistent with similar courtesies that the Office of the Assembly has offered to past government officials preparing for the budget. For these reasons, I find that a prima facie case of privilege has not been established in the matter of access to the chamber.

1040

Let me add, however, that there is no reason why the member could not have requested the assembly's security staff to retrieve the papers from his desk in the circumstances he described. To this end, I have confirmed with the Sergeant-at-Arms that his staff can and will, upon request by a member, retrieve a member's papers from his or her chamber desk as expeditiously as circumstances permit, even when the chamber has been properly scheduled for an after-hours event. I believe the security officer in this circumstance acted according to that protocol.

I thank the member for Wellington-Halton Hills for raising and speaking to both matters, and the government House leader, the member for Timmins-James Bay and the member for Newmarket-Aurora for their helpful submissions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Last Thursday's budget confirmed that Premier McGuinty is the undisputed champion of serial promise-breakers, with unemployment at 8.7%, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians out of work, and hard-working families just hanging on day to day. I'm only going to focus on one component of your tax grab in this question, one component that impacts virtually everyone—people on fixed incomes, seniors, the unemployed, small business—and that is your 8% tax hike on gasoline.

Premier, how can you in good conscience in the middle of a recession dramatically increase the cost of this basic need for all Ontarians, especially those struggling today to make ends meet?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and I look forward to the opportunity to debate this budget bill today and during the coming weeks and, indeed, months.

We're proud of our budget. We have worked long and hard to speak with Ontarians to get their best sense of where we need to go on this. We're absolutely convinced that we cannot adopt the status quo. The world is changing around us and we have to make some substantial changes here in the province of Ontario.

The single greatest consensus connected with what we might do to make ourselves more competitive so that we can strengthen this economy and have the capacity to create those good jobs and support good-quality public services was to be found in moving toward a single sales tax. That's why we're moving in that direction and that's why, at the same time, we've put in place tax measures that also benefit our families and individuals, and I'd be pleased to speak to those in more detail in the subsequent questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, I'm sure you noticed that I asked the Premier about a specific component of his budget, which he declined to respond to.

For those of us over 50 who remember buying gasoline by the gallon, I'll translate your gasoline tax grab into gallons: 32 cents a gallon at current prices. That's a mammoth tax hike in anybody's books except, apparently, yours and that of your comrade in arms, Bob Rae. Premier, what if you're someone commuting from Barrie or Durham to Toronto for work? What if you're a small businessman with two or three trucks, or an independent taxi operator?

You, Premier, are living in a taxpayer-subsidized bubble. Do you have any idea of the hardship you're imposing on struggling Ontarians with this unconscionable tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my colleague that 93% of Ontario taxpayers will be paying less as a result of this budget. We're going to have the lowest first tax bracket in all of Canada. Approximately 90,000 low-income taxpayers will no longer pay personal income tax. There is going to be a 30% average tax cut for families earning under \$25,000. A single parent earning \$25,000 and with one child is going to save over \$1,100 under our tax plan.

If you take a look at the comprehensive package, if you understand what our overriding objective is, which is to build both a more competitive and a more caring Ontario, I think Ontarians will come to the conclusion that we're being successful in both regards.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This serial promise-breaking Premier continues to insult the intelligence of Ontarians. Last June, Premier, you said it would be crazy for any government to increase taxes in the middle of a recession. In the 2007 election campaign, you, for the second time, promised Ontarians you wouldn't increase taxes. For the second time, you violated a sacred trust, blindsided the people of Ontario, and, according to today's Toronto Star, you even blindsided your own caucus by bringing in another massive tax grab. Premier, on gasoline tax alone: a tax on a tax—a huge increase that will hit hardest those who can least afford it. Why would you do this in the middle of a recession?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As you might imagine, I take issue on a number of scores here.

First of all, none of these tax measures take place for another 15 months. It may be that the leader of the official opposition believes that we're going to be mired in a global recession at that point in time, but I have a different take on that.

As well, we are cutting taxes for Ontarians by \$10.6 billion, \$2.3 billion of which is permanent. And we're cutting taxes for our businesses by \$4.5 billion. This is a dramatic response to an extraordinary set of circumstances.

We recognize that there are difficult choices that we made in this budget—there will be a significant deficit—but we have to bring an extraordinary and a dramatic response to the circumstances before us. That's why we're cutting taxes for families; that's why we're cutting taxes for businesses. We want to strengthen the economy to ensure we have the capacity to support good-quality public services long into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think we can take his forecast with not just a grain of salt, but a block of salt. When General Motors announced some layoffs not too long ago, this is the same fellow who said, "It's just a

little contraction." Wasn't that what he said? And now we're supposed to take his prognostications in terms of when we're going to recover in this province.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier: The feelings expressed in newspapers across this province since Thursday show that no one is buying your weak defence of this massive tax grab. Just a few examples: "Poor being kicked while they are down," says the St. Catharines Standard; "The wrong time for a Liberal tax grab," says the Waterloo Record; "Taxman hits everything," says the London Free Press.

Premier, we have to wonder, are you hearing or even listening to the message from every corner of this province about your massive tax grab? Or do you intend to disregard the concerns of Ontarians and shove it down their throats no matter how loudly they protest?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's interesting to hear from my colleague. I assume that the Conservative Party is now taking a position that, after we proceed with the implementation of this single sales tax, after we flow transition funds to Ontario families, after we provide subsidies to our businesses to make the change, after they move from collecting two sales taxes to merely collecting the one, I understand that, I guess, as part of their platform, we're going to return to two sales taxes in the province of Ontario. Businesses need to be very clear on that front, that they're going to bring us back.

Just so we're clear, 130 countries have moved toward a single sales tax system. No jurisdiction has ever moved forward and then turned it back, but I understand we're going to be the exception here in Ontario. Notwithstanding the fact that we're going to move toward a single, modern, more efficient single sales tax, the Ontario Conservative Party is telling us they're going to roll that back and reimpose two sales taxes on Ontario businesses. You'd better confirm that now.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills isn't helping.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Perhaps the honourable member may want to ask a question later in question period.

Please continue.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Unlike the government side, we have respect for the intelligence of Ontario voters. We know that your platform will not be worth the paper it's written on, and you've proven that over two successive elections.

CI Financial of Canada says a harmonized sales tax will result in additional taxes being applied to investments, management services, mutual funds, segregated funds and other management investment accounts. Your proposed HST will take an additional \$500 million a year

from the savings of Ontario residents. You've already decimated seniors' life savings; your new tax on funeral services shows you're willing to go into any lengths to reach into their pockets, even when they're leaving this earth. Premier, what can you tell seniors, who built the foundation of this province, that once again you're doing everything you can to reach into their lifetime of hard-earned savings?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's a little confusing, because just a few days ago the leader of the official opposition said, "I think, in theory, our party is supportive of harmonization." Then he went on to say, "In principle, it's something we think should occur."

Just so we're clear on this: Our tax measures, over the course of the next four years, will cost the Ontario treasury \$2.3 billion. We are running a deficit, and a significant deficit, as part of a comprehensive package to stimulate the economy and to make our economy more competitive for the future. So we're making dramatic tax cuts, not only for businesses but for families. Those are permanent tax cuts. They're the kinds of things that we know, and I'm convinced the leader of the official opposition knows, need to be done so that we can have the capacity to support our public services.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Just for the record, like the Premier's promises, the people of Ontario can disregard what the Premier said about my position, because it's quite inaccurate. You would think the Premier would have learned by now about what happens when he disregards the families in this province. Just look at the Lord's Prayer, the young driver's bill and the York University strike. Premier, how many e-mails, phone calls, petitions, Facebook pages, letters to the editor and Twitters is it going to take for you to fully appreciate just how your tax grab is going to devastate the families of this province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Mike Colle: I withdraw the comment.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: He heard the question.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a fundamental difference of opinion in terms of what we need to do to strengthen the economy. The official opposition does not believe that we should move towards a single sales tax regime. I think that is a terrible mistake on their part, and I interpret from that they choose that we stand pat. We choose to take a stand. We're going to find a way forward.

What's happening in Ontario and what's happening in the world is big; it is very big. The world is changing; we need to make some changes here to our economy. The single most important thing that we can do to improve our capacity to maintain good-quality public services, to

ensure that we can support good schools and good health care and supports for our most vulnerable Ontarians, is to move forward with this comprehensive tax package, to move towards a single sales tax, to cut our business taxes and to cut taxes on our families. We've delayed the implementation for some 15 months and we've taken steps to ensure that families enjoy, over the long term, permanent tax cuts.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: On Thursday, Ontario women and men learned that they'll be paying 8% more: 8% more to fill up the gas tank to get to work, 8% more to heat their homes and pay their electricity bill, 8% more for their morning coffee and doughnut. When people are only worried about their jobs, why is this Premier adding 8% more to their bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we're cutting taxes for our families; 93% of Ontarians are going to enjoy a permanent tax cut. The leader of the NDP, I gather, is in the same camp, not philosophically but, like the leader of the official opposition, they prefer that today we do nothing. That's not an option for us. We have to do something.

Let me give you another good piece of news that I got this morning. George Cope, who's the CEO of Bell and BCE, said this morning: "As has been the experience in other provinces in which Bell operates, savings from a single sales tax structure will accelerate our investment in Ontario. Fewer dollars going towards taxes in 2010 mean more dollars—\$1.5 billion—that Bell will reinvest in our networks." That's \$1.5 billion; that's a lot of new jobs in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families were looking for a plan from this government to address the jobs crisis, but instead the Premier decided to cuddle up with Stephen Harper, striking a backroom deal with him. The impact on families is 8% more for the things that they buy every month, like gas and hydro.

Why did the Premier strike the backroom deal with Stephen Harper and hammer Ontario families with another 8% tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, again, I just don't see it the way my honourable colleague does. Our \$32.5-billion investment in infrastructure will create 300,000 jobs in the short term. I would love to have my honourable colleague tell us that in addition to supporting that, she commends our move to dramatically accelerate the Ontario child benefit from \$50 a month per child to \$92 per month per child. I would like to hear her support for the \$1.2-billion investment we are making in social and affordable housing. I would like to get her support for the \$260 new sales tax benefit for low-income families, children and adults alike. I would like to have her support on those particular aspects of the budget which speak to our desire to build not only a more competitive but a more caring Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Only six months ago, this government was handing out leaflets that said, "Fairness for Ontario." They were campaigning on fairness for Ontario. It's clear that the governments have now kissed and made up. Now you've kissed and made up, and you've ended that phony campaign. I think it's time the people in this province launched their own fairness campaign against the McGuinty and Harper governments for their unfair 8% tax hike.

When families in this province are worried about their jobs and their savings, why did the Premier strike a back-room deal with Stephen Harper to add an 8% tax on the price of everyday goods?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've worked hard to create exemptions for those items that are near and dear to families in their daily living, to make sure they're exempt from the provincial portion of the new sales tax.

I recognize that what we're proposing represents significant change. It is dramatic change, but it is absolutely essential that we put in place a modern, efficient and competitive tax model. We already have the most highly educated workforce in the western world. What we want to do in addition to that, to make ourselves competitive when it comes to securing international investment, is to make sure we have in place a competitive tax regime.

Now, my colleague says that we should do nothing. She thinks that the world from before the recession hit is still with us. It's no longer with us. We need to do something that is dramatic, that is progressive, that's—

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

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: It sounds like the higher sales tax is not the only thing that the Harper government and the McGuinty governments agree on. They also agree on lower minimum wages for workers. On Thursday, the budget reaffirmed the government's commitment to a \$10.25 minimum wage by March 31, 2010. Less than 24 hours later, the Premier said the 75-cent increase will depend on business conditions. Talk about a double whammy: Thursday an 8% sales tax on basic purchases, followed on Friday by a minimum-wage backtrack.

Why is the Premier backpedalling on a \$10.25 minimum wage?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. The fact is, it does call for some clarification on my part, and I take responsibility for muddying the waters.

I think when we talk about the minimum wage, we have to ask ourselves what it is that we owe both our workers and employers. I think clearly we owe them fairness. Our commitment was to get to \$10.25 an hour one year from now, and we will honour that commitment. It is fair to workers, as we try to recover from nine years of frozen minimum wages.

I think as well it is fair to our employers, given that in this budget we're reducing the corporate income tax, we're reducing the small-business corporate tax rate, we're eliminating the small-business clawback and we're moving towards a single sales tax. In those circumstances, it remains fair to Ontario employers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I've got to tell you, the last thing the people of Ontario needed, particularly the hard-working people of Ontario who are working for minimum wage, is a Premier who couldn't make up his mind as to whether or not they would get their raise.

While the Premier was flip-flopping around and musing about this raise, people were worried. People were very concerned. So now I need to ask the Premier, which Premier are they supposed to believe: the Premier who was musing a few days ago or the Premier who yet again made another promise today in this Legislature?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd ask Ontarians to look at what's going to happen tomorrow when the sixth increase in minimum wage takes effect. We go up to \$9.50. I'd ask them to take a look at what we've done with respect to the Ontario child benefit through this budget, increased from \$50 to \$92 per month per child. I'd ask them to take a look at the \$1.2-billion investment we're making in social housing. I'd ask them to take a look at the \$260 sales tax credit that we're putting in place to provide protection to our adults and children alike in the face of the new single sales tax, and the permanent tax cut. We will now have the lowest tax bracket in Canada for Ontarians at low-income levels. I think if they take a look at the big package, they'll see that we are, in fact, building a more caring Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thursday's budget really showed the McGuinty government's real priorities. Instead of the jobs plan that we were looking for, the Premier is tacking 8% more tax on the prices of everyday things in this province. Instead of a jobs plan, the Premier decided to hand out \$2 billion in corporate tax giveaways to corporations that don't need it. Then the Premier decided to muse about whether the lowest-paid workers in this province deserve an increase in their minimum wage.

What I want to know from this Premier is this: Instead of making families worry about their ability to get a minimum wage, why didn't he put on his priority list making sure that they have decent jobs and making sure that his priority is for the hard-working women and men of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, this budget is all about jobs. The \$32.5 billion that we invest—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They laugh; they laugh, but \$32.5 billion is devoted to infrastructure. That's going to create jobs in the short term. In addition to that, it's going to give us more schools, more hospitals, better roads, better public transit and the like. The purpose of moving ahead with a single sales tax is so that we have a more

competitive economy so that our businesses can create more jobs. The entire budget is about jobs, and I'd love to have the support of the honourable colleague opposite when it comes to that particular dimension of our budget. It's more jobs for more Ontarians.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier. Premier, your budget contained a record-breaking deficit and a massive increase in provincial debt. Working families and seniors have made enormous sacrifices, many, sadly, choosing between filling the grocery cart or paying the bills. They gave you, Premier, through their sacrifices an increase of some \$26 billion, and you spent it all.

It took from Confederation to 2002 to get provincial debt to \$111 billion. Premier, you're going to almost double it to \$200 billion in five short years. Isn't this a shocking failure in your leadership?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's interesting to hear from the member opposite. His government added \$48 billion to the provincial debt—\$48 billion in good times, in very good times. There is no doubt that governments around the world, the government of the United States, the government of Canada—the government of Alberta has gone from a surplus of \$8 billion last June to a deficit of \$1.4 billion now. There's no doubt, and we take this issue very seriously. Unlike the member opposite, we are going to invest in new jobs, 300,000 over the next two years, and we're doing this in difficult times.

There are difficult choices to be made. The member opposite and his party just one day say one thing, the next day say another thing. This government's taking action to build jobs, to grow this economy, and sir, we will make sure—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I never thought we'd see the return of Floyd Laughren to the Ontario Legislature, but here he is before us today. I refer the minister to his own budget papers, pages 144 and 145, Minister, where it shows that Dalton McGuinty took the provincial debt from just over \$100 billion to \$200 billion, despite record revenues coming into the treasury. You took every penny and you spent it and then some.

I say to the minister, how can you tell the children and grandchildren today how they are going to benefit when you've doubled the debt, through your irresponsible decisions, that they are going to have to pay through higher taxes down the road?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What they are going to get is good health care, good schools, a cleaner environment and more jobs going forward. What they won't get is a \$5.5-billion hidden deficit. What they won't get is a party that, in its pre-budget submission, says, "Tax reform like the federal government's recommending." They say that in their pre-budget submission, and then the day after the budget they say they are against it.

The leader of the third party—the interim leader of the second party says, "In principle, we support this." Well, in fact, here it is: It is a tax cut for 93% of Ontarians. The day before the budget, the second party said, "Cut corporate taxes; cut personal taxes." We've done that. Now they say they're going to vote—

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

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Premier. The North American auto industry is in a crisis. Reports are circulating that Washington has denied GM and Chrysler further funds and that the bankruptcy of the two companies can't be ruled out. High-level meetings are beginning in Washington and Detroit, but there is silence from the government of the jurisdiction that produces the largest number of vehicles in North America. Four hundred thousand good-paying jobs and the future of Ontario's economy are at stake. Where is the government's plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to the issue. I believe that President Obama will shortly be making an announcement in Washington. We have been working to work in concert with Washington, and I anticipate that, shortly thereafter, Ministers Bryant and Clement will be making an announcement in Ottawa so that we can move in lockstep with Washington to ensure that at all times we're acting to protect our proportionate share of the industry here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Paul Miller: New Democrats have outlined what is needed in Ontario: a made-for-Ontario auto strategy. We need public and worker representatives on the board of directors; we need an equity stake in companies that you own, that budgets say will be receiving billions of dollars in aid over the oncoming years; and most of all, we need iron-clad and product guarantees that will guarantee that billions in tax dollars create good-paying jobs that remain right here in Ontario.

I repeat: What is the government's plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague, and I don't doubt the sincerity of his interest in this, that prior to Christmas, the Prime Minister and I indicated that we would put together a \$4-billion package worth of funding to provide transitional support for the sector here in Canada. The industry has not had call upon those resources to this point in time. I believe that the announcement to be made later today will begin to speak to the industry need for that.

