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of Debates
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des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 31 March 2009

Mardi 31 mars 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 31 March 2009

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 31 mars 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**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**

Mrs. Jeffrey, on behalf of Mr. Bradley, moved second 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): Debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm sharing my time with the member from London–Fanshawe and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I rise today in the House to begin debate on legislation that, if passed, would merge GO Transit and Metrolinx to build transit faster and ease congestion as well as create jobs.

As the Minister of Transportation stated in the House yesterday, our government is committed to acting decisively and creating a single transit agency. We believe there is an urgency in this province to implement a regional transportation plan to bring projects online faster and more cost-efficiently. The regional transportation plan, appropriately named the Big Move, is a consensus plan that has been shaped by municipal leaders across this province and in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, who understand service delivery at the local and regional level. By consulting widely and working together, the Metrolinx board identified the many components of the transit infrastructure that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area residents and businesses need. We really appreciate their excellent work on this plan for the last three years.

Ontario is ready to take the next step to better service the daily transportation needs of the 5.5 million people in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area with a greater, ex-

panded public transit system. That is why today we are proposing to merge GO Transit and Metrolinx through the proposed Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009.

We want to create an organization with the necessary expertise for implementing an integrated and multi-modal transit network for the most populated region in Ontario. Our government is ready to take the regional transportation plan and at the same time create winning conditions to implement it. To do that, we must first bring the planning and implementation of regional transit projects together. Metrolinx has ably demonstrated its planning expertise with the development of the regional transportation plan and in building the solid foundations for the agencies from the ground up.

At the same time, I want to acknowledge and thank the board members of GO Transit for their wise counsel and service. GO Transit has a very strong track record of building large-scale transit projects and running transit operations and services. The synergy by bringing the two organizations together would not only fulfill the original intent of Metrolinx, it would build continuity as well as getting shovels in the ground faster on new transit projects.

Implementing the regional transportation plan would generate thousands of construction jobs over the coming years and a stronger economy. Leading Canadian economists have made clear the value of investing in infrastructure spending. They recognize that money for transit invigorates the economy and delivers a high rate of return. Ultimately, these investments create valuable assets that spur business growth and make life better. Our government is poised to take decisive action because we know transit investments are important to stimulating the economy while safeguarding our environment.

The economic, social and environmental benefits of moving more quickly to implementation will be substantial. More and better infrastructure projects will mean better transit service and additional capacity to handle more riders. With fewer cars on the road and more people on transit, we will reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are widely known to harm our environment. These projects would mean reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions to protect the environment and provide a better quality of life for our families and our communities.

The McGuinty government has made transit one of our top priorities, and we've made history-breaking financial commitments in the process. Our commitment to the regional transportation plan of \$11.5 billion still

stands as the largest single commitment in Canadian transit history. Since 2003, we have invested an additional \$7.4 billion in transit, including more than \$2.5 billion in GO Transit. In our spring 2008 budget, this government committed more than \$744 million to fund all Metrolinx Quick Win transit projects. These Quick Wins included \$305.9 million for Toronto to improve capacity on the Yonge subway and other projects to provide a worthy head start in planning for the TTC's Transit City light rail plan. These investments will strengthen our economy: 10,000 jobs are created or spin off from every billion dollars invested in building transit. The Quick Wins also include \$105.6 million for York region's Viva bus rapid transit system along Highway 7 and Yonge Street corridors.

The list of Metrolinx Quick Wins our government has supported includes various transit improvements and projects in Peel, Halton and Durham regions, and in Hamilton. We invested \$66.1 million for improvements to rapid transit infrastructure in my community of Peel. Halton region's Dundas Street rapid transit received \$57.6 million. Quick Wins included \$82.3 million for the highway-to-BRT spine lane in Durham region, and \$32.8 million for Hamilton to support improvements to the King-Main and James-Upper James rapid transit corridors. Earlier this month, our government announced \$321 million in provincial gas tax funding as an additional source of funding for public transit. Roughly two thirds of all gas tax funding will be delivered to municipalities in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. Since 2004, the McGuinty government has committed more than \$1.3 billion through the gas tax program to introduce transit service improvements, as well as promoting increased ridership to 89 transit systems in 111 communities.

0910

I think we have ably demonstrated leadership and attached the necessary funding commitments to build more and better transit, not only in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, but across the province, after years of inaction and a lack of funding by successive governments.

Our transit agenda is certainly ambitious. We are eager, and we cannot wait for the next generation to act. We are looking forward to working with our partners to achieve our goals. Municipalities are crucial partners in this effort. We will continue to work with them to knit together a regional transportation network that will serve all of our constituents more effectively. A new Metrolinx can bring stronger communities together, with a sustainable urban development and renewed transit infrastructure that will promote a higher quality of life for everyone.

Our proposed legislation not only means the merging of GO Transit and Metrolinx; it also puts in place the tools for taking the regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service. The combined result is the creation of a single regional transportation body that is properly equipped and funded to focus on project delivery. The new Metrolinx will be governed by a board of individuals drawn from the community and private sec-

tor. We are moving to a phase of building and implementation where people with a range of professional and corporate experience will be most helpful. This is a model that we have seen in other large transit agencies around the world and one that we've seen that works. We have appointed a transit adviser for the merger to help the smooth consolidation of Metrolinx and GO Transit. The transition adviser will work with the transition advisory board to quickly bring the two organizations together.

Our proposal will ensure that as Ontario invests taxpayer money for transit infrastructure in the greater Toronto-Hamilton area, Metrolinx will have the ability to design, build and own these assets that could be amortized over their lifetime. These are tools that would allow the new Metrolinx to build the necessary infrastructure, deliver better service to our customers through new transit projects and pay off the asset over the longer term.

Our proposed legislation shows how Ontario is moving forward to build more transit, to do it quickly and do it cost effectively. We have structured our proposal carefully to significantly advance the development of an integrated regional transportation network for the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Almost 600 million transit trips occur each year in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. Now is the time for Ontario to build on this momentum and to build a regional transportation network with quick commute times, easy connections and a renewed focus on customer service. We know that building new transit projects will benefit our economy, our communities and our environment. I encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from London-Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted and honoured to stand up in my place this morning to speak in support of the bill being proposed in this House, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, which was introduced yesterday by the Minister of Transportation. I think it's a very important step toward reforming the transportation system in the province of Ontario.

I was listening to the minister and to the honourable member from Brampton-Springdale speaking about this bill and the important elements in this bill. It's very impressive. It's about time for any government to take a very important step toward amalgamating the many different task forces and authorities together, in order to create an efficient transit system that allows people to move from one spot to another without any problems.

It's important for all of us, especially the people who commute on a regular basis from outside the GTA. I myself go to London every week. As you know, I represent London-Fanshawe. I come on a regular basis. Most of the time I cannot come during the day, in the morning or afternoon, because it's very difficult to cross the city without spending two or three hours, sometimes, on the road. It's like a huge parking lot outside the GTA. You see thousands of cars moving slowly. It would be impossible for people like us, who want to come from London,

Windsor or any place outside the GTA, because the congestion is incredible. It's impossible to come on time to the city of Toronto in the morning or afternoon. So I think by creating one authority and investing more money in the transportation system in this province we'll allow many people who want to commute and come to this beautiful city to be able to come without any problems.

It's important how much we'll save a lot of business people, who I know want to come to Toronto on a regular basis but cannot come in the daytime. They have to come the day before. They have to spend a lot of money on hotels, food etc. Maybe it's good for the hotel and restaurant industries in the city, but economically, it's not viable because so many people waste time. It's like me; when I go back to London, I wait until 7 or 8 o'clock at night to be able to drive easily to my riding, London-Fanshawe. I think creating a transportation system that functions better gives us the ability to move quickly from point A to point B.

Besides that, I had the chance not long ago to meet with the manufacturing industry, which came to Queen's Park to update the MPPs about many different elements. And guess what? The most important thing for them is transportation, because it costs them extra money, especially when they are facing delays on the highway, to come in to or go through Toronto or the GTA. I was shocked when I learned that some auto parts travel between the United States and Canada, back and forth, between six and seven times. Can you imagine? Every single time they have to waste two or three hours. Do you know how much it costs for gas, how much it costs for employees and how much it costs our environment by putting more emissions in the air? All these costly elements would be eliminated or at least reduced if we created an efficient transit system in the province of Ontario.

Besides all this, I think we are facing some challenging economic times. The most important thing in challenging economic times: Many different governments around the globe, to stimulate the economy, go back to infrastructure. This infrastructure is important for the future; important for the present and out into the future. This initiative would create almost 430,000 jobs if this bill is passed and we are able to link those transportation authorities together, to create a wave of massive infrastructure in the transportation system in Ontario to enable us to fix our highways, widen our highways, create subways, build bridges, fix and widen bridges. All this infrastructure is needed badly, in order to create a stimulus package, to enable manufacturers and companies to come to and open in Ontario and to be able to move from one point to other points without any delay. This is a very important step. It's important for all of us: for the business community, for the people who live in Toronto, for emissions, for the environment, for many different elements of our society.

0920

It's really this point: If this bill passes, it will allow us, first, to invest almost \$11.5 billion in this project. I think

that is a massive investment. It will be the first of its kind in the history of the province of Ontario. Also, it will allow almost 800 million new transit trips a year and 300 million car trips off our roads on a yearly basis. It will be a 10-megaton reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the whole region.

All these elements are important and convincing, as the member from the other side spoke about. He knows about transportation. I know he cares a lot about it. Also, he should listen to his colleagues. The member from Newmarket-Aurora, the critic of the Ministry of Transportation, when he stood up in his place, said, "Often I don't agree with the government, but it's a very important investment. This time I'm going to agree." This is on the record. He said, "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."

It's a great testament to our commitment to improvement and our vision to see the province of Ontario with a good transit system to allow the great people of Toronto and the Metro Toronto area and Ontario to move quickly and smoothly on a daily basis. It is a very good step.

Everybody knows Hazel McCallion; she's the dean of all the mayors across Canada. I know the honourable minister of municipalities can agree with me, the Honourable Jim Watson. He knows her very well because he's the minister; he has to deal with her basically on a regular basis.

Hon. Jim Watson: Every day.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Every day. She is well known not just in Ontario but across Canada. She's the most talented mayor and a wise mayor. She knows a lot of things about this element of life. She said about this bill that it's important, she agrees with it and she supports it. She came forward and said the government is doing an excellent job to make it easy for the people who live in Toronto and the Metro Toronto area because—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Is she a Liberal?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We don't judge. Everybody is free in this province to believe whatever, but when you do something good, I think you deserve the acknowledgment.

I think the Minister of Transportation is doing an excellent job in his position, his role as the Minister of Transportation, to reform transportation in the province of Ontario. As you know, my colleague member opposite said it many different times: It's important for all the people who want to come to Toronto.

You know what? We want to invite people, want to be an inviting city. How can you be an inviting city without reforming the transportation system? Very often I travel around the globe, and I use the transit systems. I was sometimes amazed at some transit systems, like the one in England. You don't have to have a car to move from spot to other spots because the transit system, especially the metro or the subway—what they call the tube there—is important. You can move with no hesitation, no problem, efficiency in place, and everything is perfect. So now Toronto, the GTA, has grown in size and popu-

lation. We have between six million and seven million people, I think, living in this area.

We got used to—I believe every one of us wants a car to travel and to go from his or her house to work. Now we have to change our habits. This habit cannot be changed without implementing a good transit system that people can depend on, because it's important. I think if we pass this bill, we will achieve our goal.