We are going to continue to find ways to work with both Washington and the sector here in Ontario to do everything we can to preserve it. People have traditionally talked about the Big Three. I've reminded them that it's not about the Big Three; it's about the big 400,000 workers and their families who are connected with this industry. It is very important to us and we are committed

to finding a way to stabilize it and to strengthen it here in Ontario.

POVERTY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, I've heard from families in my riding who are having a hard time making ends meet. They need more support to help provide for their children. Community organizations have repeated this call. For example, Neighbour to Neighbour, an organization on Hamilton Mountain that supports Hamiltonians in times of need, requires a strong government partner to help families through this recession. The proposed increase to the Ontario child benefit ahead of the scheduled timeline is an important step towards continuing this partnership by supporting Ontario families.

Can the minister please share more details about this announcement and how it will help families in my riding, especially those who are experiencing the economic downturn?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member for the great work she is doing.

The Ontario child benefit is the foundation of our poverty reduction strategy. Families received a down payment in July 2007 and began receiving their monthly cheques this past July.

We know the OCB is making a difference, but we also know that many families are facing challenging economic times and need more support. That's why our budget proposes to speed up the implementation of the Ontario child benefit by two years. Starting this July, it will be almost doubled, from maximum payments of \$600 per child to \$1,100 per child annually. That's an increase of \$500 per year for each child, helping parents to provide nutritious food or more stable housing or give their children the opportunity to participate in music lessons or play sports.

The increase to the OCB is just one of the ways—

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

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I appreciate the minister's response.

There has been a lot of talk recently about whether or not we can implement our poverty reduction strategy in the face of economic decline. The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, a multi-sector community organization dedicated to reducing poverty in Hamilton, has been a strong advocate for the reduction of child poverty by 25% in five years. It's essential that we take the steps outlined in the poverty reduction strategy to ensure Ontarians have our full support during these tough times.

Can the minister please tell this House what the proposed speeding-up of the Ontario child benefit means for the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy and whether the government is still committed to implementing the full strategy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're not just proceeding with the implementation of the poverty reduction strategy; we're accelerating it. The OCB is a huge part of our poverty reduction strategy, and our budget shows just how committed we are to implementing the strategy, especially in the face of tough economic times.

The proposed increase comes two full years ahead of schedule and will be followed up with another increase, to \$1,310 per child annually at full implementation. We've also taken action on other areas in the budget that were included in the strategy: \$3 million for community hubs; \$4.5 million for employment standards officers; \$35 million for the youth opportunities strategy; and over \$1.2 billion in partnership with the federal government for affordable housing.

With our 2009 budget we're showing just how committed we are to implementing the poverty reduction strategy to improve outcomes for all Ontarians and help them get through these tough times.

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. The centrepiece of the McGuinty budget is a \$2.3-billion tax grab that will hit every family in this province and every business. In these tough economic times, the last thing that families need is a tax increase and the last thing businesses need is an increase in the cost of doing business. His HST proposal misses the very point: Its intention is to simplify the tax system. What he's ended up with by trying to accommodate every lobby group is to put in place exemptions that will in fact give us a more complicated tax system.

Will the Premier agree that he made the wrong decision and will he agree to step down from this wrong-headed proposal and reverse himself in the same way that he did on the minimum wage?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so we can marvel at the twisting that's taking place there, the leader of the official opposition stood up and said, "We need to exempt gasoline." This member is now saying, "No; there's a problem with our single sales tax proposal because it's not pure enough and there are exemptions associated with it."

We have chosen some specific exemptions which we think are nearest and dearest and closest to the hearts of Ontario families. It's hard to figure out, not only from one day to the next but from one question to the next, where the Conservative Party stands with respect to sales tax reform in the province of Ontario. Are they in favour of exemptions that help families or not?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier makes my point. My point is that he has brought a system of taxation into this province that does not work. The fact that he now is wrestling to put in place exemptions here and exemptions there and paying off people with \$1,000 cheques—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: —and pay people \$1,000 to be quiet about this, thinking that they may not feel the effect until the next election, is fundamentally wrong. It's the wrong time and the wrong place for a tax hike on businesses and families in this province.

What I'm saying, the pure unadulterated response and answer, is back down on the implementation of the HST, get off the backs of business, get off the backs of families in this province.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're moving forward. The times call for us to demonstrate leadership. The times call for us to find a way forward. The world around us is changing, and what's happening out there is big. It is really big. It is a worldwide recession. It's having a profound impact not only in Ontario and Canada but indeed the world as a whole. We need to make some changes internal to our province. We're doing that through our new single sales tax regime.

I don't understand where my colleague is coming from. The fact is, it is supported by the chamber of commerce in Ontario, it is supported by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, it is supported by organizations like the C.D. Howe Institute and it is supported by dozens and dozens of economists and business organizations. They're telling us that this is the single most important thing we can do to help them create more jobs, to create more wealth, to support our schools and our hospitals.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. In 2007, Premier McGuinty was quoted in the Toronto Star saying, "Ontario needs minimum standards of care in nursing homes that give seniors the 'dignity and respect' they deserve." Yet the same year, the government passed Bill 140, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, that failed to set minimum standards of care. Everyone concerned about the absence of standards was told that their concerns would be addressed in the Sharkey report. Yet today, almost a year after Sharkey's report was released, we have not seen a single step towards establishing standards of care.

Can the Minister of Health explain to Ontario's seniors why his government has failed to put in place minimum standards of care in long-term-care homes?

Hon. David Caplan: I appreciate the question from the member opposite, because in fact this government is increasing capacity and making sure that our long-term-care residents get an appropriate level of care.

I am, and I know members on this side of the House are, committed to improving the quality of care for residents through the development of staffing plans, the involvement and collaboration of residents' families, staff and people who operate long-term-care homes. For the very first time in Ontario's history, we're bringing all of the partners to the table to enhance that care and improve the satisfaction. That is the essence of the recommen-

dations that Shirlee Sharkey, as the member referenced in her question, came forward with. Ms. Sharkey in her report found that there was no evidence to support a three-and-a-half-hour minimum standard of care as some of the employee groups have called for.

I know that Ms. Sharkey is working with an implementation group, which includes representatives right across the spectrum, to ensure the successful implementation of her—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are a few problems with the implementation group working on the Sharkey report. Today, four major health care unions that participated in Sharkey's report working group are withdrawing. They are frustrated that the process has gone nowhere.

Minister, Ontarians are wondering why the minister has chosen the route of endless study and meetings, when he could have implemented minimum standards of care two years ago and stood up for the well-being of Ontario's most vulnerable people. How does the minister justify dragging his heels when seniors are suffering?

Hon. David Caplan: I disagree completely with the member opposite. In fact, there have been significant quality improvements in long-term-care homes already. We're beginning to measure and report publicly health outcomes and satisfaction for the very first time through the Ontario Health Quality Council. We're working with our partners to implement the recommendations that Ms. Sharkey quite sagely made. We've introduced a new act, the Long-Term Care Homes Act, to deliver better care. In fact, the first wave of regulations is currently posted on the website to have public feedback and consultation. We've increased staff capacity in our homes. We have committed to adding 2,500 additional personal support workers and 2,000 more nurses. We've already raised the level of paid daily care to three and a quarter hours toward a standard the member asked for. In fact, we're rebuilding 35,000 beds over the next 10 years. That's more than half the homes in this province. Over—

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

1120

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, I believe that Ontario is a world leader when it comes to research. For example, just this month, we heard of the incredible breakthroughs that came as a result of the work of Dr. Andras Nagy and his discovery, turning human skin cells into stem cells.

I'm hearing from Guelph entrepreneurs and innovation leaders, such as John Kelly at MaRS Landing, that we can't stop investing now. Kelly recently stated in the Guelph Mercury: "It's our future. We can't rely on Industries that have served us so much in the past. We have to look forward. We have to make sure that people don't retrench, hold on to their cards and not invest in

innovation. It's a mistake to think that you can't invest in the future, even in these economically troubled times."

Minister, new venture capital is scarce right now due to global economic conditions. What is Ontario doing to ensure that there is sufficient capital—

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my good friend from Guelph for the question.

I agree with the advice that we received from our good friends in Guelph. This is no time to take our eye off the ball when it comes to innovation. That is why, in our recent budget, there was a commitment of over \$700 million of additional resources, as we drive our economy based on the creation of new ideas in Ontario that will create new Ontario jobs. And we need those jobs today more than ever.

I had the opportunity about 10 days ago to visit a firm called ecobee, joined by other small businesses. There is a lack of venture capital available, and we've taken a bold step, creating the new \$250-million emerging technologies fund. That will be matched by the private sector. That creates a new pool of capital, some \$500 million, to ensure that if you have a great idea in Ontario—that we are open for business, that we're willing to partner with you. If you're willing to take a risk, so are we—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: There's no doubt that there is a need for an injection of capital out in the marketplace. Minister, companies are saying this investment alone is not enough, however. Earlier this month, the National Post ran an article by Karen Mazurkewich entitled "High-Tech Ventures Feel Crunch: Stimulus Needed; Ontario's \$250M Fund Not Enough, Industry Warns." In the article she says, "Emerging high-tech firms are struggling ... stalled and starved for cash," and that "this group hasn't got much love from the province or venture capitalists of late."

To get investments flowing again, the government needs to wake the Ontario venture capital market and get these firms investing in new projects. Has the government been ignoring this sector? Does the government have a strategy to grow new, innovative companies and the venture capital market in Ontario? Minister, we need your help here.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Well, I want to say to all the readers of the National Post, \$855 million in the province of Ontario that is available today, compared to just 18 months ago. Not only is there the new \$250-million emerging technologies fund, which will be matched by the private sector at least dollar for dollar, creating half a billion dollars; there is as well the Ontario venture capital fund, some \$205 million, which has already started making investments in Ontario venture capital. We're particularly proud of Research in Motion and their creation of a new \$150-million BlackBerry Partners Fund. So, in the last 18 months alone in the province of Ontario, I can proudly say that there is at least another \$855

million worth of venture capital. It's exactly what our economy needs today to accelerate the growth.

We need to help create those new jobs that are coming out of the great ideas, the world-class, breakthrough ideas that are coming every—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Minister, the Mount St. Louis Moonstone ski resort employs between 350 and 400 people, and it has been a model for a family tourism enterprise since its founding 45 years ago. They've invested tens of millions of dollars and a lifetime of hard work creating a business that all Ontarians, I believe, should be proud of. They cater to families across Ontario and beyond.

Minister, the budget last week and the proposed harmonized tax will now add another \$4 to the price of each lift ticket. The owner of Mount St. Louis fears that this newest tax hike will drive families away in these very difficult economic times. Minister, can you inform the House today what you will do to ensure that there will be no loss of jobs or impact on businesses such as Mount St. Louis Moonstone as a result of your newest tax grab?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: I am very proud of the budget that we presented last Thursday. It strikes a perfect balance between assisting business people so that we can create the right environment and assisting families at the same time.

But the whole purpose of the budget is actually to create jobs. Especially for small businesses, the income taxes are going down by 18%. We are cutting the surtax on small businesses as well. In addition to that, the general income tax for other businesses is being decreased. We are also decreasing the business taxes on the manufacturing sector. This budget is very good for small businesses because it will help them to become more competitive in the marketplace and generate more jobs and keep—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Minister, and I'll make sure I take that answer back to the owners of Mount St. Louis Moonstone. Mr. Josl Huter is the owner of Mount St. Louis Moonstone ski resort and he says, "This is not the right time to add taxes. At this time, we're all scrambling. More and more people are unemployed. The dollar doesn't go as far. And now everything becomes more expensive."

Mr. Huter was building a successful business before a lot of people in this room were even born and has definitely paid his fair share of taxes. He also doesn't think the one-time \$1,000 rebate will ease the pain. He says, "A thousand dollars doesn't go that far. They're just talking to get it through."

Minister, again, how can you guarantee this particular company, and other companies like it, that this new Liberal tax grab will not impact tourism operators like Mount St. Louis Moonstone and add to the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have already lost their jobs under your Liberal regime?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What this budget really does is cut the taxes for small businesses. It makes them more competitive in the marketplace so that they can compete effectively. It cuts their income taxes, it cuts their surtax, it cuts their minimum tax, and it also gives them the transition funding so that they can deal with the single-tax issues. It has done everything that is possible to make sure that businesses, especially small businesses, become more competitive in the marketplace so they can generate jobs. The whole emphasis is to make businesses more competitive but at the same time generate more jobs. That is what this budget has done.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The lives of thousands of residents and business owners are being made unbearable by the earth-shaking clanging from new railbed construction in western Toronto, yet GO Transit refuses to implement ways to reduce the noise. When will the minister finally do something to get GO officials to address this unnecessary and unacceptable disruption of people's lives?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I want to say that both the provincial and federal members of Parliament for the area have drawn this to the attention of GO Transit on an ongoing basis. Certainly, for those who reside in the area, it is a very significant imposition. The member would know that from talking to her constituents.

GO Transit has been in constant consultation with the people in the area. They have been trying to explore other ways, I'm told, to undertake the work that they're undertaking at the present time. There are, I'm told, some technical problems with that because of the soil and the water table that is there. I know to the people who live there that doesn't make much of a difference, but I do know that GO is continuing to try to find ways to alleviate the grave concerns the people have and—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly that will be news to the residents because all they've heard is stonewalling from GO. There are ways to mitigate the noise made by driving so-called piles into the ground for railways, such as putting in place sheathing or augering the holes instead of pounding them. GO knows how to correct this problem, Mr. Minister; they're just not doing it. Will the minister demand that GO officials find a way to reduce the unacceptable noise levels?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard both from the member and from the federal member, Gerard Kennedy, that this is a major problem, and I think the people in the

area would agree. One of the challenges we have when we're trying to put public transit into place—or any transit into place—is that it's very difficult to do so without it being an imposition. I know they are making an effort to do so. I understand there is a high water table in this particular area and if drilling technology is used, the holes will collapse. When a piledriver is used, the steel sleeve being pounded into the ground remains in place, meaning no water can enter and collapse the hole created.

These are the facts, but having said that, I have already raised the concerns of the community with GO Transit, as I know the members have in the area, and I've asked them to look into other methods that might be available to them because I know the noise in that area is very loud for the people and a very great difficulty for the folks who reside in that area.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Health. Earlier this month Dr. Carol Herbert, the dean of the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Western Ontario, did an interview with the London Free Press. She said that the shortage of doctors we are facing today came as a result of decisions made in the 1990s. Back then, the government in power was facing tough economic times, so they thought in order to save some money they would reduce spaces at medical schools across the province of Ontario.

Minister, can you tell us what you are doing in order to make sure that people in Ontario are still able to study at medical schools, in order to save our medical system and provide enough doctors—

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

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for this very important question. I want to assure the House and every Ontarian who is looking for a family doctor that our government is not going to cut medical school space like the member for Welland did. I want to say that, in fact, we're doing just the opposite; we're creating more. In our 2009 budget, which the finance minister here spoke about on Thursday, we're committed to providing \$35 million to create an additional 100 medical school spaces. Since 2004, we've increased the number of first-year medical school spaces by some 160. When our investments are combined, our government will have increased access to first-year medical education by 38% since 2004.

Yes, these are tough economic times. But we know something that other governments in this province failed to recognize: No matter the economic climate, Ontarians need better access to doctors and family health care providers. They need quality care, and that's what they're going to receive under this government.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister, for your commitment to medical and health care in the province of Ontario.

Minister, I know your government and your ministry have taken a lot of good initiatives and steps in order to

reform medical health care in the province of Ontario. I know, for example, you created Health Care Connect, a new phone line to help link Ontarians to health care, but my constituents in London–Fanshawe and many people across Ontario are still concerned about how to find a doctor to connect with in order to get service and get treated. Can you assure this House and my constituents in London–Fanshawe that you are going to make sure everyone in Ontario is able to visit or connect with a family doctor?

Hon. David Caplan: Again, I want to thank the member for London–Fanshawe for the question and for being such an incredibly strong advocate for high-quality health care.

I'm so pleased to inform the House that 2008 was a record-setting year. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario issued nearly 3,500 certificates of registration in 2008. This is the highest number ever issued in a single year and a 6% increase over 2007. In addition, a recent study highlighted in the *Toronto Star* found that 22% of doctors graduating from McGill University choose to come here to Ontario; 27% of medical school grads from Memorial University and Dalhousie University did the same thing. In response to those numbers, the president of the Canadian Medical Association said, "Ontario is attractive; that's the conclusion we can make from those kinds of figures."

I'm proud of the steps that our government has taken to increase the number of doctors practising in Ontario and I'm going to keep working to ensure that we can—

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. The Ontario Bar Association has expressed serious concerns about the implications of tax harmonization for the cost of legal services for hard-working Ontarians. Mr. Jamie Trimble, president of the association, has written a letter to the Premier indicating that, "If, for instance, harmonization of the two taxes means that legal fees, formerly not subject to PST, become subject to PST, the overall cost of legal services will increase and create a further barrier in access to justice." Attorney General, why is your government making it even harder for Ontarians to have access to our justice system?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There are some very significant access-to-justice issues right now. It would be tempting to lay them at the feet of the GST, but they have accumulated over many years. We have a justice system that's too slow, has too many steps—many of which are adjournments—and is far too costly for too many Ontarians. That's why we brought in initiatives in the criminal, civil and family areas to speed it up, to get to the decision point faster, eliminate the unnecessary steps and make sure people have access to a justice system that works. For those who are vulnerable, who have no money, we are working to strengthen the legal aid system

and to make sure that all Ontarians, through our Justice Ontario initiative, have access to information about the system so they know what it looks like before they have to enter it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Trimble's letter makes a very compelling case for reconsideration of this ill-advised tax grab. He expresses concern that in "these economically troubled times Ontario will unfortunately see an increase in domestic violence, family and marriage breakdown and criminal activity, which puts increasing pressure on the justice system, the legal aid system and those people seeking representation from private practitioners." Attorney General, why is your government putting even greater stress on an already strained legal system and putting more vulnerable Ontarians at risk?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're in fact taking the opposite step. Access to justice for those who don't have a huge amount of money is enhanced by speeding up the system, taking out the unnecessary steps and removing the unnecessary paperwork. That decreases the overall cost of legal services. For those who need the legal aid plan, we have brought in three separate 5% increases to the tariff—the last increase of \$51 million just a few years ago.