In these tough economic times, people are looking for many different ways to make it easier for business people and give them the tools they need to be able to do their business without extra costs. That is why I'm proud of our government. Last Thursday, it introduced a great budget—a great budget, one of its kind in the history of this province of Ontario. I'll tell you why it's important: In tough economic times, you have to think about the vulnerable people who live among us. You have to think about infrastructure. You have to think about health care. You have to think about education, innovation and research. That's why part of the budget is an important element: Focus on the infrastructure piece. Infrastructure will give us the way to the future, the prosperous future.

We talk about having to change our thinking, because we're losing a lot of traditional jobs. Let's face it: We may not be able to attract the jobs we're losing today back to the province of Ontario in the future. That's why we have to change our way of doing business from traditional jobs to creative, technological jobs, to be able to move people quickly and fast; and to create elements in our budget, economy, society, communities, universities, colleges and training sites to allow people to do better, to utilize their capacity and skills, because this is the way for the future.

I very often attend sessions which my colleague the Honourable Chris Bentley, the Attorney General, puts on almost every week in London, Ontario. He holds a round-table to bring together people from different sectors—from the university and college, the business community, the city, the federal government, from all the elements of our society in the London area—and we talk.

Do you know what the most important thing is for them? Transportation—how we can be accessible. Some of them talk about expanding our airport to be a place where we can haul products from around the globe and ship to the United States. This is one of the ideas. They talk about widening the 401, what they call the 401 corridor, taking it from London to the border cities like Windsor or Sarnia. It's very important, because every company, every factory, every group wants to invest in the province of Ontario and wants to make sure they have quick access to the huge market in the United States, whether it's the state of Washington, New York or Michigan.

We cannot achieve our goals without investing in our infrastructure. Today we're talking about transportation. I think it's very important—how we can enhance the transportation system in this province. I think the minister got it right and I believe that he is on the right track in the right direction in order to reform our transportation system.

The most important element of this is co-operation from municipalities, especially the city of Toronto, because we believe strongly that we cannot do it alone as a government. We have to partner with municipalities, with strong partners who believe strongly in our commitment to the future. That bright future cannot be achieved, as has been mentioned by many other people, without creating fast and green transportation systems.

The other day I was watching TV and they were talking about Spain, how they have the fast train—250 kilometres per hour, I think. In France, they call it “le train à grande vitesse.” People can commute fast and quickly to go to their jobs. I guess the speed is about 250 kilometres per hour. Can you imagine? If we had those systems in the province of Ontario, people from Windsor could be here in Toronto within a couple of hours instead of spending six or seven hours. If you wanted to commute to Montreal or Ottawa or any place in the province of Ontario, you could go fast and quickly, without losing any time. Instead of coming the day before, wasting your day or afternoon, spending it on a train or bus or whatever, you could come within two hours' time and do your business without any hesitation or problem.

This is what we need. We need a strong, able authority to give us the service we need, because we deserve it, because we work hard. We want to save people time and money. We want to save factories and companies money. It's important, for all of us, to create enhancements to enable companies to save and enhance their productivity and not waste any time.

0930

I was talking to many people who work in agricultural communities, in the agriculture sector. When you want to transport goods from one town to another, especially when you're talking about hogs or cows or chickens, sometimes you are stuck on the highway in cold weather, and do you know how much damage is done in this industry? It's huge. Also, if you are stuck on the highway across the Metro Toronto area or the GTA, for this industry, in hot weather, it's also a disaster. So it would be good not just for the factories and the people, but also for the agricultural industry to be able to transport their goods quickly and without any losses.

I think all these elements will create a good enhancement to our economy and create a good stimulus package for the workers who want to work in the province of Ontario, and also maintain our strength as an economic engine for the whole country. Also, this would be the best and the biggest enhancement ever, not just in Ontario, but in Canada.

I had the chance, with my colleagues Chris Bentley and Deb Matthews, to talk about the budget at our breakfast meeting in Toronto last Friday. Many people were thrilled when we talked about the infrastructure money—they were thrilled. They never saw that one before.

They say—you know what?—that this is a very important government that has taken leadership to work together: federal and provincial governments and municipalities together.

We put the politics aside. We don't believe that politics should play any role in tough times. We should put all ideological differences aside and focus on our economy. That's what we're doing with the federal government right now, even though we have a different ideological approach. But the federal government, the provincial government and municipalities are coming together in one direction: how we can solve this economy, how we can stimulate the economy, how we can create jobs for our people and how we can get out of this dilemma.

It's important, and I think this investment will do us good. It will give us the sense and the ability to achieve our goal: a good working relationship between federal and provincial governments and municipalities.

Also, we don't want to forget our private sector, which is very innovative and creative in this regard. This morning, I got a chance to go to Sutton Group, the green energy sessions, where the Honourable Michael Bryant was speaking to a bunch of people from different sectors. He spoke about our infrastructure, our investment, and people were thrilled with our initiative.

I was sitting at a table sponsored by a gentleman from Windsor, Ontario. He is an innovative person. He created machinery that can fix your pipeline without breaking or cutting the road. That's incredible: "I can fix it without any damages"—and this runs electronically. This is all introduced, all invented in Ontario, in Canada, here.

So this initiative will see the light and see good support if this bill passes. Other companies will prosper, not just in Ontario and in Canada, but also worldwide, because people will come to us and ask us about technology and our inventions. That's why it's important for all of us to continue working towards changing our habits, our directions, creating a massive wave of new ideas, and patenting those ideas and taking them to the next generation, because it's important.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the jobs we're losing right now, what we call traditional jobs, are not going to come back to us. We have to find and create a way to pave the road for our children, who will be looking for future jobs. So it's our responsibility to work together—municipalities, provincial and federal governments—to create a strong economy, a strong country and a strong province.

Thank you for allowing me to speak. I want to congratulate my colleague, who gave me the chance to speak, and also the Minister of Transportation for introducing a very historic and impressive bill that will enable us, as the citizens of this province—and also people who want to visit us from outside Canada—to move quickly and smoothly without any problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and my fellow colleagues.

I know that the Minister of Health is very interested in public transit. His riding, especially, is very transit-dependent, but they don't have the investment they deserve in Don Valley East for public transit. So I know

he's very interested in public transit, and I'm sure he's going to be a big supporter of Bill 163, as the member from Oshawa knows—

Mr. John O'Toole: Oshawa?

Mr. Mike Colle: Durham, excuse me—how important it is to Durham.

In fact, as the Minister of Health knows full well, if we don't fix public transit, he's going to need more money in his health budget because of the number of people who are breathing the different pollutants that come out of cars every day, 24 hours a day, spewing chemicals into the air.

The member from London—Fanshawe mentioned the cost of gridlock. In the past, it has been estimated by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Toronto Board of Trade that the cost of gridlock is probably about \$3 billion a year. That's the number of extra dollars that we have to pay for our gasoline and that companies delivering goods and services pay for their fuel prices. Also, they have to pay more workers to deliver more goods. Rather than it taking an hour to deliver a product from Mississauga to Brampton, it would take two hours, because the fact is that the roads from Mississauga to Brampton are clogged. Highway 10 there is bumper to bumper 24 hours a day. That's because people trying to get from Mississauga to beautiful downtown Brampton can't get there because of the congestion, and because of the fact that there isn't good, direct public transit between those two great cities.

People forget, and that's why this bill is so important. This bill is a transit bill beyond the core of public transit—that's the core in Toronto. It reaches out to the sources of gridlock. That is because people living in Brampton, especially, have few opportunities to get public transit into Mississauga. And never mind Mississauga: They cannot get to Vaughan city centre; they cannot get to downtown Toronto because there isn't enough public transit infrastructure. That's what this bill does: It basically streamlines the implementation of public transit investments throughout the GTA. That's why we need to support this bill, because the bill talks about implementation.

We've been talking about doing something for public transit for 30 years. Toronto and the GTA—especially Toronto—was seen as the poster child for public transit. If you went to Europe, they knew about Toronto's subways, the great work done by Mayor Allan Lamport, that great mayor of Toronto. I'm sure the Minister of Municipal Affairs thinks it's about time he recognized this mayor for his great work.

I know he's not from Ottawa, but this was one of the best mayors Toronto ever had, and that's Mayor Horatio Hocken. The Minister of Municipal Affairs should recognize Horatio Hocken for his foresight. What Horatio Hocken did at the turn of the century is, he had the foresight—and the Minister of Health should have the foresight to support this initiative—because what Horatio Hocken did is put on the table the fact that one day there would be a subway across the Don River, the Prince

Edward Viaduct. So when they were building the Prince Edward Viaduct at the turn of the century, Horatio Hocken ran on the platform—when he ran for mayor of Toronto, he said, “When we’re building the Prince Edward Viaduct”—for the pages, it’s a bridge across the Don River—“we should deck underneath the Prince Edward Viaduct bridge so that one day in the future, if there’s ever a subway linking Toronto to the Danforth, there will be access by a subway.” This is back at the turn of the century. In fact, he lost the election because he said he wanted to invest \$1 million into decking the Prince Edward Viaduct. He lost the election, but then the next term along, they did do it. So if you go across the Prince Edward Viaduct right now to the Danforth, you’ll see that the subway goes underneath that bridge. That’s why the Minister of Municipal Affairs should recognize Horatio Hocken for the incredible vision that he had at that early time. There was a mayor who was a visionary.

0940

If you go to Ottawa today it’s the same type of thing. They’re still talking and talking about putting a transit line in Ottawa. They’ll talk until the cows come home—but this is not something peculiar to Ottawa; it’s peculiar to Toronto, too. We talk and talk about investing in transit, but this bill is about implementation. It’s about putting money where our mouth is, and that’s why this bill is dovetailing with the massive investment we as a government and the people of Ontario are making in public transit—over \$11 billion.

The good thing about this investment through MetroLinx is that this is not the usual cost-sharing arrangement. The \$11 billion we’re talking about is 100% provincial money. It’s not asking the municipalities to cost-share the capital, which is quite unusual. That’s how much the Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, feels about public transit. And it looks very promising. The federal government is finally being very positive on this front. They’re going to partner; then we can end up with \$17 billion invested in public transit in Ontario as a result of the federal government partnering. The municipal governments have to implement with their planning process, which they’re doing right now, but the capital dollars are 100% provincial to start off with, and then the federal will bring us up to \$17 billion.

The critical thing here is that we need a seamless planning and implementation system because the political maps of the GTA are no longer the transportation maps. That’s why in Don Valley East there’s daily congestion—cars pouring in from York region because people from York region have very little opportunity to get into Toronto because of the lack of transportation planning that crosses the political boundaries. It’s just as if in Don Valley East, when they built that sewer—there’s a major trunk sewer there—it stopped at Steeles Avenue. They don’t build sewer lines based on political maps. You can imagine water lines stopping at Steeles Avenue and sewer lines stopping at Steeles Avenue. Don Valley East would be flooded with sewage if that were the case. But because of the planning of the works department in the

greater Toronto area, those sewage lines go across political boundaries.

Yet the transit projects do not recognize the transportation or travel habits of people. People going to and from work from Brampton to Toronto don’t stop at Steeles Avenue; they have to work in Toronto, or vice versa. Yet our political transportation network that exists today is based on a 20th-century vision that people lived and worked in East York, lived and worked in Toronto or lived and worked in Brampton. That’s not the case anymore. People from Brampton work in Durham—and Durham is one area that needs attention, because Durham is a critical, fast-growing area. That’s why this bill has to connect Durham to Toronto and to Mississauga. That’s why the critical thing here is that this bill, if you look at what Metrolinx is going to do, puts together the reality of people’s work trips and travel trips, as I said.