It's very interesting to hear the member stand when she represents a party that campaigned on a 20% cut to legal aid, and they delivered. They almost bankrupted the legal aid system in 1996. The member can say no, but those of us who do legal aid work or did legal aid work know that they almost bankrupted the system. Their government had to be sued to pay the lawyers who delivered the services.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. After promising in this very Legislature, in the presence of Julie and John Craven, the grieving mother and grandfather of Jared Osidacz, that all the questions surrounding the 8-year-old boy's murder would be answered at the coroner's inquest, is this minister at all concerned about the report of the coroner's counsel screaming and yelling at Julie on the witness stand and, in her words, treating her like she was a criminal, when all she wants is for the truth to come out about the link between the domestic violence that she suffered from her then-husband and his eventual murder of their son?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Obviously, there is an inquest going on so we're not going to speak to the specifics. I can tell you, there isn't a person in this place or in Ontario that doesn't want that mother and that grandfather to get the answers that they're looking for.

I'm proud and happy, and I think we should all be very happy, that that inquest is now under way. The coroner has determined the direction of the inquest, and I look forward to the recommendations from that inquest.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It was supposed to be an inquest into the death of a child and not the farcical and shameful show of disrespect that it has become. A key report on the link between domestic violence and this murder was prepared on behalf of the coroner by Dr. Peter Jaffe, but it was hidden from the inquest jury. The inquest is so narrow in scope—you're so proud of it—that many of the Cravens' questions are not being answered. None of their witnesses are going to be called. I hope you're proud of that. The minister said he would support the Craven family by getting all their questions answered, but the opposite is happening.

1140

Will this minister use his powers, now, to launch a public inquiry, a stand-alone inquiry into Jared's murder and honour the promise he made to the family here in this very chamber?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: No, we're not going to order a public inquiry. We're going to allow the process to take place. We hope that the recommendations from that inquest will ensure that this type of circumstance never happens again. The coroner is in the best position to decide the parameters around that. That has taken place. The inquest is going on and I am confident—very confident, in fact—that at the end of this, the recommendations that will be made will ensure that these types of circumstances never happen again.

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, we hear a lot these days about the importance to First Nations communities of economic development. I know that this government is committed to improving the quality of life in aboriginal communities and in helping to close the socio-economic gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in Ontario. We all recognize that it is unacceptable for aboriginal people to have higher unemployment levels, earn less money and generally face greater economic challenges than do non-aboriginal people.

Minister, can you tell us about some of the things the Ontario government is doing to encourage economic development opportunities for aboriginal people?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs are working with First Nation and Metis communities, in concert with other ministries throughout our government, to promote economic development and sustainability for aboriginal people in Ontario. Our recently released budget is a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to provide economic opportunities for aboriginal people. For example, we have the \$250-million loan guarantee program which will support aboriginal participation in renewable energy projects. This is something long called for by very much-respected First Nation leaders such as National Chief Phil Fontaine and Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse.

This commitment, along with the elements of the Green Energy Act, will create partnership opportunities

for First Nation communities and businesses and ensure that aboriginal people will play an important role in the recovery of our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: I just noticed that North America's finest mayor is here: Mayor McCallion of Mississauga. Welcome, Mayor.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Dalton McGuinty has done it again. Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government have found a way to do the unthinkable, the unimaginable and the inconceivable.

Through the McGuinty tax grab in the 2009 budget, Premier Dalton McGuinty has found a way to tax the dead. That's right: Funerals will now be subjected to a harmonized tax. Starting on July 1, 2010, when you arrange a funeral for your loved one, you will be subjected to an additional 8% tax. A funeral service and burial here in Ontario can cost anywhere from \$10,000 and up, and now the Liberal government is asking the deceased and their grieving families to dig a little deeper when planning a final goodbye.

This is one of the many new things that Premier McGuinty has found to tax. Lawyers' fees to administer a last will and testament will be subjected to the McGuinty tax. Families using accountants to settle the estate will also be subjected to the new McGuinty tax. This new tax will also be charged on floral arrangements, catering and other funeral-related costs.

This McGuinty tax will affect seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians. Everyone in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario will pay more—and now the dead. How far will this Premier and his government go to tax the most vulnerable people in Ontario? To the end.

HOCKEY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to salute Dave Gatherum, a mainstay of the 1950s Fort William Hurricanes who played three memorable games for the 1953-54 Detroit Red Wings Stanley Cup champions. His son-in-law, John Rich, an old friend of mine, spoke about his remarkable story in a recent letter to the editor.

Dave Gatherum, who lives in Thunder Bay, received his Stanley Cup ring in February 2009—55 years later—thanks to gracious Red Wings owner Mike Ilitch.

Dave played his three games in October 1953, after an injury to the legendary Terry Sawchuk. In Dave's first NHL appearance in October 1953 he shut out the Maple

Leafs. His streak of 100 minutes, 21 seconds without allowing a goal is the longest shutout sequence of a goaltender from the start of their NHL career. Dave's stats for his career were two wins, one tie and a goals-against average of one.

The 1953-54 Red Wings championship team included Fort William products such as Hall of Famer Alex Delvecchio and "Jolly" Jack Adams, who in his coaching and managing career captured six Stanley Cups. Another Fort William native on that team was Benny Woit, who played five seasons for the Wings, capturing three titles, and was one of hockey's best body checkers ever.

I salute that great and classy hockey family of the Detroit Red Wings, the home of Hockeytown USA, as well as the home of Hockeytown Canada, formerly Fort William and Port Arthur and now Thunder Bay, which has produced many stars, including Trevor Johansen; Eric, Marc and Jordan Staal; Patrick Sharp; Alex Auld; Trevor Letowski; Taylor Pyatt; Katie Weatherston; Olympic gold medallist Hayley Irwin of the 2010 women's Olympic team; and also from northwestern Ontario, Ryan Parent and Mike Richards, with many more to come.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to tell members of the McGuinty government about the reaction I'm getting to their budget. My offices have been flooded with calls and e-mails from constituents who are absolutely frightened by this government's budget. The proposal to blend the federal and provincial sales taxes is sending shockwaves through the communities of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

For instance, Mr. Brown, who lives in Katrine, told me he can't afford to drive to Queen's Park to protest your government. He also told me that your harmonized sales tax means he won't be able to afford to stay in his home because he won't be able to afford the increased cost of home heating oil. By the way, he's not falling for your rebate, which he says would be a fraction of the actual costs he will face.

Another constituent writes: "In the news, they spoke of this magnanimous rebate of \$1,000. Yippee! It was also disclosed that on the average, this tax will cost the ratepayer an additional \$500 a year ... and I am sure that is based primarily on the people that live in the metropolitan areas. What will it cost us northerners, where to get a simple loaf of bread at the grocery store can easily cost \$10 in gas alone?"

The additional tax on fuel oil and gasoline alone will have a huge impact on the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka and those people in living in northern and rural areas. I ask the McGuinty government: How can you possibly justify this additional tax on gasoline and home heating oil?

PROTECTION OF WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise in the House today to call the McGuinty Liberals to account for the ongoing abuse

of foreign-trained nannies who work in Ontario. Nannies have been put in harm's way, denied OHIP, had their immigration status threatened and charged outrageous fees, all by unscrupulous agencies. The McGuinty government does not have to wait for the arduous passage or, most likely, non-passage of Mike Colle's bill, but through Bill 139, it could make the changes needed immediately. All the social service agencies that have deputed before the committee for Bill 139 have asked that "temporary" agencies be replaced with "employment" agencies. That simple change could curb most of the abuses.

The only question remaining is, with public pressure demanding action, why will McGuinty not act? We in the New Democratic Party want that action now, not in a private member's bill, but either through Bill 139 or by direct government intervention now.

VILLAGE OF WESTBORO

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The year 2009 marks the 30th anniversary of the Westboro Village Business Improvement Area, which has a mandate to improve, beautify and maintain the public lands and buildings within the community of Westboro, a vibrant community in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Its boundaries encompass Richmond Road from Island Park to Golden Avenue, including Danforth and Picton avenues. The BIA promotes the area as a shopping and business district.

Westboro village was initially founded in 1817 and settled intensely since 1852. It was a major centre of lumber production and at one time home to one of the largest steam sawmills in Canada. Westboro was formally amalgamated into the city of Ottawa in 1950 and is today a community that offers some of the best shopping the city has to offer. I'm very pleased to have my community office located within Westboro at the corner of Roosevelt and Richmond.

Westboro BIA encompasses over 100 businesses, the best in shopping, dining, arts and entertainment. The BIA undertakes many activities to promote local businesses and funds many charitable causes. Westfest, now in its sixth year, is one of the largest free music and cultural festivals in Ottawa. Located in Westboro, this is another great initiative of the BIA.

I want to congratulate the Westboro Village Business Improvement Area and its executive director, Elaina Martin, on 30 superb years and wish them many more.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: People in my riding want to know why this government is imposing new sales taxes on the real estate industry in the middle of a recession.

The Ontario Real Estate Association has estimated that the McGuinty sales tax increase will add about \$2,000 to the cost of a resale house priced at \$360,000. As well, new homes over \$400,000 will also be taxed. Home buyers and sellers will have to pay for more legal fees, moving costs, real estate commissions and home

inspection fees. Many home buyers will be priced out of the market. Especially hard hit will be first-time home buyers and lower-income home buyers.

Why does this government think that a higher tax on real estate is a good idea at any time, and certainly not in an economic downturn? Increasing the cost of housing will hurt everyone: homeowners, real estate agents, builders and all those businesses and workers that supply the housing industry.

The government must withdraw this foolish tax before it starts to kill jobs in real estate and construction, before it kills the dreams of thousands to own a home.

1310

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Dave Levac: On Tuesday, March 24, I had the privilege of greeting the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, the Honourable George Smitherman, in the riding of Brant. It was one of the many stops in the province as part of this hard-working minister's Green Energy and Green Economy Act tour. We discussed and discovered how the Green Energy Act would help create more than 50,000 private sector jobs in the next three years, promote conservation, promote investments and provide lots of opportunity for growth in green technology throughout Ontario.

During his visit, I had the opportunity to host the minister and to bring him to two of the many companies in my riding that have had much to offer in terms of green energy technology: R.J. Ecosafe Homes in Ohsweken, of the Six Nations territory; and the ProTerra LED factory in St. George. We had the opportunity to meet the president of R.J. Ecosafe Homes, which is a First Nations-owned operation with non-native partners, a company that manufactures affordable, safe and durable insulated-panel homes which are erected directly on-site. Being composed of a revolutionary insulated metal panel system and powered and heated in part by the rays of the sun, they are energy-efficient and are compatible with their beliefs of living in union with Mother Earth.

The minister was also enthusiastic to see the company ProTerra, which manufactures a 50-watt LED street lamp replacement bulb that is comparable to the currently used 250-watt mercury vapour bulbs. The president of ProTerra, John Johnston, stated he currently has 11 employees and that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

TAXATION

Mr. Rick Johnson: We read every day about the impact of the global financial crisis. We, on this side of the House, have risen to the occasion and responded with a bold tax reform package. The McGuinty Liberals' plan to build Ontario's future economy and improve the quality of life for all Ontarians includes tax relief for all

segments of society. This bold package will help build a stronger economy by cutting taxes for nine tenths of Ontarians, while providing additional targeted tax cuts to those who need it most by:

—offering \$4 billion in tax relief cash payments, with every family making under \$160,000 receiving \$1,000 and individuals receiving \$300 to help the transition to the new sales tax system;

—providing more than \$1.1 billion annually in broadly based personal income tax relief that would see 93% of Ontario taxpayers pay less personal income tax; and

—establishing the Ontario sales tax credit, which would provide timely annual tax relief of up to \$260 for each adult and child in low- and middle-income families, benefiting more than 2.9 million Ontario families.

These tax relief initiatives underscore our government's commitment to Ontario families and together will continue to work hard to help them through this uncertainty and building a strong economy and strong communities for all Ontarians.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to recognize the McGuinty government's commitment to improving the lives of all Ontarians, especially the most vulnerable citizens. The McGuinty Liberals recognize that giving each child the resources and stability they need to reach their full potential is the right thing to do for our society and for our economy.

We've recognized this need and responded by: (1) almost doubling the Ontario child benefit credit, up to \$1,100 a month for low- and middle-income families, beginning in July 2009—that's two years ahead of schedule; (2) investing \$35 million over two years in our youth opportunities strategy, which helps young people in high-risk neighbourhoods through the creation of key opportunities, including targeted funding for summer jobs; (3) partnering with the federal government to invest \$1.2 billion in Ontario's social housing infrastructure. This investment in new, affordable housing units and the repair of others will provide children with the stability they need to reach their full potential.

The McGuinty Liberals know that Ontario is at its best when we are working together. We are proud of these investments, and we will continue to work hard to help each child build the skills necessary to succeed in this province.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on hazardous waste management from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The committee reviewed the section of the Auditor General's report of November 2007 and May 2008. This report reflects the committee's recommendations with regard to that section of the auditor's report.

The recommendations hone in on the Auditor General's recognition that the waste management manifests and tracking of hazardous waste are not in order. The committee asks for reports from the ministry on promised improvements to the hazardous waste management system for our province.

It was felt by members of the committee that there is a lot of work to be done in this area. The committee will continue to hold the ministry's feet to the fire to ensure that the auditor's recommendations of his report are held up. With that, I will adjourn the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREATER TORONTO AND HAMILTON AREA TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO ET DE HAMILTON

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll make my statement during the time allocated for ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House to propose the next step to better serve the daily transportation needs

of the 5.5 million people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area with greatly expanded public transit. I'm introducing the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009, to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit and to put in place the tools for moving quickly as we take the regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service.

Regional transit is finally catching up with regional needs. Our government is acting decisively and with a sense of urgency to build regional transit projects faster and more cost-effectively. These projects would mean reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions to protect the environment and improve the quality of life for our families and communities. The visionary work of municipal leaders in shaping the regional transportation plan, appropriately titled the Big Move, is in step with our transit objectives for the most populated region in Ontario. We all want seamless transit, better service, quick commute times and cleaner air. These are gathering points for everyone, including our many stakeholders and important voices from the business community.

After years of underfunding and inaction by successive governments, the McGuinty government has put transit among its top priorities. Our commitment of \$11.5 billion in the regional transportation plan made Canadian history as the largest single commitment in public transit. This investment will strengthen our economy: 10,000 jobs are generated by every billion invested in public transit.

Since 2003, we have also invested an additional \$7.4 billion in transit, including more than \$2.5 billion in GO Transit.

1320

Leading Canadian economists have recently emphasized the high rate of economic return in infrastructure spending. They recognize that money for transit projects invigorates the economy and creates valuable assets that spur business growth and make life better. Our government is investing in infrastructure when our economy needs it most.

I'm also pleased to announce Robert Prichard as a transition adviser for the merger, and a transition advisory board to help bring the two organizations together. The transition advisory board will include Rob MacIsaac as chair and Peter Smith as vice-chair.

I would like to acknowledge some of our guests who have joined us here today in support of our proposed legislation, including Robert Prichard, Rob MacIsaac, Peter Smith and Mayor Hazel McCallion.

We want the new Metrolinx to have a board comprised of people with a range of professional and corporate experience, people with backgrounds in customer service, planning, law, and financing large capital projects. We decided on this type of board after examining how other large transit agencies around the world are structured. I also draw the attention of this House to the work of the current Metrolinx and GO Transit boards, whose work and contributions have been exemplary. I thank them most sincerely.

Our proposal would require the new Metrolinx to be guided by the regional transportation plan to ensure those projects in the plan are built expeditiously. Municipalities are crucial partners in this effort, and we will continue to work with them to knit together a regional transit network that will serve all their constituents most effectively.

The proposed legislation would also require Metrolinx to consult with all municipalities in the GTHA on any changes to the plan.

Our actions today bring the implementation of a regional transit and transportation network and our aspirations for the environment and our economy into sharper focus. I know our transit agenda is ambitious, but we cannot wait for the next generation to act. We look forward to working together with all our partners to make this happen and I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

PARALEGALS

PROFESSION DE PARAJURISTE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark over two years of successful paralegal regulation in the province of Ontario, and I want to take, at the outset, a moment to recognize the following people from the Law Society of Upper Canada in the members' gallery: treasurer Derry Millar; former treasurers Justice Frank Marrocco and Gavin MacKenzie; Paul Dray, the chair of the paralegal standing committee; and William Simpson, Stephen Parker, Margaret Louter, Brian Lawrie, Michelle Haigh, Julia Bass, Sheena Weir, Katherine Corrick, and the Honourable Doug Lewis, PC. Acknowledgment for them, too.

Avec l'adoption de la Loi de 2006 sur l'accès à la justice, notre province est devenue la première province canadienne à réglementer la profession de parajuriste pour protéger les utilisateurs de services juridiques et reconnaître les contributions des parajuristes au système de justice. En réglementant les parajuristes, nous avons donné aux consommateurs un choix de services juridiques qualifiés, tout en protégeant les gens qui obtiennent des services juridiques auprès de personnes qui ne sont pas des avocats.

Through the Access to Justice Act, 2006, this province was the first Canadian jurisdiction to regulate paralegals to benefit consumers of legal services and to recognize the contributions paralegals make to the justice system. By regulating paralegals, we have given consumers a choice in qualified legal services while protecting people who get legal advice from non-lawyers. In short, we've given people greater access to the system of justice.

We've also given the public increased confidence in the paralegal profession. Ontarians know that paralegals, like lawyers, doctors and teachers, are licensed, have insurance and the necessary education to provide the best service possible. Before regulation was in place, paralegals could provide legal services without receiving

training, carrying liability insurance or reporting to a public body that could investigate complaints against them. The McGuinty government believes that by regulating paralegals we have encouraged qualified, independent paralegals to continue to provide quality service to the public.

I have said many times in the past few months that justice is a trust we hold for the people of Ontario. It must work for all of the people in the province and be accessible to all. It makes sense to have different kinds of legal practitioners in our justice system. With paralegal regulation, we wanted to enhance access to justice for those Ontarians who cannot afford a lawyer, but we also wanted to ensure that consumers who use the services of paralegals are protected. Regulation has many benefits to both the public and the profession. It strikes a balance between consumer protection and access to justice; it strengthens the role of paralegals in Ontario.

Through the Access to Justice Act, 2006, our government designated the Law Society of Upper Canada as the body to oversee the regulation of paralegals. We believed it was best positioned to assume the role, as it had the experience and the ability to regulate professionals providing legal services. Today, I'm pleased to table a two-year follow-up report from the law society that assesses whether the law society's recommendations in its 2004 task force report on paralegal regulation had been followed. The report confirms that the 2004 recommendations have been closely adopted.

I'd like to thank the law society for their dedication and their hard work. I want to particularly acknowledge the paralegal standing committee for taking the lead and implementing paralegal regulation for the law society. Within the required timelines, the law society, through its paralegal standing committee, put together the necessary regulatory framework and infrastructure to oversee paralegals including an application process, education standards, rules of professional conduct, a licensing process, insurance requirements, a public directory, a complaints and disciplinary process and a compensation fund. Through the whole process, the law society managed to maintain communications with the paralegal community, offering support and encouraging them to transition from their present status to licensed paralegals.

In May 2008, the law society began issuing licences and since then, I'm very pleased to announce, more than 2,300 licences have been issued in this province. It's a good indication of the success of paralegal regulation under the Law Society of Upper Canada. The law society has made tremendous progress so far, and I am confident that it will continue to oversee the regulation of paralegals in the same professional and dedicated manner in which it put the regulatory system in place. We are the only Canadian jurisdiction that regulates paralegals. We're becoming an international leader by creating a system, along with training programs, for qualified paralegals. The law society is playing a key role in changing the scope of legal services in the province. I'd like to thank them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

PARALEGALS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to respond to the statement made by the Attorney General with respect to the regulation of paralegals on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

On October 19, 2006, the Access to Justice Act was passed by the Legislature and received royal assent, providing, among other matters, for the regulation of paralegals. The act required paralegals to receive training, carry liability insurance and report to a public body that could investigate complaints. The impetus for the act was the concern expressed by members of the public and by many paralegals about the unprofessional and unethical conduct of a few rogue members of their profession. I recall the hearings on Bill 14, the Access to Justice Act, very clearly because it was the first bill that I dealt with in my role as Attorney General critic following my election to this Legislature.

At that time, the Progressive Conservative caucus agreed with the principle of paralegal regulation, but expressed some concern about the Law Society of Upper Canada becoming the governing body. I'm pleased to say that those concerns have been allayed. In November 2006, the law society established a paralegal standing committee, the membership of which consisted of both paralegals and benchers—three lay benchers and five lawyer benchers appointed by the society with a non-lawyer majority.

Since their appointment, I understand that the members of the committee have worked long and hard to develop appropriate regulations, and on behalf of the PC caucus, I would like to thank the paralegal standing committee and the Law Society of Upper Canada for their tremendous service to the public.

1330

As for the McGuinty government, one has to wonder why this particular day was chosen to celebrate this occasion. Could it be because the Ontario Bar Association is sharply critical of their plan to harmonize the PST and the GST, which will result in a higher cost of legal services for hard-working Ontarians? This increased level of costs in an already stressed justice system will surely mean that more and more Ontarians will be denied access to justice. This announcement today is nothing more than a cynical attempt to distract Ontarians from the fact that access to legal services is becoming ever more remote in this province.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to respond on behalf of the PC caucus to the Minister of Transportation's announcement. It's not often in this House that I stand and agree with something that the minister has done, but I'm going to do that today. The reason I'm going to do that today is that what he's doing in this act is something that I

actually called for when we debated the original act, because central to it is the fact that, as much as I have the highest regard for elected officials, being one myself, I believe that this board should in fact have exclusively professionals who know what they're doing when it comes to planning important things such as transit and transportation. This proposal does exactly that.

I want to point out, Minister—and I don't want to totally deflate the minister, although I probably should. I agree with his comment as well when he said that the commitment of \$11.5 billion in the regional transportation plan made Canadian history as the largest single commitment to public transit. He's right: It did make Canadian history when he announced it. What the minister will know is that not one single dollar of that \$11.5-billion announcement has gone out of the Ministry of Transportation—not a single dollar.

Minister, you shake your head. I had a wonderful meeting with your staff this morning, who briefed me on this bill. I asked them this question: "Of the \$11.5 billion that was announced under this plan, how many dollars have gone out?" They said, "None." They did say there was about \$700 million that was transferred out and put into transportation, but not of the \$11.5 billion. So we have lots to look forward to, Minister, and often the devil is in the details. I made some suggestions to staff about some of the concerns that I have and I'm sure that we'll have an opportunity to work that out.

Let me say, in conclusion, on behalf of our caucus I want to thank the members of the current board of GO and the current board of Metrolinx and the leadership of both boards for their service to this province and the very selfless act of stepping aside in favour of the new board that will be appointed. I know that they will continue to support that good work. Transportation and transit is without question a priority for this province, and we want to ensure that the right thing is done. I believe this is a step in the right direction.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all I have to say, don't break out the champagne. What can I say, Minister? I look at the bill. I know that we have huge demands in this community, huge needs for action on rapid transit. Everyone is aware of the gridlock that is paralyzing the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas and everyone is aware of the air pollution that kills thousands of people a year. What we see today is a bill that will not deal with one of the fundamental problems, and that's the problem of money. There's no question that the Metrolinx regional transportation plan is slated to cost \$55 billion. There's no indication where that money will come from, and frankly, we won't even know for a number of years.

The McGuinty government announced \$11.6 billion for Move Ontario, but the money's not out the door. The government has announced a ream of new projects dependent on Ottawa kicking in. If you are standing on a GO platform somewhere waiting for a train, don't expect it to come faster based on this bill.

PARALEGALS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Access to justice, my foot. McGuinty jacks up already exorbitant legal fees by 8% and he calls that increasing or enhancing access to justice? This just doesn't cut it out there in the real world with real Ontarians.

In an unprecedented move, 12 Family Court judges in some of the busiest Family Courts in this province made a written submission to the social policy committee as it's considering Bill 133. These judges have pinpointed one of the most acute problems that we have in our justice system. Access? I'm afraid not. I'm quoting from their letter:

"Vast numbers of Family Court litigants are unable to retain lawyers to represent them. For the past number of years, legal services in our courts have been delivered primarily by per diem duty counsel.... Parties who by any calculation are 'the working poor' do not qualify for legal aid. They do not even qualify for duty counsel services. They are unrepresented."

And I insert here now that even if you do qualify for legal aid, there are precious few family lawyers who will take on family litigation with a legal aid certificate because of the cap on hours. I go back to the letter:

"Those people who do qualify for duty counsel services, (although not for legal aid) are represented by counsel who have inadequate time to interview them to ensure that their cases can be presented properly to the court. Duty counsel do not assist in the preparation of motions and affidavits. Duty counsel do not represent parties at motions or trials. Pleadings are drafted by volunteer law students or by self-represented parties, who have limited knowledge of the evidentiary requirements of relevance and reliability. Duty counsel do not maintain files. A party coming to court twice will likely see two different duty counsel. There is no continuity.

"The role of counsel, which is critical to a properly functioning legal system, is no longer being filled by retained lawyers who are bound by ethical duties not only to advance their client's interest, but also to ensure that relevant, admissible and reliable evidence is before the court in child custody cases. Parties must represent themselves."

Any judge will tell you, whether it's in our criminal courts, civil courts or Family Courts, that unrepresented parties put a great strain on the system. They are effectively the blockers for matters proceeding smoothly through the system. They take an inappropriate amount of a judge's time, because the judge has to exercise a role that goes beyond the mere neutral role of being an arbiter. And this government has done nothing to enhance access to legal representations, especially at the Family Court level, where the largest number of litigants seeking assistance are women with their children, who are victimized by being brutalized, who are victimized financially or who are suffering because of this government's minimum wage policy and being forced to work at sub-living-level-income jobs.

So this government has a long way to go before it can brag about any enhanced access to justice. This government has a long way to go before it can talk about justice at all for people in our criminal, family or civil court systems.

It raises the limits on Small Claims Court, but all that will do is bog down Small Claims Court with larger and larger pieces of litigation that add to the complexity of that court, and again, that push the unrepresented litigant aside.

Adequate funding for legal aid is right at the top; family law clinics across the province, especially in northern Ontario in those remote communities, where access to justice becomes even more difficult—I'm talking about places like at Peawanuck, Attawapiskat and those small, marginalized communities in the far north and the near north as well; and, I say to you, Attorney General, ensuring that there's adequate court staff, judges and spaces so that litigants can have their matters dealt with in a timely manner.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mrs. Mitchell assumes ballot item number 10 and Mr. Dhillon assumes ballot item number 54, and Mr. Brown assumes ballot item 15 and Mr. Crozier assumes ballot item 57.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity as well to wish the member from Toronto—Danforth, Peter Tabuns, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, Christine Elliott, and the member from Nepean—Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, a happy third anniversary. I hope you've enjoyed your past three years in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Burk's Falls health centre, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk's Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

1340

"Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

"Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing

demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk’s Falls health centre;

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

“That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk’s Falls health centre.”

I support this petition and give it to page Emily.

CEMETERIES

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage; and

“Whereas Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

“Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

“Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren.”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my signature to it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’m pleased to present this petition today to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario. I’m pleased as well that a number of friends of mine, including Andrew Durnford of Victoria Harbour and Rod Lundy, put this together on behalf of the citizens of Tay township.

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m signing this on behalf of these residents, and am pleased to do so.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I do have another petition, and this is from constituents from my riding, and it relates to my private member’s bill, Bill 149. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage; and

“Whereas Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province’s cultural heritage;

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

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of all of our vulnerable foreign workers.

“Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers” and nannies;

“Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

“Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

“Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

“Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

“We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law.”

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’m going to read these in today.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a

taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents, and I’ll pass it to Renée to bring to the table.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have another petition to stop the drive-by shootings that are occurring all over this country and province.

“Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

“Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are allowed to possess handguns;

“Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in cars driven in our communities;

“Whereas impounding cars and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing illegal guns on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56 ... entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities.”

I support the legislation, and I affix my name to the petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’m not sure where everybody is today with petitions. Usually I have a hard time getting up.

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to sign that on behalf of my constituents.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform

Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

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

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

1350

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

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

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

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario. Again it comes from my friends Andrew Durnford and Rod Lundy, who put this all together.

"Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

"The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down."

I'm pleased to sign that on behalf of my constituents and pass it to Michael to bring it to the table.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition from a lot of unemployed workers in my riding who are trying to get fairness for EI.

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

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

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

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in" Prince Edward Island or in New Brunswick or in Quebec or all the "other provinces and thus, unemployed are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to" do something about it and "press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I fully support Ontario's unemployed workers in their quest for EI fairness, and I affix my name to it.

WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This one's on the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, and it is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to sign this and pass it to Olivia to present to the table.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition in support of the great Canadian Tom Longboat.

"Whereas Tom Longboat, a proud son of the Onondaga Nation, was one of the most internationally celebrated athletes in Canadian history;

"Whereas Tom Longboat's record-breaking marathon runs made him a Canadian and international athletic superstar;

"Whereas Tom Longboat fought bravely for Canada in World War I and was wounded twice as he served his country;

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a proud symbol of the outstanding achievements and contributions of Canada's aboriginal people;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize June 4 as Tom Longboat Day in Ontario, so that we can ensure this legendary Canadian hero is not forgotten.”

I support all the people who are trying to recognize Tom Longboat, and I affix my name to the petition.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This will likely clean it up. It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to sign that on behalf of my constituents and give it to Victoria to present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for duelling petitions having expired, I call for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think this is probably more on a point of order. I believe we have unanimous consent to move forward a motion regarding speaking rotation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Do we have consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The motion is the following: that, notwithstanding the practice of rotation, the member for Pickering–Scarborough East be permitted to speak immediately following the mover of the motion for second reading of Bill 161.

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

Motion agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2009

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2009

Mr. Duguid, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ajax–Pickering—no. I’m having trouble today. Something Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I’m sure my friend from Ajax–Pickering will appreciate the acknowledgment in the Legislature this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for recognizing me and the deputy House leader.

I’m pleased to rise today in the Legislature to be able to speak to Bill 161, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009.

The Supply Act is one of those cornerstone acts in the Legislature, and it’s one that is proposed by the government. If passed, this bill would give the government the necessary authority, as any government needs, to finance the programs that it sets out, to fulfill the commitments that governments make and put the vision that a government has into practice. I’m certainly going to urge all members of the Legislature, when the debate concludes on Bill 161, to support it, because without the necessary spending authority, no government of any stripe would be able to meet its obligations to the people of Ontario. Thus, it’s one of those annual activities that are so crucially important to the functioning of the province of Ontario and its government.

The government’s interim spending authority for the fiscal year ending March 31 is provided through the interim appropriations act, 2008, and the supplementary interim appropriations act, 2008, pending the voting of supply and the enactment of the Supply Act. As a result, Bill 161 would repeal those two particular statutes. Without this authority, the government would be unable to make most of its scheduled and unscheduled payments and to implement the initiatives that exist within budgetary priorities.

As you know, this is the first piece of legislation that’s being debated subsequent to the minister introducing the 2009-10 budget just last Thursday, March 26, here in the Legislature. I want to share with the members of the Legislature, in a limited amount of time that’s being provided, the highlights of some of the plans that we have and have had to allow Ontario to grow yet stronger.

It’s no secret that Ontario, like most jurisdictions in the world, is feeling the impacts and the effects of an economic crisis. This is not news to anyone here, nor, frankly, is it news around the world. The impact on economic growth, jobs and investments is directly affecting this province’s individuals, its families, its communities and its businesses. Job losses have been hurting families. Communities have lost mills and factories, and our government revenues, our outlooks, have declined significantly compared to what we saw with the 2008-09 budget outlook. As a matter of fact, Speaker, you will have heard the Minister of Finance speak to this matter in the Legislature, talking about the revenue cycle stream sort of “falling off the cliff,” as I think was his phraseology in September of last year—a very dramatic turn of events at that point in time.

The challenge is significant, but it’s one that the people of Ontario will meet and they will overcome. We

will see the end of this economic cycle and look forward, then, to a much more positive outcome, and certainly our 2009-10 budget takes immediate steps to make Ontario more competitive, both now and in the future.

A strong, competitive economy helps families and businesses in this province take advantage of the next generation of growth that we all look so much forward to, while maintaining and enhancing the province's cherished public services, a hallmark of this government, in continued support of public service within the province of Ontario.

1400

Our plan undertakes initiatives in a variety of sectors, in communities, for families, that continue to face additional external challenges that have been well spoken of by many in the Legislature over the past number of months.

The Premier is very fond of saying that for the economy to truly succeed, for Ontario to succeed, we need every Ontarian at their very best. There's no question about that. We need to put in place and continue to support policies that provide opportunity for every Ontarian. When each of us are at our best, then Ontario can be at its best.

Prudent planning allowed us to invest in the people of Ontario while we paid down some of the provincial debt and cut the cost of doing business within the province of Ontario.

Five years ago, the government was elected on its commitment to improve the public services throughout Ontario that we require to reach our full potential: public education, universal health care, modern infrastructure, support for vulnerable citizens within our communities—and to create a greener Ontario.

Between 2003 and 2008, the province experienced strong revenue growth. This period of growth and prosperity allowed our government to make much-needed investments in key public services. For five years, the government invested in these public services to help ensure that Ontarians do indeed reach their full potential. We managed spending prudently, not allowing average expenditure growth to exceed our revenue growth. We eliminated the hidden \$5.5-billion deficit left from the previous government, and our debt-to-GDP ratio is lower than when we came into office. Today, there are more teachers in our classrooms, there are more students in our colleges and universities, more families have a family doctor, and patients have shorter wait times for surgeries and other medical procedures.

It's important that we look back at the successes over the past five years to understand that the policies of the government, both past and current, improved the lives and the public services of Ontarians and have grown our economy. As we come out of this particular recessionary period, it's important to look back to understand what we've accomplished, to understand what we can look forward to in the future.

The Ontario child benefit is providing children who grow up in low- and middle-income families with a better

start in life. Our partnerships with cities and towns throughout this province are leading to infrastructure development across Ontario. We've invested in innovative companies, and we've cut business taxes. I can tell you it wasn't that long ago that the Premier was in my riding for an announcement regarding Purdue Pharma Canada and expenditures there in the pharmaceutical industry on new, innovative research opportunities.

Our government, though, saw that there were economic storm clouds on the horizon some time ago, and as a result, we laid a foundation in preparation for what has transpired. No one could have seen the depths to which the economy has changed, but certainly we were aware that there was change on the horizon. We are able to continue to support Ontarians because of the five-point economic plan that we put in place. The plan encourages growth and job creation through ongoing investments in skills and knowledge, infrastructure, partnerships, and lowering the costs of doing business here in Ontario.

Our government prepared for this economic storm by investing over \$18 billion in infrastructure over the last two years. As we look forward, as a result of this budgetary commitment, to expenditures beyond \$30 billion in infrastructure on a go-forward basis, certainly the \$18 billion worth of investment during the past two years is nothing to sneeze at. It laid out a framework for work that's actually going on today. This is not a matter of having shovel-ready projects that we might be able to start in the weeks and months ahead. These are projects that are currently underway here in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that the Durham consolidated courthouse in downtown Oshawa is one of those types of projects and, as it works its way to completion, has been an important economic stimulus within that region.