One of the projects which is very close to my heart is the Eglinton rapid transit line. For 60 years, great transit planners—we’ve got two of the best in the world, Dick Soberman and Ed Levy; one lives across the street from me—have been telling governments that you have to have a transit line linking Durham to Mississauga to Peel region, and that transit line is Eglinton Avenue. Eglinton Avenue is the longest east-west open route that connects Peel region to Durham region right through the heart of Toronto. It is a crying shame that there is no rapid transit line on Eglinton Avenue, because it is the critical east-west link. As you know, through bad planning and poor foresight, in 1996, the then government of another party stopped the building of that transit line. In fact, there was \$100 million spent in lowering the sewer, building the station at Eglinton West, and in the middle of the building of the subway on Eglinton Avenue, they filled in the hole with concrete and filled in the station with concrete. That was probably one of the biggest transit mistakes in the history of Toronto. So right now we have to start that all over again. The Eglinton transit line would have been completed by now. People would have been travelling from Yonge Street, Leaside, all the way out to the airport. It would have cost about \$1 billion and it would have been done. Instead, now we have to revisit that. Luckily, it’s still on the planning board. It might cost \$2 billion to \$3 billion to do something that would have already been done at one point.

Anyway, I don’t want to talk about the past. Let’s talk about the future. And this is what this bill is: It talks about integrating GO Transit. If you know GO Transit, it is another system of transportation that is recognized across the world. GO Transit was one of the first systems that did double-decking. That was done with great foresight. Again, I think it was during the Bill Davis era, and I really credit Bill David because he understood public transit. It was also Bill Davis who stopped the Spadina Expressway, with the help of Jane Jacobs. They said that you can’t build an expressway through a city, the heart of the city, the Spadina subway. The late Colin Vaughan, Adam Vaughan’s father—they all said at that time that building a road in the heart of Toronto would have

destroyed all those neighbourhoods and would have caused pollution by the tonne to go into the centre of the city.

Bill Davis listened to Jane Jacobs and they stopped that madness and put a subway line, God forbid, down the ditch, down the Davis ditch, they used to call it. Now we have a subway line that I took this morning and that I take every morning, because driving is a pain in the neck here in Toronto, as it is in Brampton. The member from Scarborough Southwest was saying it took him—I don't know how many hours—two hours to get from downtown Scarborough to Toronto. The member from Don Valley East should know this. Trying to get from Don Valley East, Minister of Health, how many hours does it take because there's not enough public transit? It shouldn't take you two hours to come from Scarborough into downtown Toronto.

This investment in implementation and coordinating GO Transit, which, as I said, is one of the most respected transit systems, is interregional. It goes from downtown Toronto all the way out to Mississauga, to Brampton, all the way to York region—the buses, the trains—to Oakville. The GO Transit system is now going to be implementing transit planning and implementation, as I've said, along with Metrolinx. In other words, the sewer lines aren't going to stop at the Mississauga-Toronto border. They're not going to stop at the Durham-Scarborough border. This will mean that the transit movement, the modal split, will change because it won't be just the city of Toronto, the TTC, doing its planning. It will be done on a regional basis, which is done in every major city in the world. Whether you go to Atlanta, to the lower mainland in BC, to Dusseldorf, to Paris, to London, to Madrid, every major city in the world has a regional planning outlook. In many cases it's done by the federal government and the local state governments. That's what has got to be done. You have to have transit planning implementation that recognizes the fact that people do not live and work in the same communities as before.

I can remember years ago, too long to remember, when I was on the TTC, when there was another transit expansion program we were doing at that time, and a lot of deputants came to us and said, "Well, listen, with the computer, people won't be travelling as much"—they call it telecommuting or something like that—"so why are you spending this money on transit? People will work at home, send e-mails and they'll be doing everything on the Internet. They won't come into work. They won't have to come into work, so why invest money in public transit when everything is going to be done by computer? People will not have to drive."

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Over and over again, all these so-called visionaries who said, "Invest in computers; don't invest in public transit" were dead wrong, Mr. Speaker, because you know yourself, coming in from Wellington county, there are people in cars, wall-to-wall cars, because whether you have computers or not, people have to travel. They

still travel: delivery of goods and services, the shopping trips, the visitations, the doctors' visits. The computers have not diminished the trips. Those phony visionaries who said, "We'll all be telecommuting," were wrong back in the 1980s. Try to get from Aldershot to downtown Hamilton. See the problems.

That's why this comprehensive program invests in Hamilton in a big, big way. I'd love to see the day when the electric rail cars are running in Hamilton again. I'd like to see the day when there are electric light rail cars running throughout the GTA, that even in Durham—Courtice and Clarington and throughout all those beautiful areas—there will be light rail cars all the way across the lake, so that people have a choice. People now take their cars because they don't have much choice.

The GO Transit system has been expanded. As you know, we made some excellent investments in recent years. One of the ways we do this is through the gas tax. We are one of the few jurisdictions now that spends and invests huge amounts of money, over \$320 million a year. Part of the gas tax goes directly into public transit. In fact, I think about 65% or more goes in the GTA, and that's because it's based on the number of trips and the ridership. When the GTA, which is almost six million people if you go all the way to Hamilton, all the way to Niagara Falls, all the way to Peterborough—I'll talk about Peterborough later. You have to have investment in public transit so that there's more room on the roads for the trucks and the service people who need the roads.

If you stand at any corner in Toronto, if you stand right here outside the Legislature—and I see it on a daily basis: I'm trying to get across to the Legislature, and for 99% of the people driving by the Legislature, there's one person in the car. Half of them are on their cell phones. The member from Durham knows that full well. Half of them are on a cell phone; there's one person in the car. They're filing by here 24 hours a day, seven days a week, one person in the car. That is a waste of energy; that's a waste of time. We have to give people the option to take transit.

One of the reasons why so many are coming down in the car is because some people who live out in Don Valley East—as I said, that's one area especially that needs public transit—don't have the option of taking that bus or subway. That's why this Metrolinx will support the extension of the York University line all the way through York University right up to the great city of Vaughan, because that's where the car trips originate. We can do all the great things we're doing with the King Street streetcar and all the great things we've done with the St. Clair streetcar, but if you don't fix the root of the problem—and the roots come from Durham; the roots of the transit trips come from York region.

The other day, I was having an argument with a guy at the grocery store, at Sobeys. I said to him, "Well, how many people do you think live in Mississauga?" He was arguing about the fact that we shouldn't invest in Mississauga, that we should put the money in the TTC. I said, "Listen, where do you think your problems come

from? People from Mississauga need transit. They have to get to work here in Toronto, and vice versa. How many people live in Mississauga?" He said, "Well, 300,000 or 400,000." I said, "More." "Six hundred thousand." There are a million good people living in Mississauga—a million. Brampton: How many live in Brampton now?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: Six hundred thousand.

Mr. Mike Colle: Six hundred thousand. When Bill Davis was there, there were 60,000. Six hundred thousand people deserve public transit, because they are the source of the car trips that come into downtown Toronto. If you want to solve Toronto's congestion issues, you have to go up to the source.

How many people drive from Hamilton and Carlisle and Aldershot? They come in because they don't have the option of all-day GO. We should be running trains all across this GTA. Maybe one day, God forbid, we will actually have electric trains. The whole world is electrified; we're still diesel-fied here. But I won't go there any more.

That's how far behind we've gotten because we've been navel-gazing about it for 30 years in this province. The other cities and countries of the world have put us to shame because they've implemented; they've put things into action. We've got a rail line being discussed to go from downtown Toronto, Union Station, all the way up to the airport. It's been discussed now for eight years. There's already a rail line there. Someday, maybe in another eight years, it will be done. Who knows? All we've really got to show for it—and that's because there wasn't a proper visionary—is the Sheppard subway line that goes nowhere with nobody on it, because there wasn't the regional planning. That's all we've got to show for it. We should have been putting in a subway line or light rail lines going into York region or Durham region. Anyway, we won't go back to the Sheppard line.

The critical thing here is that this bill is a lot more significant than just who is on the board of directors. It's a lot more significant in terms of who's on it. The significance here is that the Minister of Transportation, in his foresight, has put together an implementation plan whereby the planning—and you need a lot of planning in public transit because there are sewer lines that have to be moved, you have to have environmental assessment impact studies, engineering studies; you have to have integrated planning across the GTA and beyond. As I've said, this has to go to Hamilton, it's got to go to Peterborough and it's got to go up to Pontypool. It's got to go into these areas to be effective. I hope the members from Hamilton get up and talk about the need for public transit in Hamilton. That's going to create jobs, because public transit is directly linked to the steel industry because of all the rails you have to put down. If you want to see an explosion or the full firing of the steel industry in Hamilton, you've got to support public transit, because the trains, the streetcars and the subway cars are built in Thunder Bay; the steel comes from Hamilton. Never mind the transit jobs; it's going to provide the steel jobs,

because the steel for the rails, the trains and the cars comes from Hamilton.

I hope Hamilton takes the lead on supporting this integration implementation of transit across the GTA, from Niagara Falls all the way to Pontypool. That's what should be done here. We can't stop at Steeles Avenue. We can't stop at the Don River. We've got to get to Brampton especially: 600,000 hard-working people deserve—if you want to talk about congestion, people say to me, "Gee, there's so much traffic on Queen Street." Queen Street in Toronto is a joy. The streetcar moves rapidly from the Humber—in fact, the Solicitor General, from Sudbury, knows if tourists from Sudbury want to go to Toronto, the best way to see Toronto is to take the Queen streetcar. Take it from in front of city hall and do the loop all the way past the Don River to the east and go all the way to the Humber. For a couple of bucks, you've got the best view of the city of Toronto, face first on the Queen Street streetcar.

But they say there's traffic on Queen Street. If you want to see traffic, go up to Bovaird Drive in Brampton; go up to York region at Highway 7, where Al Palladini's motors is at Weston Road. It's mayhem there—trucks, cars. It's mayhem because there is no public transit infrastructure that's sufficient to meet the needs of the people.

This seamless integrated process is futuristic, but it's also implementation. Our biggest hurdle is trying to get consensus, because by nature—and the member from Durham knows this very well—when you sit on these regional councils, everybody worries about their own constituency, so it's very difficult sometimes for elected officials to think of the bigger picture. Certainly, in the past, what it has been is an approach to say, "Well, we've got to do this piecemeal." But the piecemeal approach doesn't work in transit; you have to look at the overall encompassing transit patterns and where you get the biggest bang for your buck. That's why Metrolinx and GO—hopefully, if this bill is passed—will be integrated into this new plan.

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Again, the good thing is that we've already been investing in public transit—\$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion already to Ontario municipalities for better public transit—and in every budget, we've had major investments in capital projects. We're upgrading the GO stations. You saw the announcement from Prime Minister Harper and Premier McGuinty.

There are shovel-ready projects, but the shovel-ready projects won't be implemented if there's eight more years of navel-gazing and deciding what's going to be built. We're going to choke in exhaust fumes, and it's going to be difficult for businesses to thrive, because their costs are going to go up as there's more and more gridlock.

Also, in terms of quality of life, if you go to the best cities in the world, the ones that have the best quality of life are usually the ones that have good public transit. If you go to Amsterdam, that's a perfect example of excellent public transit, where you can move easily through

an ancient city, seamlessly, on bicycles or public transit. That's the kind of city that's ideal. It's not going to happen in Thunder Bay, but it's something that we can do.

What we can do in Thunder Bay with this kind of support—and I hope the Minister of Northern Development and Mines supports this bill, because it means thousands of jobs for the steelworkers and the excellent workers in Thunder Bay. That's why I get upset sometimes. People say, "You're spending all this money in Toronto, on transit." In fact, I was there, I think in 1993, when I signed the contract for \$1 billion to have the Toronto Transit cars, the T1 cars, made in Thunder Bay. And I think the people of Thunder Bay realize they're linked in transit with the people of Toronto, because if we get subway cars and streetcars here in Toronto, Hamilton wins—Hamilton is the biggest winner of all, actually—and Thunder Bay is next.