Shovels are in the ground now, and we created and sustained more than 85,000 jobs in 2007-08 and more than 100,000 jobs during the past economic year.

Our investments over the previous years will strengthen the long-term economic productivity, stimulating investment and job growth today, and moving us to a greener, more sustainable future here in Ontario.

In 2008, our budget proposed a number of tax cuts and regulatory reforms to reduce the costs for business and enhance the quality of life of Ontarians. Our government has invested in the people of Ontario so that Ontario can continue to compete.

Among the most significant investments we have time to speak to would be matters of investment in education, whether it's elementary schools, secondary schools or post-secondary educational investments. We have more students graduating from secondary school, we have smaller class sizes in the elementary system, and we have more students in both post-secondary and in graduate programs, which will stand us well into the future as we move through this economic cycle.

I said that I would be keeping my remarks short. I know that there are others in the Legislature who want to speak to this particular bill, and I know that later this afternoon we'll be hearing from the leader of the official

opposition in respect to his comments on the budget that we put forward. I'm sure that his comments will be received with mixed reviews within this Legislature. The supply bill, though, is important for us to ensure that the programs that I've mentioned are able to be fulfilled and carried out.

In conclusion, the Supply Act is an important act because it allows the business of government to continue. I hope, when the speeches conclude today on this bill, that all members of the House will find it within their means to be able to support Bill 161.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments on the supply bill and thank everyone for the opportunity to do so. Like my colleague who went just prior to me, I want to talk a little bit about the economy: where we've been in the past, where we're heading and the sort of problems we probably have in front of us.

One of the things that I'm curious about with the government is some of the excuses they like to use when it comes to deficits and surpluses and all those sorts of things. They continually relate to 2003 and the deficit they inherited halfway through the year. I believe it was \$5.6 billion; that's the number they continue to use, anyhow. Throughout that whole year and right through to today I have never, ever heard the government once acknowledge the fact that that was the same year as the blackout that we had here in the province, the SARS epidemic that hit and caused a tremendous loss of revenues to tourism, the mad cow disease etc. There were a lot of problems that year, and that was at the end of a time period when the former Progressive Conservative government had an economy in place that created a million jobs here in the province of Ontario. They'd never give us credit for that, ever, and they've never given us credit for the fact that there were a million jobs created under the Mike Harris regime.

However, when we look at the budget, the first thing out of the finance minister's mouth was the following:

"I rise to present Ontario's 2009 budget."

Ontario "is in the middle of a global economic and financial storm.

"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."

It's everybody's fault; it's the whole world's problem, then. Everybody is at fault; it's not one thing to do with Dalton McGuinty, not one thing to do with the Liberal government here in the province of Ontario. They're going to try to—no matter what happens over the next seven or eight years, you can be sure of one thing: It will not be Dalton McGuinty's fault, because he's trying to deflect it to everyone else that he possibly can.

One of the things that I think is important, because this is a bill that talks about government having money to pay its bills—we have to look at the past. From Confederation, 1867, through to 2003, the provincial debt grew

from zero to \$67 billion. From 2003 until 2009, the budget has now gone to \$109 billion in spending—not in revenues; in spending. That's an increase of \$42 billion. On top of that, the government plan calls for another \$38 billion to be added to the deficit as we move through to the year 2015-16. So if you add that together, \$42 billion and \$38 billion are \$80 billion. That's what the plan is. From 2003 to 2015-16, an \$80-billion increase in spending. Remember, we only went to \$67 billion from Confederation to 2003.

1410

I'm not sure how wisely the government spends its money. Like the former Bob Rae government, they think they can spend their way out of this economic downturn. Now that we're well into it, I wish them well. I can tell you one thing: This is our children's future we're spending right now. When you're giving out 3%, 4% and 5% pay increases per year, we're borrowing money from our children to pay for those increases. That's a bit of a worry to me because it seems to be a stimulus package for government spending in the budget, and I'm not 100% sure that the government is the best person to lead the attack on creating an economy to create jobs.

We don't have a lot of time to talk about this today, but I wanted to mention a number of things that are important to me. If we're going to try to spend our way out of this economic downturn and hopefully can recover by 2015-16 and get back to a balanced budget, I'm hoping there are a number of things that we can deal with. One of them is hospitals. I'll acknowledge that there has been money spent in the redevelopment of hospitals. Both the Progressive Conservative government and this government have put a lot of money into construction of facilities across the province of Ontario.

I'm happy with the redevelopment of the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in my riding. It's an exciting redevelopment of a hospital, with a big addition and a lot of repairs and improvements to the old section. However, already the administration staff and some of the board members have mentioned to me that they're very concerned about the deficit they'll face this year. They've had to sign accountability agreements with the local LHIN. I can tell you that, as we move forward, the LHIN only has so much money to divide up. It comes right back to the ministry. At this point, it is my understanding that they will be facing a substantial deficit.

Over the previous few years, at the end of every fiscal year there was always some money to help the hospitals. I believe there's 2.1% in the budget this year to assist the hospitals. It's my understanding that that won't be enough. A lot of the hospitals across the province—I believe that something like 70% of them are in a deficit position—will be in the position that you're going to have to either bail them out or we're going to see massive layoffs and a reduction in health care services across the province. We'll be watching that very carefully.

I also want to talk for a moment about community colleges. The community college system, of course, was established by Bill Davis over 40 years ago when he was

the Minister of Education. It's one of the finest community college systems we have in the world. I do know, and we mention it here all the time in the House, that it is a system that has the lowest per capita funding in our country. I've talked to a number of presidents and deans of some of the satellite campuses, not only Georgian College but other community colleges in our district, and most of them are facing deficit positions this year. Again, although we've got a lot of money in the budget and we tried to spend \$109 billion, there are very little increases for community colleges this year. There will be some issues facing them, as either they'll have to raise tuition rates or they'll have to get additional government assistance to carry forward.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, they'll have to raise tuition rates. There's no question about it. You should check it out with the presidents of your community colleges. I've checked with mine, and we've got problems—big problems—and they need to have substantial increases.

That takes us to something that's very important to me, because I have a strong advocate in my riding from the Midland Area Reading Council who has been pointing out to me for the last year or so the difficult position that a lot of the community-based literacy programs are in across the province of Ontario. As you know, we've seen a huge loss of manufacturing jobs here in Ontario, almost 300,000. Many of the people who are laid off or their jobs are gone forever—the plant relocates, goes bankrupt or whatever it may be—many people who lose their jobs find it very, very devastating to begin with. The first act of devastation is losing their job; the second is to find out they can't properly fill out a resumé for a future job.

I know that in the budget—I'll read what the budget says, and I'm hoping we can move forward on this: "In addition to creating more than 100,000 summer jobs for students this year, we will expand training and literacy programs and propose to make the apprenticeship training tax credit the most generous in Canada." That's before they dump on the federal government right below it, with the \$4,000 in unemployment insurance. But I was happy to see the word "literacy" at least mentioned in the budget, because I think it's an area that we have to spend a lot of extra time on. We can look at some of the programs that are run across the province.

I know that the boards of education and the community colleges also run literacy programs. However, the community-based programs have been basically frozen for the last 10 years. It was good to see the word "literacy" mentioned in the budget, and I'm asking all members of this House to ask the Minister of Finance or ask the government to move forward and to help the community-based programs.

They're not asking for the world. The program we have running out of Midland gets around \$60,000 a year, and the rest of it's basically run by volunteers to help people to learn how to read and write. It has been very successful, but the biggest problem we're finding now is

that more and more people are coming through the door almost each and every day because of their loss of jobs. They're not people who want to be laid off; these are people who want a job. Some of them have been working 20, 30 years. They want to have a job in their community and are finding that they lack some of the skills they need to proceed. They can't get those skills with the Second Career program, community college or school board until they pass a very basic literacy test up front.

We passed a resolution in this House a few weeks ago. Everyone supported it here, and I thank them for that. I hope we can move forward and actually prop this up fairly well with some funding that will help these community-based literacy programs right across our province. I believe there are 111 of them, and they are important to our communities and are important to a lot of people who I think right now are falling through the cracks.

There's one other thing I wanted to say about that. This estimated job creation of 100,000 summer jobs: I'm concerned about that. When we're seeing so many plants closing their doors, I just can't quite figure out where the 100,000 summer jobs will actually come from. I'm hoping that in our budget deliberations, which will start this afternoon, the government can point out when those programs will be released and when we can actually see some really strong programming put in place to show where those 100,000 jobs will come from.

As well, the Premier has said on a couple of occasions now that he expects the infrastructure funding or the deficit—what I should really say is the deficit that will be created because of the stimulus package. I'm wondering as well how those jobs will be created, because it's easy to say 300,000 jobs here or 50,000 jobs with the Green Energy Act, but I really don't have any idea and I haven't seen any indication or any data that would back up how that would be put in place and how the government will actually roll those jobs out.

I did want to say that as we go through the spending programs, I wanted to put a couple of things on the record. One of the things we've seen in our area—and I know the government, when they came into power, talked about never closing another school and all these sorts of things. We're seeing more pressure. I think this is the first time since the founding of our local school boards where we're not seeing where schools are going to expand, but we're actually seeing plans put in place by some of the school boards to close down some schools. I know in Orillia they're talking about closing down both Park Street Collegiate Institute and ODCVI and maybe building one new one. We're not sure where that's going at this point.

1420

I think we have to be really careful when we start closing these, particularly secondary schools, because as the province continues to grow, particularly in central Ontario, the GTA and western Ontario, it may be a terrible error to close some of those schools. Down the road, we could be looking at adding a number of porta-

bles to the new school and not really be accomplishing anything other than getting rid of a couple of fairly good schools.

Moving over to the infrastructure for a second, I know that we've had the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program put in place in the province of Ontario, I believe since about 1993. I think it was Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Bob Rae who put the original plans in place. Since then, we've had a lot of programs from all different parties and all different governments, both at the provincial and federal level. Some have been funded at 33%-33%-33% and others at 20%-20%-60%, that sort of thing. However, one of the things I'd recommend to the government—what I've seen happening in my own community and my own smaller townships is that we are seeing a problem with the water system users in the smaller municipalities. Their rates are much, much higher than in the municipalities with more water users. So it becomes a problem, and I'd like to see the government—and we'll work on it with our party, at least—work on some kind of a strategy where we can come up with a plan that will better help those.

I can tell you that I've read a few petitions in here today from the township of Tay. It's a township in the riding of Simcoe North. I can tell you that the water and sewer users in the township of Tay now pay \$1,620 a year. That's probably five times the rate of water use in the town of Midland or the town of Penetanguishene. I think it's \$300 for sewer and water there.

A lot of the people simply cannot afford these high water bills. They've followed all the recommendations of the government—the Clean Water Act, nutrient management in order to put that all in place. Now we're finding that people have to sell their houses because of these water and sewer rates. The township of Tay has only received one small grant, originally for one road, to put the water down, and it was something like \$600,000. They received no money under COMRIF for major expansions of the water and sewer system to accommodate the Clean Water Act and the other COMRIF programs that were available.

It's an issue that I think they've got a lot of background and a lot of data on, and they're trying to actually come up with a plan to submit to AMO. I'm hoping that, in the end, we as a Parliament can treat these small rural municipalities and their water and sewer users on a more fair basis. I think it's important that we move in that direction.

A couple of other things that I wanted to mention in the debate here today: where infrastructure money will be spent. If we're going to have this \$38-billion or \$40-billion, \$45-billion accumulated deficit, I'm hoping the money can be spent wisely in all areas across the province.

There are two things in Simcoe county that I think are extremely important at this time. One is the commitment made a couple years ago in the budget for the redevelopment of the Oak Ridge Facility at Penetanguishene's mental health centre. They've already divested from the

board. There's a new board working at the hospital now. I think they're doing a good job, and they have to move forward with the redevelopment and the infrastructure investment in it. It's not a cheap system. I believe it's something like \$300 million for this particular project, but they followed all the rules and met the divestment criteria, and as we move forward—in the next couple of years, I'm hoping—I'll be working with the ministries and the ministers to make sure that that money is on the table and those projects can go ahead.

I know that in the city of Barrie, which Minister Carroll represents, they also have the planned expansion of the Royal Victoria Hospital. It's a huge redevelopment and expansion of the RVH, with the Cancer Care Ontario unit. I think that everybody—not playing politics with it or being partisan about it—in the region wants it to move forward. We're all supportive of it, and I'm hoping that's another infrastructure project we can see.

I did talk very briefly today to the minister about economic development in the middle of central Ontario. One of the plans that we have in place that got turned down in the last Building Canada application was the expansion of the runways of the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport. I've talked to the minister and found out some of the reasons it was probably turned down, but we're hoping that with economic development—Barrie being one of the fastest-growing cities in the province—the use of better air service is a priority for that community and for the communities around it. I'm hoping that as we move forward, we can see the expansion of that runway as well.

This is all borrowed money; it's taxpayers' money that we'll be moving forward with, whether it's the mental health centre, the Royal Victoria Hospital or an airport, but they all require the government to pay special attention to them. As we move forward, I'll be looking forward to seeing those projects started in all these communities.

With that, I'll pass it over to the NDP. Obviously, we will be supporting the Supply Act today; however, we're very interested and very concerned about how tax dollars are being spent at our children's expense in the future.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to continue with this debate on the supply bill today. Like the previous speakers, I'll talk a little about what has happened in the past and also what faces us in the future, particularly in light of the budget bill that was introduced by the government on Thursday of last week.

One of the things I want to address is some of the events that have taken place in our province in recent years. Our government, when we were in office from 1995 to 2003, created an environment which allowed the private sector to create new jobs. We were fortunate to see, during that period of time, the creation of one million new jobs by the government, under the leadership of both Mike Harris and Ernie Eves.

Also, I want to set the record straight, because in 2003, when the Liberals were elected in the fall, they

indicated that there was a deficit of about \$5.6 billion. I just want to put on the record the fact that that was a projected deficit—that wasn't a real deficit—because, as we know, the number doesn't become real until March of the year. That deficit was based on the fact that during the summer and that past year, we had experienced events that were totally beyond the control of any government and of any political party.

Of course, that was the year of the lights going out throughout a great part of North America, over which we had absolutely no control.

The other issue was SARS. Of course, the government has recently been forced to deal with the whole issue of C. difficile, and I hope that it has brought them to a greater appreciation of the fact that we are going to be continuing, as we move forward, to find ourselves in situations where there are going to be health care costs involved as these superbugs continue to travel around the world, and unfortunately, create some chaos and some deaths.

I want to set the record straight. It was a projected deficit; it was not a deficit.

1430

However, thanks to the efforts of this government and the track record that they've had over the past number of years since 2003, we have seen a tremendous amount of reckless spending. We've seen spending beyond what the government was capable of absorbing, and so we have gone now—believe it or not—from having a balanced budget to where we last fall had a \$500-million deficit to where we will have next year a deficit of more than \$14 billion. In fact, it will be a record deficit in the year to come of \$14.1 billion. As my colleague has pointed out—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Not bigger than Bob Rae.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's beyond Bob Rae, who has now come full circle and has moved from the NDP ranks to the Liberal ranks and, I guess, brought his tactics with him. Maybe they're taking a lesson.

Anyway, Ontario's budget is going to top the \$100-billion mark for the first time and, as I said, this record deficit of \$14.1 billion. It's a huge change that we're seeing in the province of Ontario. I think we all acknowledge that there is certainly a tremendous amount of economic hardship, and it's being experienced not just in the province of Ontario but certainly in countries throughout the entire world. I think the difference between Ontario and some other provinces and other parts of the world is that this government in good times didn't save money for the bad times. As a result we now have this record deficit that we're looking at next year of \$14.1 billion.

On top of that, taxpayers in this province are being asked to pay even more. In fact, at this time when the economy is in a downturn and when people are suffering and finding it hard from day to day to make ends meet, when they are postponing making purchases of cars, renovations to their home, even enrolling their children in sports programs, buying clothes or postponing holidays,

they're now being asked to pay next year a 13% levy as they blend the provincial and federal sales taxes.

That is going to create a tremendous hardship because many items in this province, and I'm going to speak to some of them later, are now going to be taxed. That's going to be an additional 8%. Whether it's driving your car, whether it's the Internet, whether it's cable, whether it's a haircut, whether it's funeral services, whether it's legal services, it really doesn't matter. You're going to see more in the way of taxes, generally 8% more. That is going to create tremendous hardship. For people who are buying a new home, it is going to add thousands of dollars to homes that are over \$400,000.

Then the government is going to attempt to bribe people with their own money that they have paid in the form of additional taxes and is going to give them supposedly a thousand—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It seems to me I recall this morning during question period that the use of that word was asked to be withdrawn.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw that word. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

People are going to see the return of that thousand dollars which the government has taken from them in the first place. It's going to flow to them, starting next July, over the course of the next year, and the last instalment will occur just before the 2011 election. So in many respects, yes, people are being given this money back. I guess the government hopes that come the election, they will forget how much they have been forced to pay in the interim.

There are a lot of people who are concerned about the harmonization. The Canadian food and restaurant association has said that the Ontario government is making this "as painful as possible for the province's struggling foods service industry and its customers."

In fact, Stephanie Jones, the vice-president, says, "It's death by a thousand cuts for Ontario's restaurant operators. Our costs are going through the roof, sales are slowing dramatically, and this budget will only worsen the situation for food service operators and their customers."

The Kingston Whig-Standard, in talking about harmonization, says, "Not even audio books for the blind escaped the taxman yesterday."

Of course, the Ontario Real Estate Association says, "Now is not the time to be erecting barriers to home ownership. These additional taxes could price some homebuyers, especially first-time homebuyers, right out of the market."

Greg Pollock, the president and CEO of Advocis, says, "Consumers lose with the new proposed harmonized sales tax as it will now apply to mutual funds, segregated funds and other investment products. This additional tax on management fees will, in the end, reduce investors' net returns." He says, "Given the present circumstances in the markets, investment funds should have been exempt from an Ontario HST."