That's why we're all in this together as a province, and we shouldn't put down this investment in transit as something that just deals with Durham or Brampton. These are jobs. This is economic competitiveness at its best. Look at the most economically viable cities. Look at Singapore. It puts us to shame, the investments they've made in Singapore.

This is a time and a place to do something that is good for our quality of life, good for our economy, good for our environment, and it will get rid of a lot of the frustration that people have who have to come down from Don Valley East and Brampton and Durham every day or Scarborough–Southwest and fight this traffic mayhem. Let's think of them when we're thinking of this bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to acknowledge, praise and compliment the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. He knows where Durham is; in fact, you could say it's the eastern gateway to Toronto. I'm pleased to represent the riding, and much of what he said I agree with.

It's a matter of having a plan, which is something in a general sense we heard last week in the budget that the McGuinty government doesn't really have: a plan. But this is one where they are certainly on the right track, to use a term.

In terms of the bill, if you'll recall, Mr. Speaker—and you might, because I used to sit close to you—when they introduced Metrolinx, the Greater Toronto Transit Authority, we responded—at that time I was the critic—and we said at that time that the governance model was completely incorrect, and the bill modifies that. The board used to be comprised of 11 people.

Now here's the issue. The organization prior to this was this: It was gridlock in its own design. There were four people from Halton, Peel, York and Durham, one from each; and there were five people from Toronto, which gave David Miller and Adam Giambrone all the control; and then, for safety, the Ministry of Transportation had the chair and the vice-chair. So Minister Bradley ran it; there's no question about it. He sent the two chairs

down with the notes, "Do this," and they did the minister's bidding.

Now, the new organization is a governance model that prohibits elected people—municipal, provincial or federal. That's very important to get the governance part right. However, I still question the legitimacy here. If I look at the changing of the corporate sizing—I wonder if I could have more time, because I certainly can't get this all on the record in such a short time.

Here's the deal, though: The minister's going to appoint all of them now. In fact, they're going to be putting 15 people on the payroll. That's the deal, the order in council. They're Liberal Party supporters, basically. What do you think Robert Prichard is? He's a well-known Liberal, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's interesting; you know you've been around in this place long enough when you see the bills that are fallout from bills that you dealt with a number of years ago. The original bill that set up the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority had all these provisions in it of having GO Transit rolled into Metrolinx. I thought that it would have been acted on sooner, but nonetheless, the moment has come.

I think the critical point, though, is the reality that all of those who are out there today, who are waiting on GO platforms or waiting for a Viva bus or simply stuck in gridlock somewhere on the QEW, should know that this is a shuffling of the chairs on the decks of a ship that is not going very far. If the fundamental issue is not taken care of, if the money isn't put in place to actually make sure that transit works, and works at a price that's affordable to people, that attracts people in, then frankly, it's not going to resolve the problems. You can structure and restructure as much as you want.

The fundamental problems have to deal with urban planning in the greater Toronto area and the greater Golden Horseshoe. Those have not been addressed. The Smart Growth plan that came out was criticized by people who do urban planning for essentially giving us a status quo model, one that looks good on paper but that in fact will lead to more and more gridlock as the years go by. The failure of the government to put the money in place for operating and capital for local transit operations, the failure to actually move in the last—what has it been?—two years to get things in place that have already been planned, says to me that we will see more and more of these bills that speak to restructuring, or even just new structuring, but in the end won't take on the transit crunch and will leave us with all the urban ills that my Liberal colleagues have outlined, saying this bill will deal with them. This bill won't.

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm proud to join in this debate and add a few comments, but I have to say that I was taken aback by my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence

and his passion on this particular issue. I know my colleague served on the TTC way back when, and I'm sure he, like myself, sat on that commission and heard, over the years, the discussions that went on without action. To be honest to everyone, a lot of the inaction has taken place because transit was not well funded in the past. Previous provincial governments and federal governments would request that the cities look at transit and look at regional transit, but when it came time to fund the studies that were done over time, the monies would never come forward. Those studies would sit on the shelf and collect dust.

I have to say I'm sort of very proud that this government created Metrolinx. I was disappointed at the first call, when the appointed board members were all politicians, because I think that was the biggest mistake. I'll be honest with you: I was a member of Toronto council when the previous government created the GTSB. I was a member of that GTSB. And the parochialism that exists between the cities in the Toronto and greater Toronto region is the biggest roadblock in moving progress, if I could put it that way, forward. So I think what this government is doing—we have realized that. We've committed \$17.9 billion to transit. We need regional transit. We need a body that can cross boundaries without political interference and without roadblocks being placed in front of it. I think we're doing the right thing.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to add some comments to Bill 163, which is An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act. Of course, the bill was just introduced yesterday afternoon. We haven't actually even had a chance to have a good look at it, although I gather it's a change in governance that we've been recommending: taking the politicians off the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority.

I would just like to raise the question, what is taking so long to get an integrated transit system in southern Ontario? You go to other parts of the world, and they have systems that are much more integrated. I think back to 1988, when I was in Hong Kong. You could use their subway system—you had a card you used. You put it in when you got on at one spot, it deducted the fare, and you got off at another spot. We should have a system like that, whether you're getting on GO Transit in Barrie and ending up in Toronto, or from Durham or wherever.

My pet peeve is the TTC's crazy token system. Whether you're going a block or whether you're going the whole extent of the service, you pay the same fee, which is absolutely ridiculous.

Two years ago, I had the pleasure of being in Paris and London for our 25th anniversary, and we used the transit systems there. In London, they have the Oyster card. It works on buses. You get on, you just flash it by a device, and then you flash it when you get off, and it deducts your fee. You can add extra value to the card at many spots, at pretty much any transit location. We should have the same thing here in Ontario.

It's time for us to get moving on this because we're way behind the ball.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to respond. I'll return to the member for Brampton–Springdale.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I don't know if everybody has noticed this morning, but we've had a very lively discussion. I just want to thank all the members for participating, and the member from London–Fanshawe for his thoughts. They were interesting. He was engaged and enthusiastic. Certainly, the members for Parry Sound and Durham added some very useful comments. I'm not as cynical and as jaded as the member from Toronto–Danforth. I believe in this process. I think it's going to move forward, and I think we can hear the enthusiasm for this. I'd particularly like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for his history lesson. I think a lot of us haven't been around that long, and if you don't remember your history, you are doomed to repeat it.

I think we're a government that pays attention. We want to help all Ontarians. Certainly, a lot of our northern members were listening closely to the minister's announcement yesterday, because they care about the potholes in Sudbury and Thunder Bay. They know that this is all part of a longer transit continuum and that we need to make these investments throughout Ontario to make transportation a better thing. We want to get it right. We want to put the investments and the right people in place. We are eager to get going. We want to do it properly. We're going to listen very carefully to the debate that occurs in this House. We're going to be listening at committee to find out the best ideas to move this forward; to put the right people in place to make those decisions; to give them the authority to move forward on making transit more efficient, more economical, more green; and to put in place a visionary exercise that provides implementation quickly and gets those shovel-ready projects in the ground for all the municipalities—because this benefits businesses, communities and families across Ontario.

We look forward to moving forward on this. I want to thank all the members for their support this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being quite close to 10:15, this House now stands in recess until question period at 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to welcome some very special guests to the members' gallery who are visiting us today in honour of Epilepsy Awareness Month: Mac Burnham, of Epilepsy Ontario; his colleague neurologist Richard Wennberg; Ms. Margaret Maye, who's been a tireless advocate about epilepsy, and her son, Thomas Drag, who is here and for whom she has become a champion of this important cause.

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House this morning Michelle Parker and Thomas

Parker, who are family members of page Emily Parker from my home community of Barrie. Page Emily Parker today is the captain of the legislative pages. She has come to Queen's Park following in the footsteps of her brother, who was also page here at the Legislature. Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce my guest, Laura Beaulne-Steubing. She has recently been working with the social planning council in Waterloo region, working on a project that will determine the cost of living and a living wage for the Waterloo region. Welcome, Laura.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, and page Ian Coomes, I'd like to welcome his mother, Janet Coomes, and his father, Carlo Meola, to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Runciman, and page Renée Bongers, I'd like to welcome her mom, Christine Bongers, and her friends Adrienne Fournier, Stephanie Fournier and Lori Gilbert to the Legislature today.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, just outside this House, the finance minister told the media that he hasn't heard any negative reaction to last Thursday's budget. Premier, would you agree with your finance minister? Have you not heard any negative reaction to your record-setting, debt-laden budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me tell you a little bit more about the budget, and I had the opportunity to talk to the media about it this morning, in terms of the balanced approach that we're trying to bring through this particular piece of public policy. We are both reducing corporate income taxes and increasing the Ontario child benefit. We're reducing the small business corporate tax rate and we're increasing the minimum wage. We're eliminating the small business clawback and reducing income taxes on the lowest income earners to the lowest level in Canada. On top of that, we're building affordable housing and we're increasing funding for health care, education and post-secondary education. I think it's a budget that is suited to the times. It's going to build both a more competitive and a more caring Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's the old "Everybody be happy" message from this Premier. He has mused about the world changing and that we need to move forward. The people of this province need to be leery, as it's clear that the Premier's interpretation of moving forward is massive taxes, furthered by increased costs on basic essentials that everyday families need: gasoline, groceries, school supplies.

Under this latest tax grab, the average family is going to be paying at least \$500 in additional McGuinty taxes just to fill up the car to go to work, to go to the doctor, to take the kids to school; customers at the door, at the till, at the gate, at the pump, once again being hit hard by you, Mr. Premier.

Premier, why haven't you been straight with Ontarians and told them that when they go to the gas pumps in July of next year, they'll be facing an 8% hike in gas prices because of this new tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, there are a lot of taxes being cut in this budget. We're cutting taxes for businesses by \$4.5 billion, but we're cutting taxes for people by more than twice that amount; in fact, by over \$10 billion. There are \$2.3 billion in permanent tax cuts for Ontarians; 93% of Ontarians are going to get a personal income tax cut.

As I say, we've tried to be balanced. We understood that bringing in a single sales tax would create challenges. That's why we've gone out of our way to ensure that we minimize the impact on our families. The overwhelming majority of Ontario families are going to be ahead as a result of this budget and our comprehensive tax package.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think that starting July 1, 2010, people will determine that by themselves, not based on your rhetoric.

We said earlier that Dalton giveth and Dalton taketh away, and he's taking away much more than he's giving. Minister Duncan deserves to be in the tax-and-spend hall of fame. He has somehow found a way to make Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae seem like penny-pinchers. I got an e-mail yesterday which I thought was quite profound: "Liberals have been spending taxpayers' money like Duncan sailors." I thought that was quite accurate.

Why does it seem that communities in every corner of this province are absolutely terrified of more bully tactics from a Premier and a government with an insatiable appetite for taxing and spending? Are seniors and hard-working families supposed to simply allow you—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I get the sense that we're probably in the right place when it comes to the budget, because on the one hand we're being accused by the Conservatives of being in the hands of the left wing, and we're being accused by the NDP of being in the hands of the right wing.

What I think Ontarians want to know is that we understand that it's not about right or left; it's about moving forward. This budget is designed to move our province forward and it's designed to do that in a way that is in keeping with our fundamental values. We want a more competitive province and we want a more caring province at the same time. We want a stronger economy so that it generates the jobs and creates the wealth that enables us to support good schools for our kids, good health

care for all our families and strong environmental protections for all of us. Those are the kinds of values that have informed this budget and that have always informed our government policies.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Back to the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier had another “mea culpa” day and admitted to “muddying the waters” with respect to the minimum wage policy, after a flip, a flop and another flip. He has now stated that he’s prepared to honour that commitment.

Premier, what about commitments to Ontarians not to raise taxes, which you failed to honour? I have a quote here from June 3, 2007, when I guess you launched your platform. A reporter said, “You promise not to raise taxes?” Dalton McGuinty: “Yes.” The reporter: “Why should we believe you this time?” Dalton McGuinty replied, “Because I’m in charge.” That says a great deal. Yes, you are in charge, and yet again you’ve broken another solemn oath to the people of this province. Premier, how can you stand in your place and tell Ontarians that picking and choosing which commitments to honour is what you consider real integrity and leadership?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don’t like to use a lot of numbers, but sometimes you have to. We’re cutting a lot of taxes through this budget in an effort to create a more competitive economy. We’re cutting them for businesses by \$4.5 billion. We’re cutting them for individuals by \$10.3 billion; \$2.3 billion are personal income tax cuts for individual Ontarians.

In addition to those tax cuts, as I say, we have found a way to invest more in health care. In fact, health care funding this year will go up by 4.5%. Education funding this year goes up by 6.8%. Investment in post-secondary education goes up by 8.2%. Again, we are building both a strong and competitive economy and a more caring Ontario that presents ever more opportunities for the people of Ontario to grow and to flourish.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yet again, the Premier and his sheep-like backbench followers are purposely muddying the waters on their scheme to deliver their debt-ridden budget of massive tax grabs and massive spending.

Premier, your attempt to buy voters with their own money is clearly an admission that your new tax scheme is not any type of reform but a net tax increase. The Ontario Federation of Labour refers to this as “political trickery.” It’s this Premier’s utter disregard for solemn promises to voters that is the heart of the matter. Premier, is this another premeditated broken promise to taxpayers that you think the good people of this province are just going to forgive and forget yet again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I said that the world had changed, but I never knew it had changed that much. We

now have the leader of the Conservative Party quoting the Ontario Federation of Labour, which represents a dramatic change.

Again, I want Ontarians to understand that we’ve worked hard to put forward a balanced approach to the people’s finances. It’s true we’re reducing corporate income taxes, but we’re also increasing the Ontario child benefit. We are increasing the minimum wage. We are investing in affordable housing. We’re going to make sure that Ontario’s low-income earners pay the lowest level of personal taxes in the country. We think it is balanced. We think it’s in keeping with our values. We think it’s the kind of budget that Ontarians expected of us.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess the Premier forgets that I’m a former union president. We’re with the people of this province.

Last week, the Toronto Sun quoted the Premier’s latest massive tax grab and three-installment payoff as—and I’m quoting—“a bribe” to the taxpayers of this province. To lend validity to that argument, I think it’s important to note that the final instalment occurs just weeks before the next provincial election. According to the Premier, using taxpayers’ own money, in its essence, the Sun says—and we share that view—to bribe them is what he views as confronting the challenge. The Premier and his ministers mockingly referred to this as transitional funding. I want to paraphrase your good friend Michael Ignatieff; this sounds along the lines of “a bribe if necessary, but not necessarily a bribe.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a minute. I remind the member that you shouldn’t be saying indirectly what you want to say directly and would ask him to refrain from using those comments.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Finance and our financial officials worked long and hard, together with the federal government, to see what we might come up with by way of a package to ease the transition as we move towards a single sales tax. The federal government has agreed to provide with us \$4.3 billion. We’re going to take \$4 billion of that and transfer it directly to Ontarians through these cheques. Then we are going to take \$300 million plus another \$100 million on top of that and give it to our businesses to help them with the transition costs as well. We think that’s only fair. Is the leader of the official opposition suggesting we just take that \$4.3 billion we got from the feds and pocket it? The purpose of that money in the first instance, the reason that we negotiated such a healthy deal for Ontarians, is to help ease them through this transition period. We think that’s fair on the part of the federal government, and we think it’s right on our part that we transfer that to Ontarians.

WOMEN’S ISSUES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Premier. The word “women” didn’t appear once in Thursday’s

budget. According to StatsCan, the median income for a working Ontario woman is \$24,000, compared to \$35,600 for men. That means that women have disproportionately less disposable income than men and less room to absorb the impact of the McGuinty Liberals' 8% tax hike. In struggling times, why is this Premier adding 8% to women's monthly bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't see that, and I can't support that assertion on the part of my honourable colleague, if you think of the areas where we're putting in special support. We're increasing the Ontario child benefit. When we're talking about single-parent families, they are overwhelmingly led by mums, not dads. When we talk about increasing the minimum wage, there are a disproportionate number of women working for a minimum wage in comparison to men. If we're reducing income taxes for people working at the lowest level, again disproportionately, that segment of our workforce is represented by women. If we're building more affordable housing, again to accommodate many single mums, that too benefits women. So I just can't agree with my honourable colleague in her assertion that somehow this budget discriminates against women. In fact, you might argue just the opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This budget was an opportunity to make issues that affect women, like jobs, pay equity and child care, a priority. Instead, the Premier is forcing through a tax hike that will disproportionately affect women. For gas to get to work in the morning, to drive the kids around after school: 8% more. To heat the home and pay the electricity bills: 8% more. For that morning coffee: 8% more. For the trip to the gym: 8% more. Why is this Premier tacking 8% more on our bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes reference to a number of areas where more work is required, and I'll admit that. But it's just one budget, and if you take a look at what we've managed to do, given this tremendous economic challenge that we have to grapple with, I think it's significant. As well, if you talk about investing in health care, that's very important to everyone in a family. Investing in education is very important to everyone in the family—investing in post-secondary education. If you talk to mums, if there's something that they want for their kids, it's that they want them to grow up strong and healthy and to find opportunities to succeed. Those are the kinds of public services that support all our families.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Premier McGuinty's tax is unfair to all families but it especially hurts middle-income women. Combined with lower salaries and fewer benefits, the deepening recession is making life a lot harder for Ontario women. Instead of a plan to create and sustain women's jobs, women are getting an 8% tax hike in a recession that is hurting families. Why is this Premier tacking on 8% to our bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague brings her own particular perspective on this; I respectfully disagree with that perspective.

I want to come back to something I said at the outset. We've tried to put forward a package of economic proposals that speak to the values of Ontarians. Ontarians know we need to do something and we need to do it together to make this economy stronger so it can support our public services that we want and that we want to give to our kids. At the same time, we want to build a more caring Ontario. So we have a package that cuts taxes for our businesses and at the same time improves standards for people, especially those in the vulnerable classes. That's why we're increasing the Ontario child benefit. That's why we're increasing the minimum wage. That's why we're going to ensure that the level of taxation paid by the lowest income-earning Ontarians is the lowest in the country and why we invest in affordable housing and we put more money into health care and education and post-secondary education and we create 300,000 more jobs. I think it's a pretty good package—

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

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier again: The fact is, the Premier's budget failed women. While there was some talk of stimulus, there was no talk about sustaining jobs for women. Rather than creating more child care jobs and making life more affordable for working women, Premier McGuinty gave away more than \$2 billion in corporate tax cuts. Rather than creating home care jobs and improving care for older women, Premier McGuinty added 8% to basic purchases. Instead of making life better for women and their families, why did the Premier team up with Stephen Harper?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to repeat a story which I think I've told in this House but bears repetition. When I visited the Cabbagetown Youth Centre and announced, together with Minister Matthews, our increase in the Ontario child benefit, I sat beside a mom there who told me that her family income was \$16,000 for herself, her mother-in-law, her husband and two kids. She said that what she wanted more than anything else is just enough money to put her six-year-old into swimming lessons. My friend says that going from \$50 to \$92 a month per child is not significant. I can tell you in the eyes of that particular mom, \$42 more a month per child represented a good deal. It's not everything, and we need to find a way to do more, but I like to think, especially given our economic circumstances, that it represents a progressive step forward on behalf of all Ontario families, helping those who most need the help.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton East knows the rules very clearly.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm back in my seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I didn't appreciate the look that you directed at the Speaker.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier, of course: I'm sure the Premier knows this, but women earn 29% less than what men make, and this recession is making things worse for women.

The budget missed an opportunity; an opportunity to create jobs for women and make life more affordable for families. Major investments in child care and home care could create jobs, improve women's working conditions and reduce the stress on their families, particularly those families that have children and those families that are taking care of older parents and loved ones.

Instead, what did families get from this Premier? They got an 8% tax hike. Why did the Premier's budget ignore the jobs crisis faced by the women in this province and instead whack them with a tax hike?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've talked about some of the supports we put in place for vulnerable families, which are overwhelmingly led by women.

I want to talk just a little bit about two areas of public service which happen to be dominated by women. At a time of negative growth, we're going to increase funding in health care by 4.5%. At a time of negative growth, we're going to increase funding for education by 6.8%. Overwhelmingly, in education and health care, when you talk about teachers and nurses, you are talking about women. Those are the kinds of professions and public services that we continue to come to the table for. Those nurses and those teachers do so much good work on behalf of the rest of us, we thought it was absolutely essential to continue to make those kinds of investments, because ultimately we're talking about public services that benefit all of our families.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This budget failed women in other ways. For example, there's no mention at all in the budget about closing the pay gap. Women earn 71 cents for every dollar that men earn, and the Ontario government is in fact contributing to this problem. Dalton McGuinty owes women workers at government-funded child care and community centres \$156 million in pay arrears that they won in a court settlement. Why is the Premier dragging his feet on pay equity in this province for those women?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to agree at the outset that there is always more to be done. But I think Ontarians are on to the magnitude of this economic challenge before us.

I'm proud of our budget. I know it's not the easiest budget in the world to come to grips with; we are moving towards a single sales tax. But given our circumstances, the fact that we found a way to improve supports for our most vulnerable families which, again, are disproportionately led, in single-parent cases, by women, and the fact that we've found significant new dollars for health care

and for education, including for home care, I think speaks to our values.

These aren't NDP values, these aren't Conservative values; these are values of the people of Ontario, who are asking us to ensure that as we build a strong economy, we build a more caring Ontario. I think we've taken a good step towards that objective.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Premier: The Premier admitted yesterday that he was wrong when he suggested to a group of business leaders in Ottawa that he may not implement next year's minimum wage increase that was clearly set out in the budgetary papers just a few days ago. What is not clear is what the Premier meant. Did he mean that he was wrong to promise the wage increase in the first place, given the tough economic times, or that he was wrong to suggest he was willing to break a budgetary commitment? Would the Premier please clarify which of the wrongs he prefers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What this government has done on the broader poverty agenda: For instance, we are increasing the child benefit this year. We were originally going to raise it in 2011 to the level we put it at last week; we looked at that, reviewed it and moved it forward. That is absolutely the right thing to do.

I can tell the member opposite that the wrong thing to do is to freeze the minimum wage for eight years, which he and his party did. That does not benefit the economy. That does not help people in these times. The policy which has raised the minimum wage was laid out in 2007, and I'm proud that the minimum wage is going up today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm disappointed that the Premier chose not to answer a very direct question which was directed to him about his sense of what a commitment is. I would simply now go back to the Premier, and I would ask him this question. In light of the fact that in the past he has made a commitment not to raise taxes, and this budget includes an HST provision that will raise taxes on every man, woman and child in this province for years to come, would the Premier tell us this: What is it that guides the Premier in his decisions when it comes to which commitments to break and which commitments to keep?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What guides this Premier is what's in the best interest of the people of Ontario. It's about balance. It's about a very substantial corporate tax cut. I'll be curious to see if that member votes against it, because just last week they were calling for it. It's about a very substantial personal income tax cut—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They're getting nervous because they know what they've said.

I'm going to see if that member is going to vote against a \$10.6-billion personal tax cut when this budget comes up for a vote.