Of course, Susan Eng from CARP says, "Instead of exempting essential products like home heating fuel, the

government is leaving it to taxpayers to pressure businesses to pass through their savings. Increasing sales tax is no way to stimulate consumer spending and it in fact hurts those who have no choice but to spend on necessities," because the reality is that many of the necessities of life are now going to be taxed by this government.

The Social Planning Network of Ontario says they are deeply concerned "about the Ontario government's plan for harmonizing the PST and GST. Low-income people cannot afford to lose ground as cash is taken out of their pockets for increased taxes on things like gas and electricity, leaving them with less for food and other necessities."

So it doesn't appear that this harmonization of provincial and federal sales tax has been well received at this time in this province as we experienced an economic downturn and many people have lost their jobs and are afraid of losing jobs and are doing what they can in order to make ends meet. We are seeing here, basically, this government putting a tax on almost everything. We know it's going to drive up legal services, and it just has a far-reaching negative impact.

Of course, Kevin Gaudet of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation says, "The bottom line is, taxes and costs continue to go up and up in Ontario. It's going to be a huge tax hit, especially at a difficult time."

I think we also have to remember, if this deficit is going up to \$14.1 billion, that not only are we going to have to pay in the future in order to eliminate the deficit, but we're now also going to be paying more taxes in paying for the interest on the Premier's record deficit. The last time we saw a shortfall this large, of course, was when the NDP were in power. So, thanks to the McGuinty government, every person in Ontario is going to carry a piece of Ontario's debt worth about \$15,000 to \$16,000.

I think what's most regrettable, and now we have to reach back, is that this is a Premier who always said—when he was elected in the 2003 election and in 2007, he pledged as he was campaigning that, "I'm not going to raise your taxes." People believed him, and he's now broken that promise in at least two elections. We've certainly seen more than two tax increases. In fact, I remember that after 2003, I think he had broken promises about 50 times, and we stopped counting. But this is a Premier who, in 2003, said: "I won't raise your taxes," and he signed the taxpayer protection pledge. The pledge stated: "I, Dalton McGuinty... if my party is elected as the next government ... will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters and not run deficits. I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

Well, guess what? He did break his promise, and he introduced and imposed upon the people of this province the largest single tax hike in the history of this province in his very first budget of March 2004. He imposed the new health tax, and people are paying up to more than \$900 a year. He tried to tell people that this was necessary to balance the budget.

1440

To date, McGuinty's health tax has taken \$12.2 billion out of the pockets of families and businesses in this province. The tax revenue has grown from \$1.7 billion in 2004-05 to a projected \$2.8 billion in 2008-09, a 65% increase in only five years. At the same time, although people are paying more in the form of health taxes, they are losing access to health care services on a daily and weekly basis. In fact, hospitals in this province are in dire straits. They aren't going to be able to balance their budgets. There are approximately, depending on what day of the week it is, 70% of hospitals that have not been able to balance their budgets. We are seeing beds cut; we're seeing nurses fired; we're seeing services cut. There was an article in the paper today in Hamilton—physiotherapy clinics eliminated. Most hospitals today simply can't afford the outservice clinics, whether it's for physiotherapy, whether it's for asthma, and the list goes on and on. It is, of course, patients, people in the province of Ontario, who suffer.

But take a look at some of the health care services we're losing. St. Mary's hospital in my community announced that they would close 10 beds, three outpatient clinics, the osteoporosis clinic, the medical day clinic for rheumatoid arthritis patients and the physiotherapy program, and eliminate the equivalent of 17 full-time jobs to save \$1.6 million. The South Bruce Grey Health Centre announced that they would privatize physiotherapy services to decrease their deficit, and it would be a for-profit company taking over the services and patients would now be charged.

In addition, when I read Mr. Caplan's House book, it also stated that Deep River and District Hospital discontinued funding of their outpatient physio services in August 2008. In the same House book, it also says that the South Bruce Grey Health Centre Kincardine discontinued funding for outpatient physio services in August 2008. Norfolk General Hospital announced that it would cut the equivalent of 14 full-time jobs and bring its deficit down to zero. They ended an outpatient nutritional counselling service and an off-site cardiac club. The Headwaters Health Care Centre in Orangeville announced they'll be closing the outpatient physiotherapy program, the outpatient heart function clinic and the Shelburne outpatient physician clinic. Guelph General Hospital is raising its parking fees, eliminating its asthma education clinic and will operate with only one mammogram machine instead of two to help eliminate its projected \$2.1-million shortfall. Cambridge hospital announced that it will eliminate the equivalent of up to 30 full-time jobs and reduce access to surgery and diagnostic tests. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre announced cuts, and Ottawa Hospital. The list goes on and on.

This government is not spending money in a way that is going to lead to increased-quality patient care. I know that the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario is very concerned that the 9,000 nurses that were promised by Premier McGuinty are not going to be allocated as

planned and only 900 positions are going to be funded this year. We have a severe nursing shortage, and we have hospitals facing severe deficits that need to be dealt with.

Despite the rhetoric, in the province of Ontario the situation remains grave for taxpayers and patients. We're going to be passing this supply bill today, but we do so in a time when certainly the economic future for people in the province of Ontario is not rosy. We're going to have a high deficit. It's going to mean that the government must develop a plan to deal with it, which also means that taxpayers in this province are going to have to pay to eliminate that deficit. They're also going to have to be paying additional interest now. All of it is the result of a government that, during the good days, wasn't able to plan for this, so that's the situation we find ourselves in.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Once a year we get to stand up and talk about supply, and once a year the same thing is always the case: The government needs the money and, in the end, the bill must pass. But it's always an opportunity to talk about some of the things that are and are not in the supply bill: that which should be done by the government, that which is being done and that which unfortunately has been bypassed for another year.

All of this takes place in the context of a decline in the revenues that are available in this province and, indeed, in many jurisdictions around the world. But I would suggest that, in this province, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Revenue and people involved in the government process over the last number of years have seen the world through very much rose-coloured glasses.

I can remember standing in this House and asking questions about a whole bunch of things that were impacting the United States and seeking assurances from the minister and seeking assurances from the Premier that Ontario would, in fact, not be impacted or, if we were, what contingency plans, if any, the government had. I remember standing up here and talking about asset-backed commercial paper and what was happening in the United States, with a number of banks and lending institutions losing their shirts and people losing their life's savings and how that was impacting on businesses in the United States and what was going to happen here in Ontario. I remember being assured that, in spite of the fact that we also had asset-backed commercial paper, ours was a much smaller and much more manageable concern than in the United States.

I remember standing in this very House and asking about the mortgage defaults in the United States—literally seeing hundreds of thousands of homes in that country defaulting on the mortgage and whole swaths of cities being turned into ghost towns. I remember coming back on one occasion from Detroit and a conference that Ontario attended of the state Legislatures and talking in this House about Detroit, about Michigan and the number of homes that had been defaulted and seeing whole areas of the downtown core and out into the more affluent

suburbs up for sale, and houses that were empty and no one was there, and, "How was that going to impact upon the province of Ontario?" and being assured that there would be no impact at all.

I remember standing up and talking about the \$1 trillion of deficit that the United States government was running and the inability that they may have in the future to buy goods and services produced in Ontario and being assured that that was okay.

I remember standing up and talking about Lehman Brothers and some of the other financial institutions as they, one by one, failed, and what impact, if any, that would have in Ontario and being assured again that that would not have much effect.

The combined, cumulative effect of all of those has brought Ontario to the brink as well, and it isn't that our financial institutions are not successful, because we probably have the most successful financial institutions left in the world. We have not had to bail out any of the Big Six sisters. We have not had to bail out the insurance companies. We've not had to spend billions and trillions of dollars like they have in the United States in order to try to keep the market going, although we are in the process, I would suggest, of giving some monies to the Detroit Three.

1450

In any event, all of these questions were asked and the government continued to say that everything was going along swimmingly. But now the government admits that it is not going along swimmingly, and we now have a budget proposed and a supply requesting a great deal of money and suggesting that we're going to be running deficits probably for the next seven years. I'm not sure that this was totally sound financial management. It is trite to say that no one could have seen what was happening here in Ontario or what was likely to happen in Ontario even a year or two years ago, but I think, with some prudence, the government opposite should have been looking at some of the warning signals coming out from our largest trading partner to the south and understanding that this was going to have a huge impact on the province of Ontario—and to prepare for it. We have not.

When I look at these budget numbers and the supply that is being requested, the same thing is true. The forecast deficit of \$18 billion for this year and next may be very small in comparison to what is actually going to happen. I hope it's not. I hope that we've turned the corner, but every day when I watch the financial markets, including last week when we eked out a very small gain of about 1%, it seems to me that we may not have yet reached the bottom. Every day, when you open up the newspapers, you see another 100 or 200 or 500 or 1,000 jobs lost in various corners of this province, jobs that may have difficulty coming back.

This government has answered that the key to all of this is a wonderful new tool they've discovered, a tool of harmonization; a tool that I must say members of the finance committee have talked about for the past seven years. Every single time, while the Liberals were in

power, for five of those years at least, or six now, the harmonization topic got very short shrift because that was not on the government agenda and it's not what they intended to do. The arguments that were constantly being made are the same arguments that are being made on this side of the House back to the government today: that whenever there is a harmonization that takes place, the people who invariably lose are the consumers. It is with the consumers, I think, this ultimately will rest. Whether they buy what this government is attempting to do or whether they do not, we'll certainly rise and be heard most strenuously a year this July when the harmonization takes effect.

The harmonization, though, does have winners and losers. The big winners will, of course, be the corporations, the businesses, those that will see their taxes decline hugely, those that will see their operating costs decline hugely, and the big losers at this point appear to be ordinary consumers, ordinary people. They will have to pay more for such things as gas, oil, electricity; they'll have to pay more for food; they'll have to pay more for fast food and restaurant bills of under \$4; they'll have to pay more for lawyers and legal fees, and a whole broad range of extra costs that are going to have to be borne by them. The reality is that all of this will raise costs to ordinary consumers, and the reality is that there will be huge reductions concomitantly with the corporations.

We are debating the supply bill. This supply bill is requesting from this House the authority to raise an enormous amount of money. In short, the supply bill is asking for \$87,474,349,400 for public services. The supply bill at the same time is also asking for \$2,610,818,500 for capital and assets. That is almost the total expenditure of this government—minus, of course, the deficit that is going to be run—and it is requesting permission of this House to do it. If this House were to deny that, of course, an election would ensue immediately because a loss of this bill would also mean the government would be forced to resign. I do not believe that is going to happen, given the numbers in this House and the numbers on one side versus the numbers on the other, but it is an enormous amount of money for the government to ask this House to do at this time of year, given the circumstances of what is taking place out there in the market.

I had an opportunity as well to see what is contained within the compendium to the supply bill. Some of it is somewhat disturbing to me. First is section 22 of the compendium, which is the Ontario Loan Act. It is asking that the government be given, as well as the expenditure of some \$90 billion of the people's money, authority to raise an additional \$23.5 billion in loans. I assume the government might need the money. I don't know where the figure came from because it is not explained other than that that is the amount of money the government wants to borrow from the public, either in Canada or abroad, from ordinary individuals, corporations or whoever else might loan it to them, perhaps other governments. As well, they want the authority to borrow \$10

billion on smart-terms securities—that that money can be repaid back over a 25-year term. That is a total of \$33.5 billion that supply is asking the government to be given, I would assume in part to pay the deficits that are forthcoming.

What troubles me is that that total runs some \$33 billion, and the deficits are supposedly confined to some \$18 billion. There is \$15 billion here that is unaccounted for, and I don't know why the government wants to borrow it, save and except if they're borrowing it at a lower cost so that they can pay off higher old loans. That may be something that is of value, but I'm not sure that that's what it is. It has not been explained at all by the government.

I looked as well into section 24 of the compendium, which is the Pension Benefits Act. It says quite clearly of section 82—and this I found very intriguing. We know that many of the pensions in Ontario, many of the pensions in Canada, are under some kind of financial duress. We know that pensions and pension funds may not be able to pay out when they are required to do so because most of them had invested in what they thought were fairly secure stocks, bonds and securities, only to find that those stocks, bonds and securities have declined in value by some 40% or 50% since last year. I don't think any of the members of this House, at least not the members who have invested in stocks, bonds and securities through their own pension plans through this House—they would all recognize that the stock market has collapsed to such an extent that the value of the shares that ordinary people own have declined by 40% on average across the whole length and breadth. So it's not surprising that the pension funds have declined as well. I looked at section 24, and I invite all the members to look at what I think is a kind of strange piece of legislation. Section 24 of the compendium, relating to section 82 of the Pension Benefits Act, says that the cabinet will be given the authority—the Lieutenant Governor in Council will be given the authority to ask the finance minister to make loans to the pension benefits guarantee fund. That is, if the fund requires additional money so that some of these pensions can be topped up so that the pensions in turn are payable to ordinary citizens who have invested most of their life and most of their work in various factories and jobs across the province for a long, long time, this is the authority to do that. Unfortunately that same compendium, that same section, limits the payout to \$1,000.

That was established 29 years ago, \$1,000 as the maximum that could be paid out. I want to tell you that \$1,000 in today's market, \$1,000 today, is not the equivalent of what it was 29 years ago. People who find themselves under duress and their pension fund not able to pay can seek only the security that maybe the government, in paying into this, will make \$1,000 available to them. That is very short comfort to anyone looking to this.

But the real kicker here, and I invite all the members opposite to look also at section 24 of the compendium, is

that in section 82 nothing at all is required of the minister. He or she does not ever have to do what the cabinet asks. Nothing in law will require the minister to pay into this fund, so that if it starts to go broke, the law says that, notwithstanding that the Lieutenant Governor in Council can request it, the minister is under no obligation to do it. That's also what you're asking us to pass here today. I find this a little strange.

1500

I went on to read some of the others. There are some really interesting things in here. The next one was the Taxation Act. The Taxation Act has been modified in a very strange way when it comes to the political process and to donations to political parties, political individuals and political causes. We all know in this province that individuals, corporations and unions can donate to political causes, political parties, political things that they believe in. We know that there is a regimen within the tax system such that, when you donate to a political party, there is a certain amount of money that comes back: 75% on the first \$400, 50% on the next amount and 33% on the remaining amount. People are very aware of that under the Income Tax Act, especially this time of the year when people are filling in their income tax. But what is strange here and what I uncovered here under the Taxation Act is that corporations are going to be given a benefit never before given to anyone else, not to corporations, unions or individuals, and that is that they are going to be given a non-refundable tax credit for 20 years, and it's going to be retroactive. So if the corporation did not make any payments, did not support a political party or a candidate or a cause that fell under the act, they are now going to be able to do so retroactively for 20 years.

What is this? I don't understand what this is. Has the government made some kind of deal with the corporations? "You've not given us money in the past, but you can now give 20 years all at once and get a tax rebate for it?" I know individuals would stand up and say, "Jeez, I never had any money 17 or 18 years ago, but I now have won the lottery and I'd like to give some money to my favourite political party." They won't be allowed to do this. I know the unions won't be allowed to do this, but I see the corporations are, and I don't know what's in the government's head. I don't know what made you want to do this. I don't know why it's in the supply. If you can tell me why you've done this, then please, somebody on the other side, stand up and tell me why you're giving the corporations the authority to go back 20 years to make political contributions. To whom are they going to make those contributions? Not likely to us in the NDP, but I would suggest very likely to the government.

And there it is: That's what you put in your own Supply Act. That's what you stand here and try to do under the guise that we need the money. Well, perhaps we need to discuss this a little more; perhaps somebody will. Perhaps when we're trying to look at how to change the regulations around here relating to the political process, this will be brought up.

Sadly—and I'd like to conclude with this—I've been waiting for the Supply Act, for the compendium, to finally try to do something about co-ops, the co-operative movement here in this province. We know that the co-operative movement is an alternative to the corporations. We know that the co-operative movement has been very successful in particularly two provinces, Saskatchewan and Quebec, where co-operatives are given government resources, where co-operatives are allowed to do business and where they have been very successful in giving an alternative to corporations and very successful in giving ordinary people the authority to band together in order to sell their goods and products.

Back in 2006, the then-member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot, who is now the Minister of Government Services, Mr. McMeekin, stood in this House in private members' business and passed resolution number 33 to ask the government to set up a co-operative secretariat. I believe it passed unanimously on that day, from the members who were present. Of course, it was not binding on the government, but notwithstanding, a lot of things have happened in the years since 2006. In 2007, the co-operative movement met with 16 MPPs over the period of that year to try to push the idea of the co-operative secretariat. They met with the Ministry of Economic Development on numerous occasions to talk about the secretariat and what could happen. Nothing happened in 2007. Not to be deterred, in 2008, they came back. They had seven meetings with members of this Legislature. They met with the Ministry of Economic Development's chief of staff and with ministry officials on numerous occasions, and they met with Mr. McMeekin, who had been the author of the bill and by this time was a minister, and asked him to facilitate. He promised to facilitate a meeting with economic development and with finance to try to get this moving. In 2009, to date, there have been 11 meetings.

Overall, what the co-operative movement is asking for, and what could have been and should have been put in this compendium at long last, is an opportunity to facilitate the ability of co-ops to attract investment. They are seeking nothing more than an opportunity to obtain venture capital in the same way as corporations can do. They are seeking nothing more than an opportunity to get equity funds in the same way that corporations can do. They are looking for capital funds and the ability to obtain capital so that they too can expand in these difficult times, because co-operatives can—and do in places like Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—produce as many jobs as corporations, and when the corporations are failing, perhaps the co-ops should be given the same opportunity. So they're looking for capital funds.

Last but not least, they're looking for community power funds, because co-operatives such as Bullfrog Power can produce green energy and want to get into this game as well.