It is about balance. It is about building a compassionate society. It's about building a competitive tax system to lead Ontario to that next generation of growth. I'm with Jim Flaherty and the federal Conservatives: This is the right deal for Ontario and for Canada.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Here are some facts: In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, two thirds of minimum wage earners are women; in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, women earn 29% less than men; in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, racialized women earn 36% less than men and aboriginal women earn 54% less.

Since the Premier has flip-flopped on the minimum wage, will this government put in writing that it will immediately raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour as a first step to bringing hundreds of thousands of Ontario women over the poverty line?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In 2007, we laid out a plan to raise the minimum wage; today, it goes up to \$9.50. I would remind the member that we've raised it six times, and I would remind the member opposite she voted against that on each and every opportunity she had.

As the Premier said earlier, there's always more to do. I am proud that we're moving the Ontario child benefit forward. That's why a diverse number of people in the poverty agenda that have an interest in women's issues have supported this budget, have recognized that it's the right step. I wish you would have voted for those increases to the minimum wage. Perhaps you'll have another chance down the road.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Minister of Finance knows very well he's talking about the budget and not the increase to the minimum wage, which we are asking to accelerate.

Women outnumber men in nine of the 10 lowest-paying occupations in Canada. Young women graduating from high school earn 27% less than male high school graduates. The pay gap continues in Ontario into retirement, with 42% of elderly women being poor, and yet, the McGuinty government can't seem to make up its mind whether it's for a living wage or against it.

I repeat, will the minister commit in this House to immediately raise the minimum wage to \$10.25 an hour, and put it in writing? That's the poverty line.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm proud that today the minimum wage is going up to \$9.50, and it will go to \$10.25 next year.

I would like to read just a few quotes. Here's what Pat Capponi, of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, said: "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits, and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians." John Stapleton, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: "This is a budget that favours low-income

people and the working poor most of all because when you look at all the benefits, it is clear that the working poor and those with low wages are going to be better off as a result of the budget measures."

As the Premier said, there is more to do. This budget is in fact about helping those that need our help the most. I am proud of this government's record. I am proud to have voted in favour, six times now, of an increase—

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

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Bruce Crozier: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: In a time when the manufacturing sector is facing a contraction, more and more people are required to transition into a new job. In my community, recently laid-off workers are making the transition back to school and into new jobs.

A unique partnership between the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the CAW in Windsor and St. Clair College is helping recently laid-off workers from Ford make the move into new jobs easily and quickly. Laid-off workers are now training at a variety of occupations, including industrial maintenance mechanic, registered practical nurse, heavy equipment operator or paramedic. I'm pleased to report things are going well and the first class has already graduated. In fact, that class, made up entirely of Ford workers, received the highest class average.

What steps has the minister taken to ensure that Ontario's workers will have the skills and training they need—

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

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for his question and I want to thank him for the example he raises, where a partnership between TCU, CAW and the local post-secondary institutions is paying off for workers in the Windsor area.

I'm very proud that our government has made ensuring that we have the most highly skilled and highly educated workforce a priority. Through the Reaching Higher investments, we have 100,000 more people in our colleges and universities and 50,000 more apprentices. In last spring's budget, the finance minister introduced a \$2-billion skills-to-jobs action plan which resulted in our Second Career program, which complements a variety of programs offered by Employment Ontario, which helps people re-enter the workforce either directly or through training and retraining programs. We are there for Ontarians who are looking for a new job.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: To the minister: The recent budget included money for economic development, infrastructure spending and the green economy. However, these initiatives will only be successful if we have the people with the right skills to see these investments through to success.

We know that in order to compete in the global economy, we need to have a well-educated workforce that can adapt to ever-changing demands in the workplace. As we shift to a knowledge-based economy, it will be imperative for workers to access the education, training and skills upgrades that they need to remain competitive. This will require a concerted effort among all levels of government to ensure that people have the resources and tools they need to get the skills required to compete, and as we emerge from the economic downturn, we need to be sure that they have those skills.

Would the minister tell the House what the government's doing to expand skills training to ensure workers are equipped—

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

Hon. John Milloy: I was very proud that the Minister of Finance's budget last week complemented the programs that were outlined in the 2008 budget. It included an investment of \$750 million over the next two years in the area of skills training and support for the unemployed.

We will be investing \$90 million over two years to expand literacy and basic skills training—just one example. This will help up to 13,000 people per year, and I think members realize how important it is to provide that foundational training for workers as they want to re-enter the workforce or enter a training program.

For young people, we are increasing spending on summer jobs for students by 57%, or \$32 million. We know how valuable these work experiences are, and this investment means that over 100,000 young people will find jobs this summer, with targeted resources for youth in high-needs neighbourhoods and greater—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Finance: Much of Ontario's manufacturing and processing, our farming, forestry, fishing and mining have been devastated of late. Your budget speech announced a 16.7% tax cut for manufacturing and processing, but it's not in the budget.

Minister, people take you at your word. Our farming, automotive and US Steel sectors and the jobs they support needed this tax cut yesterday. The new fiscal year starts tomorrow, but your tax cut is not there. Minister, why did you not include your announced tax cut in your actual budget for the coming year? There's no tax cut for manufacturing.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd invite the member to look at the budget again, because it's there. It's quite clear.

Let me tell you what Ian Howcroft, the vice-president of the Ontario division of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said: "Overall we're very pleased with today's budget, it addresses many of our long standing issues and priorities. I think that it shows that the government was listening. We're particularly pleased with

regards to the harmonization of the GST and PST, we've been advocating that for a long, long time. We're also very pleased with the announced reduction in the corporate tax from 12% down to 10% so I think that is a very positive step for Ontario manufacturers, which ultimately will help the whole economy and all Ontario residents."

This balanced package, which balanced the interests of all parts of the province, is in fact in the best interests of manufacturers, farmers, fishermen, logging and all industries in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'll repeat: Those touted tax cuts are not in the budget. You're starting tomorrow, and in your budget speech you indicated small businesses are the backbone of the economy. Your speech announced a tax cut for small business and a general corporate income tax cut as well. However, you didn't put them in the budget. They are not in the 2009 budget. I'm getting calls from small business. Why would you mislead business?

Minister, the fiscal year starts tomorrow. You say you're going to announce these tax cuts in a future budget for July 1, 2010. Will you explain to those people losing their jobs why your announced tax cuts in your recent budget speech are not in this coming year's budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm delighted to hear that the member opposite wants to do it faster, because your leader says this is the wrong plan.

I won't occupy the House's time. I'd refer the member to page 16, paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. I would refer him to chapter 3 in the budget, which gives the detailed breakdown. There are about 70-odd pages on this. I would refer the member to the budget bill—you really should read those bills—and the changes to the corporate tax act that are included in that.

It's a shame that the official opposition hasn't read the budget bill. It's a shame they haven't read the budget, because these tax cuts for businesses—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's a shame you can't tell the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Kitchener-Waterloo will withdraw the comment she just made, please.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

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

Ten seconds.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The members opposite have been calling for these corporate tax cuts. We're doing it. What they haven't called for is a balanced package that aims to help all Ontarians, the lowest-income Ontarians as well as our businesses—

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

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Red Cross home care workers are on the picket lines right now in Peterborough. These SEIU workers, among 3,000 across Ontario, are striking because of substandard working conditions, a direct result of this government's failure to properly fund home care. The vast majority of home care workers, to the tune of 95%, are women who are trying to feed their families and survive off wages which keep them hovering at the poverty line. What does the minister say to these hard-working home care women who are asking for nothing else but a living wage?

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question. I know that there is a negotiation which is going on between the Red Cross and the SEIU. I trust that both parties are making efforts to conclude a new collective agreement. I know the Ministry of Labour mediator has been assisting the parties at the bargaining table and does remain available to provide further assistance.

I can tell the member, in contrast to some of the comments she made in her question, that in fact home care funding in this province has increased by \$573 million, a 47% increase in funding under this government. That has meant that 220,000 more Ontarians are receiving home care since the year 2003.

1110

These kinds of increases, this kind of support, have been consistently opposed by members in her caucus and by that member in particular. I would encourage this member to support the investment we are making in home care, because it provides vital services to Ontarians requiring that care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: In last week's budget, the government gifted business with a \$2-billion tax cut, but there was not one penny in the budget for the home care system. Is it this government's plan to keep the home care system running on the backs of unpaid and undervalued women?

Hon. David Caplan: No, there's not one penny; there are several million of them which are going to home care. In fact, we have unveiled a home care strategy, which will be coming in the fall and which will focus on the quality of care that residents will be receiving. That's why we're working with both parties and hope to resolve the dispute that they have on reaching a collective agreement.

But the effort this government has made—for example, a \$30-million personal support worker stabilization strategy, increasing the base minimum wage for qualified PSWs from \$9.65 an hour to \$12.50 an hour. That's why we've provided improved compensation for travel costs and for travel time, why we've introduced service volume targets and training initiatives.

It is part of a comprehensive plan which in fact is providing more care, so that Ontarians are getting better care and higher-quality care. It would be helpful if the member opposite and her colleagues would support these efforts to provide better care to Ontarians, because I know they are greatly—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a question today for the Minister of Community and Social Services. At one point in Ontario's history, it was not only socially acceptable but even encouraged to lock individuals with disabilities in facilities, facilities that were often located outside of communities and where the individuals were separated from family and friends. Thankfully, Ontarians now reject that idea. We, as a collective society, endeavour to treat individuals with disabilities with the respect and the dignity that they deserve.

Steven Muir, a constituency assistant of mine, is a self-advocate for Community Living, and we keep each other updated. Minister, would you update Steven Muir, this House, and Ontarians today on the status of the remaining three facilities in Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank the member from Oakville for his personal contribution to an issue and a topic that is tremendously important. I am proud to stand up this House today, as the Minister of Community and Social Services, and announce that today marks the end of institutionalized care for individuals with disabilities in this province. The doors are literally closing on the last three facilities in Ontario, and tomorrow we begin a new era for this province's developmental services community.

I know it is a rare occasion to have members of this House stand up in their places and reach across the floor and thank their colleagues, but this is one of those unique moments. Despite our political differences, each party in this House contributed to this day. The Conservatives and the NDP both closed facilities during their time in office, and I am incredibly—

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's clearly a defining moment in Ontario's history. I know that families across this province are thankful that we're all embracing community-based care. I have a constituent, Dianne Garrels-Munro of Community Living Ontario; she's also a very strong supporter of community care.

Now, I don't want to minimize the importance of this day, but I feel that in the midst of the economic turmoil we're all experiencing, it's important to balance compassion with discipline. Minister, would you advise this House what the government is doing with the money that we're no longer spending on the operation and maintenance of those three facilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, a very good question. We have invested nearly \$276 million to close the last three institutions. The funding previously used to support residents living in these three facilities is being used to support these individuals living in the community. In 2008-09, the ministry invested over \$108 million in operating funding to support residents who have moved to the community as a result of the closure of the facilities.

In addition, the ministry has invested over \$100 million in one-time capital funding to create new homes in the community for former facility residents.

Closing the remaining facilities is not about cost savings. We are closing the three remaining facilities so that residents can participate more fully in their communities in our society. Each and every one of us should be proud our province is moving in this direction. Tomorrow really is—

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

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Bill Murdoch: My question is to Minister of Health Promotion. Some time ago, I read a petition in the House, signed by many people from all across Ontario, asking the government to enforce regulations in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. You informed me in a letter that this was the job of the local public health units, so I sent your letter on to the local public health units. They got back to me and said, “Yes, our job is to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, but we’ve been discouraged and told not to” by your government on reserves, where these smoke shacks are.

So, Madam Minister, I would like you to explain to the House, who enforces these laws that we make in this House?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I’m going to refer the question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for the question. I know that he’s not asking us to direct the police. I can reassure him and everyone in this House that the RCMP, the OPP, the municipal police services, and our First Nations police services work closely together in trying to solve this contraband problem, with some success. I look forward to talking about the successes in my supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: There’s some miscommunication here. The minister informed me that the district health unit did it. This has nothing to do with the police. They’ve never come into this. I have the minister’s letter right here, saying that the district health unit would do this.

Madam Minister, you told me this. I asked them, and they said your government told them not to do it. So all I’m asking you, since it’s under your ministry—and I hope that you can answer this—is, who am I supposed to believe? You’re telling me one person is doing it. They’re telling me they’re not doing it. Who’s telling the truth around here?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The truth is that in 2008, the seizure of contraband cigarettes was up 46% from 2007. This year, the trend hasn’t changed. Our policing men and women have seized over 25 million cigarettes and over 10 tonnes of fine-cut tobacco and related products.

I want to assure the member, and all the members in the House, that our police services are working closely

together. We understand that there’s a problem. There is more to do. We continue to address this concern.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The honourable member knows that we don’t deal with points of order during question period. You can talk to the table and file the necessary paperwork.

The member from Thornhill.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. We’ve now had several days to reflect on the budget, and there are a range of questions brought on by hasty, half-thought-out measures which are quickly bubbling to the surface.

My question is this: Why is the minister throwing roadblocks up for the resale of homes? The largest single purchase of most people’s lives, and the one thing that most people can claim represents their savings, is their home, one of the items hardest hit by your attack. Instead of offering a helping hand, the minister wants 8% slapped onto inspections, real estate fees, legal fees, and moving—thousands of dollars more than now. Why is he taxing the resale home market?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we are providing a \$10.6-billion tax cut for individuals and families to help them adjust, in addition to the transition payment that we have spoken about. This tax cut for individuals is designed to assist all families in this economy, and it is designed to ensure that the economy grows faster in the future, which is what we really need to see happen in terms of spurring the sale both of new and existing homes.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Let’s talk about how far that \$1,000 goes. The average cost of a home in my riding of Thornhill, for example—a three-bedroom, two-bathroom house—is about \$500,000. These homes are not mansions; they are where hard-working families live. People have gone without to build a future and have realized the dream of owning their own home. On that \$500,000 home, my constituents will pay about \$2,200 more in taxes at sale, and \$2,200 is a lot of money, especially to those who have spent a lifetime saving to buy a home.

Does the minister care about families aiming higher, about seniors preserving value? When are this minister and his government going to get off their duffs and start helping good Ontarians?

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdrawn.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that resale homes are exempt from the new single sales tax. I would remind the member that the balance of initiatives, including the most generous new home tax credit in the country, help offset the challenges that people will face. But most importantly, the balance

of the package, the personal tax cuts, the corporate tax cuts, the investment in people of very modest means, will help ensure that this economy moves to the next generation of growth, the generation of growth that will see more people buy their first homes, that will see more people move up.

Finally, I would remind the member opposite that we've increased the senior citizens' property tax credit quite considerably, and that member and his party voted against that measure.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Premier. This government's budget left 22,000 child care spaces across Ontario on the chopping block. It leaves moms like Chrystal from Hamilton in limbo on a child care wait-list for months before she finally received a response. Chrystal is 25 years old and has a two-year-old son. With OSAP payments, rent, bills, food and other bare necessities to cover on her single income, their family is just making it by. Now she can't even be sure that one of those limited child care spaces that she is counting on is going to continue to exist.

What does the Premier say to Chrystal and tens of thousands of moms like her who are facing increased uncertainty because this government has yet again failed to invest in child care?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important to recognize that we have made tremendous progress over the past number of years when it comes to child care in this province: 22,000 new spaces, more families receiving subsidies. We have made a commitment to the youngest people in this province and we remain firmly committed to that.

The issue around the loss of federal funding is clearly one that concerns me and all of us tremendously. This federal government cancelled the early learning and child care agreement; that cost Ontario families billions of dollars. We are determined to do whatever we can to keep all of the spaces in this province open, but we are calling on our federal partners to step up to the plate and be part of child care in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The one thing the government could have done is to have actually funded the spaces. That's what the government could have done. Regardless of how the minister tries to spin it, all the McGuinty government did for child care in its budget was cowardly pass the buck to the federal government, which the minister just did, on a provincial responsibility. She knows it's a provincial responsibility, and she turned her back, instead, on the working moms of this province.

Adequate, affordable, licensed, not-for-profit child care can reduce poverty and create employment. Child care is a critical investment that the McGuinty budget

flat-out ignored. As the Toronto Star puts it, "Expanded daycare would create jobs for child care workers, enable parents to retrain for better jobs so they can participate in the knowledge economy that Ontario's future depends on, and help single mothers lift their families out of poverty through work."

With so many moms and kids waiting, how can this government continue to ignore the social and economic benefits of child care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the leader of the third party and our government completely agree on the importance of child care, but it's important, I think, this time, that we get some facts straight. There are some grossly exaggerated numbers that are being floated around, so let's put this challenge in perspective, recognizing that this really is a challenge.

We spend in this province close to \$900 million on child care. Approximately two thirds of that money comes from the provincial government. The money we're talking about that is in jeopardy represents just over 7% of our total child care budget. The numbers that are being floated about do not reflect that reality.

As I say, we are working very hard to resolve this issue. It is a serious problem. We are asking all members of this House and all citizens—

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many Ontarians and their families have been caught in the middle of the global and economic financial storm. Yet, despite this predicament, more and more Ontarians continue to rely on vital services like health care. In last week's budget, this government committed to a \$42.6-billion health care investment. Still, the media coverage I read the next day focused mainly on the economic or taxation aspects of the budget. I know Ontarians want to hear more about what this budget means for health care, so I ask the minister how this budget will ensure that the good people of this province will continue to receive the quality health care services they deserve and have come to rely on.

Can the minister assure Ontarians that health care is still a top priority for this government?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm glad that my honourable colleague has asked this question. It gives me a chance to reassert that we are committed, on this side of the House, to protecting our province's health care system and to making progress on our key priorities.

Our government believes in a strong, universal health care system with low wait times and increased access to family health services. That's why we're investing more in this important sector. In 2009-10, our government is investing \$13.2 billion more than in 2003-04. That's a 45% increase in funding for our health care system.

For five years, we've made significant progress in health care, and we're going to keep doing more. In our 2009 budget, our government is taking action to make

our economy competitive and to protect Ontario families. That's essential, because our ability to strengthen the health care services that Ontarians rely upon depends on a strong, growing and competitive economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Minister, but I want to ask an important question. Like this government and like many Ontario families, hospitals are doing everything they can to thrive in these difficult economic times. In the 2008-09 budget, hospitals in Ontario were promised that for 2009-10, they would receive a base funding increase of 2.1%. But many are worried, including hospitals in my riding such as the Ottawa Hospital, Bruyère Continuing Care and the Royal Ottawa. They want to know whether, with the economy taking a turn for the worse, the government will be able to guarantee this much-needed funding increase.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House what this government is doing to help Ontario's hospitals confront the economic challenge? Will they receive the 2.1% increase, as promised?

Hon. David Caplan: The government is protecting hospital funding during an economic crisis. As the finance minister laid out in his budget, I'm proud to say that we plan to meet our commitment and provide hospitals with a 2.1% base funding increase. All included, all programs' hospital funding will increase by 4.7% in 2009-10.

Tom Closson, president of the Ontario Hospital Association, has called the 2009 economic plan, and I quote, "a positive budget for Ontario's hospitals and patients." He said, and I quote: "By protecting hospital funding in 2009-10, the government is positioning hospitals to maintain access to high quality health services in the challenging year ahead."

Other Ontario hospitals have echoed this sentiment. Murray Martin, Hamilton Health Sciences' CEO, called this base increase, and I quote, "very, very good news" for—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is also to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, you would be well aware of the underfunding of hospitals in Ontario's high-growth areas. This includes the GTA 905 and some of my neighbours. Our Central East Local Health Integration network continues to have major hospital funding gaps. Compared to the provincial average, the funding gap is \$226 per person. Citizens are concerned that our community hospitals—and I should say that the headline from the doctors in my community is, "ER Cuts Would Devastate Clarington"; that's according to the doctor.

1130

Minister, will you and/or your government end the funding gap and give fair allocation to our hospitals in Durham?

Hon. David Caplan: It's always hard to know from the Progressive Conservative Party which kind of question—earlier today, we had the cut questions; now, we have the spend questions.

The member refers to the Lakeridge hospital. I know there have been a lot of rumours going around in the community. There was a recent gathering there. The hospital has quite clearly stated to the community: "There has been absolutely no discussion at the board about an emergency department closure" at the Lakeridge Health Bowmanville site. The hospital gets about 32,000 emergency visits each year, and with the exceptional growth expected in Clarington, Bowmanville is sure to see the number of patient visits expand.

That's why I'm so thrilled about the commitment that this finance minister made in the budget to an additional \$40 million in growth funding to our hospitals which have experienced it.

It would have been possible for this member, when he had the privilege to serve on this side of the House, to make those kinds of investments. Regrettably, he and his colleagues did not see fit to do so. But this government is taking the appropriate—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, on Sunday afternoon, in the rain, people stood in support of the hospital—despite what your comment is. Dr. Tony Stone and others are seeking assurances that Bowmanville's hospital will keep the level of services in the future that they currently provide today—that isn't asking for more; it's asking for the same—such services as internal medicine, general surgery, and intensive care. This is essential to our rapidly growing community of over 80,000 residents.

We've been advised that there are no plans to close the emergency department. But what will happen next year? This is actually referred to as death by a thousand cuts.

Minister, will you stand in your place and tell the citizens of my riding that Bowmanville's hospital will have the funding they need to continue vital services such as internal medicine? Will you tell Durham riding that the ER and other essential services will continue in our community and not be withdrawn?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, at Lakeridge Health—more than \$54 million in base increase funding since 2003-04. That's a 26% increase that this member has voted against each and every time the budget policies of this government have been debated and voted on in the House.

The chair of the hospital's board of trustees called the rumours that the member talked about here in his earlier question about the changes in the hospital "unfortunate and unnecessary." The hospital has stated its commitment to a vibrant hospital in Bowmanville.

I think as I've indicated in this House, the Ontario Hospital Association has called upon this government to meet its commitments to base funding increases. In fact, in his 2009 budget speech, and as will be debated on and

voted on in the House, this minister and this government have delivered on that commitment.

I hope that this member opposite will vote in support of Lakeridge hospital and the kind of necessary funding that is going to be provided to them.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Yesterday, referring to the Sharkey report, the minister said, "We're bringing all of the partners to the table to enhance that care...." On the same day the minister was boasting about the implementation team led by Shirlee Sharkey, four of the participating unions announced they are pulling out. They see the process as a distraction that is not going to achieve minimum care and staffing standards—a waste of their time.

Minister, the vast majority of workers in long-term-care facilities are women. The majority of residents in long-term-care homes are women. These women are not getting the care they deserve. Why did the McGuinty government abandon these women and not fund a minimum standard of care?

Hon. David Caplan: I must tell you that we asked a very noted expert, Shirlee Sharkey, to take a look at the long-term-care system in the province of Ontario. Specifically, the member opposite points to hours of care. Shirlee Sharkey found that there was no evidence to support the minimum standard of care that the member opposite and some of the unions, quite frankly, have alluded to as what they desire to see. In fact, she said that we should be looking at the individual needs of residents in long-term-care homes and be able to develop a care plan to meet those individual needs. I think that's very much the right kind of approach.

Our union partners—of course, we've engaged them. We welcome them. We want them to understand that we share a common goal here: making sure that our most vulnerable residents in the province of Ontario get the care that they need. We hope, and I hope, that they will come back to the table, that they will work constructively. It has been the approach of this government to—

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

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

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Jim Watson: I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2009 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DICK ILLINGWORTH

Mr. Frank Klees: I rise today to pay tribute to a legendary public servant, a great Canadian and a very good personal friend, Dick Illingworth, who died on Sunday, March 29, 2009, at the age of 92.