But there is nothing in this Supply Act and there is nothing in the compendium to change how the co-operative movement might do so. There's lots of stuff for

corporations. There's \$4 billion in tax cuts. There's the authority to go back 20 years to make political contributions. But for co-operatives we see nothing.

I know the government needs the \$90 billion. I know the government would grind to a halt, the workers couldn't be paid—I know that the money is needed for capital and the money is needed to have the whole experience of government continue in the province of Ontario. But surely this was an opportunity for this government to do something that was just. This was an opportunity for this government, in trying times—even though they've just discovered it—to do what was right: to do what was right in terms of not requiring the loans; to do what was right for the Pension Benefits Act; to do what was right to be fair to all of those who contribute to political parties; and most assuredly to do what was right for the co-op movement, which has been waiting patiently for three or four years following Mr. McMeekin's private member's bill to actually have this government take some form of action, and until this point to no avail.

So that's what I would like to discuss in terms of this. I would leave the remaining amount of time to my colleague the member from Kenora—Rainy River. I'm used to calling him the leader of the third party. I'm sure he has much more insight on this bill as well.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank my colleague from Beaches—East York for an enlightening conversation, and I want to pick up where he left off.

The supply bill is an opportunity to look at how the government of the day is responding to what is happening in Ontario today. I think everyone across this province understands that there are some very troubling things happening in Ontario. Close to 400,000 good manufacturing jobs have been destroyed in this province in the last couple of years. Ontario is now losing 30,000 jobs a month, which works out to 360,000 jobs a year.

Community after community—go to Cornwall, Oshawa, Oakville, St. Catharines, Welland, Thorold, Hamilton, Brantford, Cambridge, Kitchener, London, Sarnia, Chatham, Windsor, Kenora, Dryden, Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Red Rock, Marathon, Terrace Bay, Geraldton, Longlac, Chapleau, Wawa, Sault Ste. Marie, Smooth Rock Falls, Hearst, Kapuskasing, Cochrane, and the list goes on. In community after community after community, people who have worked hard all their lives, people who have paid their taxes, people who have raised their children, contributed to the community, done everything that we would ask responsible people to do, are losing their jobs in droves.

1510

One would think that a government that cared about people would actually respond to this devastating loss of good jobs in the province. In fact, over the last six months, the last year, many of us have been looking for some kind of response from this government.

We've heard lots of speeches from the Premier saying everything's going to be fine, everything's going to be

wonderful, and there's no problem here. I remember the Premier saying there was no problem when tens of thousands of workers in the forest sector were losing their jobs. I remember the Premier saying there was no problem when General Motors announced, after receiving \$200 million from the McGuinty government, that they were now going to close the truck plant in Oshawa and move production to Mexico.

The Stelco steel plant in Hamilton continued to produce during the Great Depression in the 1930s. It continued to produce during the very devastating recession of 1981, 1982 and 1983. It continued to produce during the very difficult recession of 1990, 1991 and 1992. It is closed today, and all of the workers are out on the street.

This is indeed a crisis. In fact, I think it is fair to say that Ontario is becoming a much poorer province very, very quickly. The McGuinty government may choose to ignore the reality, but the reality is this: Once you get outside the so-called financial district of Toronto, the heart and soul of Ontario's economy is manufacturing. It is the single thing that has allowed Ontario to function as a community, as a province. It is the single thing that has provided good jobs for people. It is the single greatest contributor in terms of making sure that people can pay their taxes and live together in some sense of a strong and good community. Today, that manufacturing economy is being hurt in literally dozens of ways, and we have yet to hear a thoughtful response from this government.

Now, we hear rhetorical speeches from time to time. The Premier likes to wax on about the new economy. I've never heard the new economy defined, but the Premier and some of the cabinet ministers like to wax on about a so-called new economy. They even commissioned Richard Florida, a professor at the University of Toronto—imagine this—paying in excess of \$2 million for a report. I found that he indulged in the same rhetorical speech-making when he produced his report here at the Queen's Park press gallery, but one of the journalists—in fact, sad to say, one of the journalists who may soon be unemployed himself—had the temerity to ask Professor Florida, what should laid-off auto workers, steelworkers and forest workers do, what should laid-off workers do, according to Richard Florida, after he'd written this \$2-million report. Do you know what his response was? His response was, "Well, maybe they should be creative and open an art gallery."

I ask, is this the McGuinty government's vision of a new economy? Workers who have contributed so much to Ontario's economy and so much to Ontario society, who are now losing their jobs in manufacturing, are told by the spokesperson for the McGuinty government, "Be creative. Open an art gallery"? Is this the new economy? I don't think so, and it's nothing of an economic vision.

But as we watch more and more communities become poorer by the day, as we watch the announcement of 500 workers there, 1,000 workers somewhere else, 2,100 workers at Stelco-United Steel in Hamilton, I think people want to hear from this government. What's its

direction? What's its plan? What does it have in mind? Certainly, I would hope, not telling people, "Just go open an art gallery."

We have searched in vain and we've even made suggestions. We've suggested that there needs to be a buy-Ontario policy. Everyone knows that any society that is urban or suburban is going to have to make major investments in rapid transit and urban transit. It just doesn't make sense to have literally millions of cars on the highway stacked up one behind the other from 7 in the morning until 10 in the morning and then stacked up again from 3 in the afternoon till 7 o'clock at night. It doesn't make any sense. If you're going to live in an urban and suburban society, you have to make major investments in urban transit. And if Ontario is going to spend billions of dollars on urban transit, shouldn't we put in place a template that says that some of those jobs have to be here in Ontario? But this government refuses.

The United States has a buy-America policy. If Chicago or New York or Miami or Los Angeles or New Orleans—any municipality in the United States—is going to purchase subway cars, light-rail cars, streetcars or buses for their urban or suburban transit system and there's even one penny of federal government money in that contract, then 50% of the work has to be done in the United States, along with the final assembly. You know what that has done for the United States? It has ensured that literally hundreds of thousands of good, skilled jobs happen in the United States. And it's a simple formula. The Americans are simply saying: "Do you want access to our market? Do you want access to our government funds for light rail, for subway, for streetcars, for buses? Then you have to invest in the United States and you have to provide some jobs here."

It was striking the other day that the new Vice-President, Joe Biden, goes to St. Cloud, Minnesota, and what is he going to do? As part of their urban transit vision he's visiting the plant of New Flyer bus manufacturers. New Flyer happens to manufacture 40% of the transit buses that are used in North America; 40% of all the transit buses used in North America are manufactured by New Flyer. So he goes to the plant in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and there are electricians, there are welders, there are instrument mechanics, there are air-conditioning experts—every kind of trade you could imagine; thousands of them working in this plant. Do you know what? New Flyer is a Canadian company. They're headquartered in Winnipeg. They manufacture the bus shells in Winnipeg. But because of the buy-America policy, the bus shells go from Winnipeg down to St. Cloud, Minnesota, where the final assembly happens. Why? Because that's the buy-America policy in the United States. They don't care if you're a company from Japan, if you're a company from Germany, if you're a company from Brazil or if you're a company from Canada; if you want to produce rapid transit vehicles for American municipalities, then the buy-America policy says that you establish a plant in the United States and you create some jobs in the United States.

I tell you, if you look across the United States, whether it be subways—Bombardier has a plant in Montreal and a finishing plant in Plattsburgh, New York; New Flyer bus lines; Motor Coach Industries, another company in Winnipeg, has a plant immediately south of the border to do the finishing work. Plant after plant—Orion Bus here in Ontario has a plant in New York state where they do the finishing work on buses sold in the United States. The buy-America policy literally helps to sustain hundreds of thousands of jobs in the United States. It's a simple concept. If you want access to the American market, if you want access to the money of taxpayers in the United States, then you have to invest in the United States and you have to provide jobs in the United States.

We've been advocating this for the McGuinty government now for, gee, over four years. We continue to look for some response from the McGuinty government. We have had press releases where the McGuinty government boasts about the \$200 million they gave to General Motors. General Motors said, "Thanks for the money," and moved the jobs to Mexico. We've heard boasts from the McGuinty government about how they were happy to give money to Chrysler—almost \$100 million. Now we see Chrysler saying, "Hey, we may move everything to St. Louis and Michigan."

1520

Where is this government's job strategy? Where is this government's concept, vision, plan to respond to the most pressing issue in Ontario today? Hundreds of thousands of good people are losing their jobs, and the McGuinty government wants to pretend that everything is fine and everything is wonderful. It's not fine, because here's what has happened: People who have worked hard all their lives, people who have paid the taxes, people who have looked after their kids, people who have contributed to the community, have now lost their jobs, in many cases their employment insurance has expired, and they're looking for help. And you know what they're being told? They're being told, "You have to exhaust your assets before you could even apply for social assistance in Ontario. You have to exhaust your bank account. You have to exhaust your RRSPs. By the way, the car you are driving is too new. You have to sell it and get an older one or have no vehicle whatsoever."

I was intrigued. Over the past couple of months I've had an opportunity to go to communities where people lost their jobs two or three years ago in the forest sector. Do you know what is happening now? People are having their electricity shut off because they do not have enough monthly income even to pay the hydro bill. Last I checked in some of these communities—it was 17 below last night. How are people supposed to live, having their electricity shut off? How do you cook your food? How can you rely upon the food in your deep freeze to be safe and healthy to eat? In many communities, this is reaching crisis proportion. And yet people are asking, "Where is this government's plan? Where is this government's strategy?"

Now, we just had a budget last week. That was revealing. I'm not going to talk a lot about that, but it was revealing, because it was almost as if I heard Mike Harris repeating himself. I remember when Mike Harris stood over there where Dalton McGuinty now stands, and his message for six and a half years was, "If you cut corporate taxes and cut corporate taxes and cut corporate taxes, it will lead Ontario to the promised land, and we'll have an abundant economy." Well, they cut corporate taxes, they cut corporate taxes, they cut corporate taxes, and as the McGuinty Liberals are fond of pointing out, they left Ontario with a big deficit.

Then there's some guy named George Bush who just exited the stage. For eight years George Bush said, "Cut corporate taxes, cut taxes on the well-off, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, and they will deliver the United States to the promised land." I ask you, Speaker, to go anywhere in the United States and ask them if they're living in the promised land. I think they'll tell you that it's a very bad fairy tale where literally millions of people are being hurt.

We've had Stephen Harper say, "Cut corporate tax, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, and it will lead us to the promised land." I don't know about you, but the federal government is looking at a pretty hefty budget deficit as well.

But I couldn't believe my ears when I heard the McGuinty government last week come out and say, "If we cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, and cut corporate taxes, it will lead us to the promised land." How many times do we have to watch a rerun of this bad movie and realize that it doesn't lead to the promised land? It's leading us into some very, very desperate situations for people.

You know, in all of this effort to cut taxes, to deregulate, the most outstanding thing to me is, I watch what has happened financially in the United States, and there was a piece last week that disclosed the billions of dollars that some of the operators of these hedge funds have made off with—the billions of dollars. Meanwhile, ordinary people are out of work, other people are faced with losing their jobs, and people are losing their homes.

I say again, is this the promised land? Is this the promised land? And we know now that many of these people who operated these hedge funds were far, far beyond the law, far beyond any sense of common decency, far beyond any sense of the rules in a civilized society, yet what do we hear from the McGuinty government? "Cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, and it will deliver us to the promised land." I guess maybe Mike Harris won after all, because that certainly seems to be where this is headed.

I look at what is happening: People are losing their jobs, people are being forced to live on smaller and smaller incomes, yet what's going to be the major change of this budget? People who are not working or are working but having to live on lower incomes are going to pay more taxes—8% more when you put the GST and PST together. So people who have less money are going to

pay more taxes, and what are corporations going to get? All in, it's going to be a corporate tax cut of close to \$3 billion. I ask again, is this the definition of the promised land: people who don't have money pay more, and corporations pay less? I don't think so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Duguid has moved second reading of Bill 161. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 64, this bill is moved immediately for third reading.

SUPPLY ACT, 2009

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2009

Mr. Duguid, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Duguid has moved third reading of Bill 161. Pursuant to standing order 64, I am now required to put the question.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be named as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day. Deputy government House leader?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to recess the House for a few minutes until 3:30 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent to recess the House until 3:30? Agreed? Agreed.

This House will stand recessed until 3:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1528 to 1534.

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2009, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and at the outset I want to thank you for your consideration with respect to the challenges we face around this place and your patience as well, sir.

I'm rising today to respond to the budget motion on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. I'd like to begin my remarks with a simple question: What's the definition of a recession? Economists have their definition, but for people across this province struggling to keep their heads above the current financial challenges, I would suggest a recession is when your neighbour loses their job.

A lot of our neighbours have been losing their jobs since the Liberals took office. In fact, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in this province since mid-2004. Another 135,000 manufacturing jobs are expected to be lost this year. We've seen over 100,000 disappear in just the past two months. That's what happens when you raise taxes. Tax hikes kill jobs.

The last time we sat in opposition across from a government that raised taxes, Ontario had a recession. Our neighbours all across Ontario lost their jobs. To my neighbours across this chamber, specifically Liberal backbenchers: I ask, what have you done for your neighbours? What have you done to save your neighbours' jobs, your constituents' jobs? Did you stand up to your leader when he came to you with the idea of raising taxes in the middle of a recession? Did he seek your advice? And if you stood up in caucus on behalf of your neighbours, your constituents, how come you didn't stand a little taller, speak out a little louder and stop this punishing tax hike before it hit your neighbours?

As a Progressive Conservative, I don't find too many opportunities to quote the Toronto Star, but this is one of those rare occasions. In Jim Coyle's column today, he references what he describes as Dalton McGuinty's "increasingly arrogant and autocratic attitude." That's a view I suspect is shared not just by opposition members but government backbenchers as well. If only they could muster some steel in their spines, they might start standing up and speaking out against a Premier who, to use Jim Coyle's words, was "less than forthcoming" during Liberal caucus discussions on the harmonized sales tax. In my less polite words, Mr. McGuinty blindsided his own caucus, didn't let them know that he had already decided to bring in a massive tax-grab budget that will do serious harm to many of their constituents.

Of course, we're not hearing any uproar from the Liberal backbenchers. They are here for one reason and one reason only: to do Mr. McGuinty's bidding—stand up when they're told to stand up, sit down when they're told to sit down, speak when they're told to speak. That's the sad state of parliamentary democracy in today's Legislature.

The challenges this budget will create for Ontarians already coping with the worst recession in 70 years should be the number one priority for MPPs: Look after and represent the people in your riding, the people who elected you. Regrettably, that number one priority for

Liberal MPPs isn't even on their list. They're here to support their leader; no other priority permitted. Over the course of this debate they will dutifully, obediently stand in their place and read words written by people in the Premier's office and hope that no one in their riding will notice their abject failure to represent them.

I said we've seen this kind of thing before—tax hikes, recession, our neighbours losing their jobs—but perhaps I was a little wrong on that. We haven't seen anything quite like this before: not just a tax hike in the middle of a recession but on top of it, the largest deficit in Ontario's history; worse still, have-not status for the first time in our lives, meaning that Ontario will start accepting a handout from the federal government and will step into the cycle of potential welfare dependency on the federal government starting April 1. This week, this Wednesday, we become a have-not province.

This is not an ordinary budget. It's not an ordinary Liberal budget. It's even worse than the worst budget the NDP foisted on this province. Again back, surprisingly, to the Toronto Star: "\$14.1 Billion Deficit is Largest in the History of Ontario." The "big-spending budget ... will make everyone's wallet ... lighter ... eclipsed the long-held red ink record held by former NDP Treasurer Floyd Laughren...." That's the Toronto Star. Toronto Star reporter Richard Brennan even asked the finance minister on Thursday, Minister, you "mind if I call you Floyd?"

1540

The Premier is raising taxes on homes in the middle of a housing crisis. Here's what Pauline Auinger, the president of the Ontario Real Estate Association, had to say about that on Thursday in a Canadian Press story: "These additional taxes could price some homebuyers, especially first-time homebuyers, right out of the market." Ms. Auinger's association represents the province's 47,000 real estate brokers. She knows what she's talking about.

The Premier is also raising taxes on gas while fuel prices are in flux. He's punishing lower- and middle-class Ontarians the most by slapping taxes on things like restaurant food, Internet service, home heating oil, entertainment, even on a cup of Tim Hortons coffee. It's nothing short of a war on Ontario families, a war on Ontario workers and a war on the middle class at exactly the wrong time. The National Post described it as "a massive tax grab" that "could easily provoke a consumer revolt ... the last thing Ontario needs."

Even those who agree with harmonizing the provincial sales tax and the GST say that this is precisely the wrong time to do it. Again, I'll quote the National Post: "While introducing a new form of sales tax may be justified on paper, doing so at the depth of a recession, when working families are already nervous, could easily spook consumers, causing them to postpone purchases—particularly big-ticket items such as cars—thereby worsening the current" economic "downturn in Ontario."

Do we really want more Ontarians postponing big-ticket purchases like cars and homes? Aren't Ontario's auto industry and housing industry suffering enough? Do

we really want Ontarians postponing even small-ticket purchases or making fewer of them, maybe cutting back a cup of Tim Hortons coffee here and there? Is that what we really want? Is this the right time for a tax on Tim Hortons? The Tim Hortons tax; well, I say good luck in selling that to the people of Ontario.

Is this the right time for a tax hike on the average family? A quote from just one, Mia Lalonde, on CBC's *The National* on March 26: "Times are really tough for the average family and the average consumer, and it just seems like it's a hit in the pocket." Well, Mia is right. It's a hit; it's a big hit in the pocket for the average family and the average consumer.

Mr. McGuinty's insatiable appetite for spending has already emptied out our back pockets. Now he's hitting our front pockets, and apparently he won't stop until there's nothing left but lint. The Premier can dress it up however he wants, but the truth is loud and clear to the average Ontario taxpayer.

I want to say a few words to our Ontario neighbours who still have jobs. Perhaps you commute to work, like so many Ontarians do. This Premier wants to raise their taxes with a whopping 8% tax hike on gas, making it more expensive for people to drive to work, drive to the grocery store or pick up the kids at school. Some of us, as I mentioned in question period today, are old enough to remember when gas was measured in gallons, and some of us remember another politician who raised taxes on gas. Back then it was Joe Clark raising taxes 18 cents a gallon. The Premier's new tax hike on gas isn't 18 cents a gallon, it's not 20 cents a gallon, and it's not even 25 cents a gallon. The Premier's new tax hike on gas, on commuters, on mothers, on fathers picking up kids at school is a whopping 32 cents a gallon based on current prices. That gives people an idea of the magnitude of this tax grab. Prices, we know, in terms of gasoline, will rise in the future. It's also a tax on a tax.

Mr. Clark's government was defeated on the basis of that tax hike, a fate that awaits Mr. McGuinty and his supporters.

And if you think you'll be able to escape this mess by taking another mode of transportation, well, Dalton's got that taxed too. You'll be hit with a tax on your plane ticket, on your train ticket, on your bus ticket, on your taxi fare. The single sales tax will also mean a tax on electricity, a tax on cellphones, a tax on cable, a tax on a ski lift ticket. Every time they need an electrician, a plumber, a carpenter, a furnace repaired, air conditioning service, their driveway shovelled and their lawn cut, Ontarians have to be prepared to add the 8% tax, a tax they didn't pay before Mr. Dalton McGuinty's latest tax grab was announced.

Even going out on the town, after working hard all week, won't be as much fun. You're going to be taxed on that restaurant food. Stephanie Jones from the Ontario restaurant operators' association, after the budget, described the initiative impacting their industry as "death by a thousand cuts."

Going out of town won't have as much appeal any more either. Hotel rooms will be taxed too.

Dalton's hit list of items to be taxed is endless. "Not even audio books for the blind escaped the taxman yesterday," according to the March 27 edition of the *Kingston Whig-Standard*.

Even legal services will be taxed. This is Jamie Trimble of the Ontario Bar Association, quoted in the *Toronto Star*, on legal services: "It means ordinary folk who, for instance, are being denied access to their children, are going to have that much more difficulty." That's from the Ontario Bar Association.

So I say once again to the backbench Liberals across the way, start standing up for your constituents. Stand up for what's right. Stand up for your neighbours who are losing their jobs. For those watching, viewing these proceedings, who live in Liberal ridings, I would encourage you to contact your local MPP to ask why he or she has remained silent on this tax grab budget. Viewers can call our 1-800 number—that's 1-800-263-2335—to let us know how this new tax is impacting you, your families, your businesses. We also intend to launch a related website, and we'll have details of that website announced very shortly.

The Premier is trying to coddle our neighbours, buy them off with their own money, returning \$1,000 in three instalments after he's already removed it from their pockets. Perhaps the Premier said to caucus, "Here's an idea. Let's send out three cheques to people to make them forget about the tax hike, a tax hike that will be with them forever." Well, that's cynical enough, but even more cynical is the Premier's scheme to send one of those cheques out just before Christmas. It's an insult to the intelligence of Ontarians. It's really a triple bribe, the scheme to send three "McGuilty" cheques to taxpayers. The first cheque is hush money to keep people quiet about being gouged. The second cheque is the Christmas cheque just to remind people that, yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus, even after the McGuinty Liberals have taxed them to their teeth. The last cheque, which coincidentally will arrive in people's mailboxes in June 2011, is an attempt, in our view—I think most Ontarians will share this view—to buy their votes for the October 2011 election.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party are on to you, Mr. Premier. So are Ontarians. You're like the magician who has tried to fool people using the old sleight-of-hand method, hoping people won't notice how you accomplish the trick. Well, Premier, you are soon going to learn that you have a big political problem with this attempted magic trick. People will only see these cheques once, twice, maybe three times, spaced out over two years and then, presto, they'll be gone. Meanwhile, the Premier's new tax hikes will be in our face every single day, at the gas station, at the restaurant, at the train station, at the airport, at the bus station, in taxicabs, on our cellphone bills, on our cable bills, on our Internet bills, at hotels, at the funeral parlour, in apartment buildings, in our homes and at the counter at Tim Hortons—a constant, never-ending reminder of the worst budget in Ontario's history. I say the people of Ontario will not forget.

1550

This is the wrong budget at the wrong time, and it gets worse. This budget plans to put Ontario in the hole and keep us there for at least another seven years—seven years of deficits by design. Think about that: a plan to put Ontario in the hole for seven years. That's their plan. It's a perfectly crafted plan for failure.

One of the central assumptions of their budget is that the recession will end by mid-year this year. That's 90 days from now. Is that optimistic, foolish fantasy or something else? I don't know. Let's get together in 90 days and see if the recession is over. I think we all hope it is, and if the recession is over in 90 days, as this budget contends, we will still be left with seven years of deficits—a recession that's less than one year long from beginning to end leading to seven years of deficits. It's a 7-1 ratio. It's like dog years. For every one year of recession the Premier turns it into seven years of deficits. Can you imagine spending \$1 and going \$7 into debt? Well, you don't have to imagine it anymore. This budget makes it a reality for you, your children and your grandchildren.

What if the recession doesn't end 90 days from now? What if it lasts longer? What if the recession lasts until July? Does that mean Ontario will run a deficit for eight years? What if the recession lasts until the end of this year? Deficits for nine, 10, 11 years? Dog days, indeed, from Mr. McGuinty.

Let me remind you once again, this is by design, their design. It's their budget, and if it all goes according to their plan, Ontario families will see tax hikes on homes while the housing market is already in enough trouble, tax hikes on gas while our auto industry is in crisis, tax hikes on transportation while people need to get to work more than ever to pay those taxes, and even taxes on legal services while people are already having a hard time accessing the justice system in this province, and seven years of planned deficits which will weigh heavily—heavily indeed—on the next generation.

A lot has been made about the Premier finally—albeit lately, but finally—admitting that he needs to lower, not raise, taxes on business if he wants to have business continue to operate in this province. I have to say—and this was noted on Global TV this week as well—that none of the cuts will take effect for more than a year, too late for many of the companies struggling to make it through this recessionary period. Still, the Premier did finally admit that he was wrong on business taxes and that we were right on business taxes. I'm glad we were able to help him see the light. However, just as the Premier giveth to small business with one hand, he taketh away with the other—just like the old magic trick I mentioned earlier.

I received an e-mail last night from a small business owner. He wrote to me about the Liberals' triple whammy on small business. He informed me that the tax on heat and hydro alone, because of this new single sales tax, will hike up his costs by an additional \$10,000. That's the impact on his bottom line.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It passes that through, and you know it.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, that's certainly what I'm hearing and what we are hearing from many small business people across this province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And what does the homeowner do, Mike?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Ontarians are starting to see who's really behind the curtain in Dalton McGuinty's office. It's a man who has sadly lost touch with the people and with economic reality since becoming Premier. He's a man who is living in a comfortable bubble. He's shielded from society in his taxpayer-subsidized, million-dollar-plus home in a very tony Toronto neighbourhood. He is picked up by a taxpayer-paid-for, chauffeur-driven limousine in the morning. He comes into an office where he has a record number of staffers in the Premier's office responding to him, paid for by the taxpayers of this province.

A couple of years ago—this was two or three years ago—we heard stories about the Premier paying \$50, \$60, \$70 for a haircut. You know, in stark contrast, I get my ears lowered in my riding at Jay's Barber Shop on King Street East in Brockville. Jay Lindy, a great guy: For \$7.50, I get a haircut, a briefing on the political scene plus three or four jokes I can't repeat here.

The Premier, stuck in his bubble, regrettably doesn't understand and appreciate the impact of his latest tax burden on hard-working families, small businessmen, the unemployed, seniors and others on fixed income. How many communities has he visited over the past few years that have lost major manufacturing operations, with hundreds and thousands of people thrown out of work? How many of those communities has he visited?

Mr. Tim Hudak: None.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: None; none that we're aware of.

He's a man who just can't stop himself from making promises as well about no more taxes, then breaking them over and over and over again. He's publicly broken the promise to not raise taxes so many times that we have classified him, and many others have as well, as a serial promise breaker, a repeat offender. He's proven that he can't be rehabilitated. He can't be rehabilitated because he just can't stop himself from raising taxes.

The Premier keeps reoffending—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My colleague just mentioned something: because he believes he can get away with it. In his view, he can get away with it. Even the Windsor Star—and this is in Finance Minister Duncan's riding, his home paper. Here is what was mentioned in the Star's editorial on March 27: "To some degree, the Liberals' attitude toward taxpayers stems from the fact they promised not to raise taxes in the 2003 election campaign, and then hit Ontarians with a health tax of up to \$900 a person. It didn't hurt them at the polls at all in 2007. They made the same 'no new taxes' vow in that

election and, as of Thursday, they've broken their promise again." The Windsor Star says, "This time, we think Ontarians are paying attention." We agree.

The Premier's bad behaviour of promise-breaking on tax increases was rewarded with re-election in 2007. It's a grave insult to the intelligence of voters across this great province for the Premier to think he can get away with it again in 2011. As the saying goes, once burned, twice shy.

I guess we could also describe the Premier as a serial spender. It's that behaviour, spending like there's no tomorrow, that helped get us into this mess in the first place. Over the past six years, the McGuinty Liberals forked out \$27 billion and increased government spending by 40%. They have spent over budget every year since they were elected, when they should have been storing their acorns in anticipation of tough times ahead.

The signs were all there. Our party saw them; many, many economists saw them. Almost four years ago, we introduced a motion for debate in the Legislature calling for the McGuinty Liberals to immediately bring forward a detailed government initiative to deal with economic crises affecting communities like Cornwall, Oshawa, Collingwood, Thunder Bay, Windsor, St. Catharines and a host of smaller communities around Ontario. The Liberal members supported our idea but then did nothing, perhaps hoping we'd forget to out them for their inaction.

Our party tried again in May 2007 with another jobs-related motion. It was also debated in this place, and this time, when we asked the McGuinty Liberals to bring forward a comprehensive jobs plan, they flatly voted us down.

1600

But we didn't give up. We tried again to spur the government into economic action. In the fall of 2008, we asked for a select committee on the Ontario economy to consider and report on options to address the challenges faced by Ontario families and businesses in the province's weakened economy. Once again, the Liberals gave the thumbs-down to this motion as well. Perhaps if the McGuinty Liberals had listened and acted when we first raised the warning flags four years ago, they wouldn't now be faced with a dismal record of nearly 300,000 manufacturing job losses, with 135,000 more predicted to come before the end of this year.

This is an aside: You can compare that to the record when our party left office. In 2003, we had created one million net new jobs.

Leading up to the budget, in an effort to work cooperatively during tough economic times, our party announced two specific ideas that could help both cash-strapped consumers and the struggling auto sector right now. We asked the McGuinty Liberals to implement a three-month provincial sales tax holiday on new car and truck sales immediately. It wasn't in the budget; instead, the Liberals decided to tax gas.

We asked the McGuinty Liberals to include a retire-your-ride program in partnership with a similar federal program. This program would give Ontario drivers \$2,000 towards the purchase or lease of a new car once

they turn in a vehicle that is at least 10 years old. It also would have assisted in terms of improving the environment. This wasn't in the budget either; instead, the Liberals decided to tax train, plane, bus and taxi fares.

In closing, I'd like to remind everyone that it took our party five and a half years to get the Premier to change his tune on lowering taxes for businesses. We should have been more specific, because it's common sense that when you lower taxes on businesses, you don't raise taxes on the things those businesses sell—the things that hard-working Ontario families need. It's common sense that you don't shift the tax burden from businesses to consumers when economic times are at their worst and then expect the businesses to pass on their tax savings to consumers when they're barely keeping their heads above water themselves. Mr. Premier, let me be more specific: Stop raising taxes, period. Stop it. In fact, while I'm at it, cut taxes on businesses and families.

I think we've got it covered, but I think we had it covered the last time we were in office. We cut taxes on businesses and families, we cut the deficit and we brought jobs and prosperity to Ontario. It works every time it's tried.

I'd like to conclude with a twist on an old Ronald Reagan bromide that applies to Ontario's current situation. As I said earlier, the definition of a recession is when your neighbours lose their jobs; the definition of a depression is when you lose your job. The definition of recovery for this great province of ours? The definition of recovery is when this Premier loses his job. The recovery for Ontario begins on October 6, 2011.

At this juncture, I would like to move an amendment. I move that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 26, 2009, "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "that this House" and adding the following:

"acknowledges that budget 2009 brings in the biggest deficit in Ontario's history of \$14 billion, when the McGuinty Liberals had a \$6-billion surplus just last year; and

"acknowledges that under this government's watch, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared, with another 135,000 expected to be lost this year; and

"acknowledges that the Premier broke his promise not to raise taxes after the 2003 election by imposing a health tax of up to \$900; and

"acknowledges that the Premier again broke his promise with this budget by announcing his scheme to create a single sales tax, the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history, that will force people to pay taxes on everything from a cup of coffee to funeral services; and

"acknowledges that serial promise-breaking on tax increases, coupled with serial spending and mismanagement of public money, will not be tolerated by the people of Ontario."

Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Runciman has moved the following budget motion amendment:

"I move that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 26, 2009, 'that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government,' be amended by deleting the words after 'that this House' and adding the following:

""acknowledges that the budget 2009 brings in the biggest deficit in Ontario's history of \$14 billion, when the McGuinty Liberals had a \$6-billion surplus just last year; and

""acknowledges that under this government's watch, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared, with another 135,000 expected to be lost this year; and

""acknowledges that the Premier broke his promise not to raise taxes after the 2003 election by imposing a health tax of up to \$900; and

""acknowledges that the Premier again broke his promise with this budget by announcing his scheme to

create a single sale tax, the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history, that will force people to pay taxes on everything from a cup of coffee to funeral services; and

""acknowledges that serial promise-breaking on tax increases, coupled with serial spending and mismanagement of public money, will not be tolerated by the people of Ontario.'

"Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House."

Further debate?

Debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Michael Prue: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1607.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
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
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	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
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
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
		Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
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Charles Sousa
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Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
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Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
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Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
Julia Munro, David Ramsay
Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

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

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Mr. Norman W. Sterling	5690
Debate adjourned	5691

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit
Implementation Act, 2009, Bill 163, Mr. Bradley /
Loi de 2009 sur l'aménagement du réseau de
transport en commun de la région du grand
Toronto et de Hamilton, projet de loi 163,
M. Bradley**

First reading agreed to.....	5691
------------------------------	------

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Public transit

Hon. James J. Bradley	5691
-----------------------------	------

Paralegals / Profession de parajuriste

Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	5692
-------------------------------	------

Paralegals

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5693
-----------------------------	------

Public transit

Mr. Frank Klees	5693
-----------------------	------

Public transit

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5693
-----------------------	------

Paralegals

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	5694
-----------------------	------

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	5694
--------------------------------------	------

Members' anniversaries

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	5694
--------------------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller	5694
-----------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell	5695
------------------------	------

Child care

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5695
------------------------	------

Child custody

Mr. Jim Brownell	5695
------------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5695
--------------------------	------

Cemeteries

Mr. Jim Brownell	5695
------------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5696
--------------------------	------

Protection for workers

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5696
---------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5696
--------------------------	------

Firearms control

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5696
---------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5696
--------------------------	------

Child custody

Mr. Jim Brownell	5696
------------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5697
--------------------------	------

Employment insurance

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5697
---------------------	------

Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5697
--------------------------	------

Tom Longboat

Mr. Mike Colle.....	5697
---------------------	------

Property taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5698
--------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Order of business

Hon. Brad Duguid	5698
------------------------	------

Motion agreed to	5698
------------------------	------

**Supply Act, 2009, Bill 161, Mr. Duncan / Loi de
crédits de 2009, projet de loi 161, M. Duncan**

Mr. Wayne Arthurs	5698
-------------------------	------

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5700
--------------------------	------

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5702
-----------------------------	------

Mr. Michael Prue	5705
------------------------	------

Mr. Howard Hampton	5708
--------------------------	------

Second reading agreed to	5710
--------------------------------	------

**Supply Act, 2009, Bill 161, Mr. Duncan / Loi de
crédits de 2009, projet de loi 161, M. Duncan**

Third reading agreed to	5710
-------------------------------	------

2009 Ontario budget

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....	5711
-----------------------------	------

Debate deemed adjourned.....	5715
------------------------------	------

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 30 March 2009 / Lundi 30 mars 2009

Correction of record

Mr. Dave Levac.....5677

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....5677

Hon. Deborah Matthews5677

Ontario budget

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....5677

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....5678

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5678

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....5679

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5679

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....5680

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5680

Minimum wage

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....5681

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5681

Provincial debt

Mr. Tim Hudak5682

Hon. Dwight Duncan5682

Automotive industry

Mr. Paul Miller.....5682

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5682

Poverty

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis.....5683

Hon. Deborah Matthews5683

Taxation

Mr. Frank Klees5683

Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....5683

Long-term care

Mme France Gélinas5684

Hon. David Caplan.....5684

Research and innovation

Mrs. Liz Sandals5684

Hon. John Wilkinson.....5685

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop5685

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar5685

GO Transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....5686

Hon. James J. Bradley5686

Access to health care

Mr. Khalil Ramal5686

Hon. David Caplan.....5686

Taxation

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....5687

Hon. Christopher Bentley.....5687

Domestic violence

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....5687

Hon. Rick Bartolucci.....5687

Aboriginal economic development

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel5688

Hon. Brad Duguid5688

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Mike Colle.....5688

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones.....5688

Hockey

Mr. Bill Mauro5688

Taxation

Mr. Norm Miller.....5689

Protection of workers

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....5689

Village of Westboro

Mr. Yasir Naqvi5689

Taxation

Mrs. Julia Munro5689

Renewable energy and energy conservation

Mr. Dave Levac.....5690

Taxation

Mr. Rick Johnson5690

Children's services

Mr. David Zimmer5690

Continued on inside back cover