The Second World War veteran came to live in the town of Aurora in 1954. Dick Illingworth had a great distinction: to serve as aide-de-camp to four Ontario Lieutenant Governors. He was also executive assistant to Ontario PC cabinet Minister John White.

Dick began his career in municipal politics in 1965, when he was elected councillor in the town of Aurora. From 1969-73, Dick Illingworth was His Worship the Mayor of Aurora, a role he assumed for a second time in 1983 for two more years.

In 1985, Dick began his career in journalism, which spanned newspaper, radio and television. His news and current affairs program on Aurora Cable TV, known as *Our Town*, was a must-see. He also wrote numerous columns and stories for a number of York region publications, and for last eight years wrote for the *Auroran*, which is owned, published and edited by his very good friend Ron Wallace.

His many contributions to York region and the town of Aurora were recognized last year when Dick Illingworth was presented with Ontario's Senior Achievement Award by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley.

His brilliant legacy of public service to Aurora and York region is the enduring testament to the memory of this great citizen of Canada and Ontario.

On behalf of all members of this House, I extend my sincerest condolences to Dick's wife, Dorothy Clark-McClure, and his family.

TYLER CROOKS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Corporal Tyler Kevin Crooks, 3rd Battalion, November Company, Royal Canadian Regiment, based at the Canadian Forces base in Petawawa, celebrated his 24th birthday on March 20 this year, and it was the same day that he was killed while on duty in the Afghanistan mission.

Tyler Crooks received a hero's welcome when his body was repatriated to his hometown of Port Colborne last Saturday. Thousands and thousands of people lined the roadways. Many of them knew Tyler. It's a small town. If they didn't know Tyler, they knew his parents. But even those who didn't know Tyler knew they had lost a brother and knew that they were welcoming a hero back home to his final resting place.

This young man in this short lifetime touched many lives with his loyalty, his constant smiling, his wit and good-natured teasing. He had a large extended family that included many aunts, uncles, cousins and family friends.

Part of the DeWitt Carter Public School alumni in Port Colborne; upon his grade 8 graduation, he was co-valedictorian with his close friend Brandon Chevalier.

Hard work and diligence were the hallmarks of Corporal Tyler Crooks's time at Lakeshore Catholic High School. He led his lacrosse team to capture SOSSA and OFSAA championships.

Hockey was one of his passions, as it is for so many young people down in Niagara region, beginning with minor leagues in Port Colborne and Welland, eventually graduating to the juniors with Dunnville and Port Colborne. Tyler continued playing in a military hockey league. He was an avid Toronto Maple Leafs fan, which was always a source of fierce but friendly competition between Tyler and his godfather, Greg Couture, an avid Montreal Canadiens fan.

Tyler was a graduate of the police foundations program at Niagara College in Welland. To support himself and pay for his tuition, he worked at JTL machine shop in Port Colborne, where he forged many long-lasting relationships with his co-workers.

He was an outdoors enthusiast, enjoying the cottage and hunting and fishing with his family and many friends.

He leaves behind his brother, Tage; Alfred "Alphie" Crooks and Karen Crooks; and his grandmother, Margaret Wagner. Grandparents Archie and Rose Crooks and Kevin Wagner are deceased already.

I ask this assembly to join with me in paying tribute to this brave young man, a Canadian hero. I tell you, his passing has honoured us, because we witnessed one of our own perform at the highest level of courage and sacrifice. I ask this assembly to have a moment of silence in recognition of Corporal Tyler Kevin Crooks and his great sacrifice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If I may, I'd like to go to the statement from the member from Niagara, and then we'll observe a moment of silence.

TYLER CROOKS

Mr. Kim Craiton: It is also with a sad heart that I rise today to talk to this House about Corporal Tyler Crooks, a brave soldier who served our country with pride and valour and distinction. I also want to talk about those he loved and those who loved him.

When a soldier dies in service to our country, we all feel a deep pain of sorrow, sadness and regret, no more so than this past week in Port Colborne, as the honourable member from Welland has expressed to this House. That pain reaches out across our neighbourhoods, into nearby communities and across our great province—and it has also in the community of Niagara Falls.

It is so sad; this native of Port Colborne, Corporal Tyler Crooks, and his beloved fiancée of six years, 23-year-old Kelly Maxwell of Niagara Falls, were planning their wedding and had a very bright future ahead of them—alas, it's not to be.

The entire Maxwell family mourns this terrible loss, for it affects them so personally. Our hearts are heavy for their sorrow and their pain.

Tyler's time on this earth was short, but our memories and those of his fiancée, Kelly, and the entire Maxwell family, will last forever.

On behalf of my community, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to the Crooks and Maxwell families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in memory of Corporal Tyler Crooks.

The House observed a moment's silence.

BOWMANVILLE HOSPITAL

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise in the House to congratulate my community for the successful rally on Sunday March 29, in support of Bowmanville's hospital. Pouring rain couldn't keep hundreds of hospital supporters from the outdoor rally at the town hall. We heard first-hand of the importance of our hospital from speakers representing a complete cross-section of the community, from very young to very old, from professionals to citizens at large.

I'd like to thank, specifically, Dr. Tony Stone, who has been a lead in this fight to save the hospital; Dr. Ben Fuller; Cory Kuipers; Frank Stapleton; Michael Patrick; a young member of the community, Steve Kay, who spoke eloquently about his concern for the hospital where he was born; Jennifer Bowman; Gerry Johnston, the chair of the hospital foundation; and all those who spoke so eloquently about Lakeridge Health Bowmanville and what it means to them.

Volunteers, nurses, doctors, leaders in the business community, elected representatives and patients all agree the provincial government must not allow any reduction in services at Bowmanville's hospital site.

All of Clarington's 80,000 residents, their friends and their neighbours are strong advocates for the hospital in many ways, as volunteers and contributors to the foundation. Whether we are speaking to health care administrators or to the government, our message could be no more clear: no more cuts to the Bowmanville hospital.

1510

I would urge Minister Caplan, after my question today and his rather high-handed response—as if it didn't really matter, that they were pouring lots of money in—that we aren't equally funded, and we want to work with the minister for Lakeridge Health's future—

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

EPILEPSY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: As many members of the Legislature may know, March is Epilepsy Awareness Month. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that affects over 300,000 Canadians from coast to coast. Here in Toronto, there are over 40,000 people living with epilepsy, and it affects one in every 100 school children.

March 26 was Purple Day, a day where people from around the world are asked to wear purple in support for those living with epilepsy. Started just last year, Purple Day has already spread as a grassroots movement all around the world. This year, provincial landmarks like the Big Nickel in Sudbury, Niagara Falls and the CN Tower here in Toronto were illuminated in purple to mark this important occasion.

Today in the Legislature, Epilepsy Ontario, along with the Margaret Maye Epilepsy Initiative, has been hosting information sessions for MPPs about the important work being done to raise awareness about epilepsy in Ontario.

I would like to acknowledge Epilepsy of Durham Region, Halton-Peel, the city of Toronto, York region and all the many other experts in epilepsy who are here joining us today.

I would in particular like to thank Epilepsy Ontario and Ms. Margaret Maye, without whom this event would not have been possible.

I encourage members of this House to take the time to learn more about epilepsy at Queen's Park today.

In conclusion, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for members of the Legislature to wear the purple ribbon in the Legislature today in recognition of Epilepsy Awareness Month.

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today and I want to do my statement on the closure of the three regional centres that the minister, in answer to a question today, made comments on. Today is the day they actually closed, and that's actually the end of all the institutions that we have in the province. I know there's been strong support from Community Living Ontario to move in this direction, and I know that all three governments have been involved in it.

I want to put on the record today one of the things that has bothered me. And I'm glad the minister actually put out this press release. It's something worth saving, because time will tell whether or not this process has been a success. There certainly is an issue out there with the amount of money that's available for people with mental health issues and whether the group home setting is the appropriate correction for this, and time will tell that as well.

But I do want to say that in Orillia and in my riding of Simcoe North, the Huronia Regional Centre, originally the Ontario Hospital School, has been part of the culture of that community. It's been a great employer since 1876 in our community, up to 2,000 residents at one time, and I just want to thank all those people, all the families who had their children in these facilities and the doctors, nurses, the staffing, all the people who made Orillia and area a better community. I appreciate that and thank you all for this opportunity to make a statement today.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I was pleased to learn that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has recently signed the federal-provincial Growing Forward agreement on behalf of Ontario. This is an important step to completing this program that farmers in my area have been waiting to hear about. The federal, provincial and territorial governments signed a framework agreement last July, which guided the development of the Growing Forward suite of programs. The agreement commits funding, over five years, for non-business risk management cost-shared programs across the country.

The federal and Ontario governments focused on three goals: (1) a competitive and innovative sector; (2) a sector that contributes to society's priorities; and (3) a sector that is proactive in managing risks.

The major program areas discussed with agri-food partners in developing the new Growing Forward suite of programs have been environment and climate change, food safety, traceability, business development and bio-security.

I understand that the federal government and Ontario will be releasing more details about how growing forward will help Ontario farmers in the near future.

I want to thank our hard-working Minister Dombrowsky and her staff at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs for their efforts.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Kuldip Kular: As with previous budgets, this year's promises to invest heavily in skills training for workers throughout Ontario. Budget 2009 will be of particular benefit to many of my own constituents, workers confronted with the challenge of competing in an ever-changing and now weakened economy.

I'm particularly pleased that that budget 2009 allocates \$90 million to expand literacy and training programs for 13,000 people. A further \$94 million will be used to provide 15,000 newcomers the tools needed to succeed in the new economy. Our veteran workers are retraining, but we must also ensure that our youth have the opportunity to master the skills and the experience required to enter our workforce. That's why \$90 million more is being invested in summer employment opportunities for young people.

All told, the McGuinty government is investing nearly \$700 million to improve the competitiveness of our skilled workforce. This is certain to be of great assistance to workers right now and in the longer run will give Ontario a competitive edge when prosperity returns.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Ontario knows that small businesses are the backbone of the Ontario economy. They are responsible for half the employment in this province,

and we are committed to ensuring they have the tools needed to succeed.

The McGuinty Liberals recognize the hard work these men and women do on a daily basis, and the last budget created bold tax initiatives to help these businesses now and in the future by proposing \$4.5 billion in business tax relief over three years. These measures build on the tax relief already in place, such as the elimination of capital tax in 2010. That will lower business costs and add to Ontario's competitiveness in support of growing small businesses. We are also cutting the general corporate income tax rate from 14% to 10% by 2013; cutting the rate for small businesses from 5.5% to 4.5%; cutting the small business income tax rate by 18%, allowing business to invest in new staff and new technology; and eliminating the CIT small business deduction surtax, making Ontario the only Canadian jurisdiction that would eliminate this barrier for growing small businesses.

These tax-relief measures underscore the McGuinty government's commitment to Ontario businesses and the people who run them. While there's more to do, we'll continue to work hard to develop policies that nurture businesses and give them the tools to succeed in this new economy.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the March 31, 2009, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

LOGEMENTS À PRIX ABORDABLES

Hon. Jim Watson: I rise today to update members of the Legislative Assembly and the public of Ontario on the progress being made by the McGuinty government to improve Ontarians' access to affordable housing and at the same time to strengthen our economy.

Decent housing plays a crucial role in reducing poverty, and it creates a strong base from which to find a job, raise a family and strengthen the community. Our government has made substantial efforts to create more affordable housing throughout the province of Ontario.

Recently, we were very proud to announce that the province, along with the federal government, is pro-

posing to invest \$1.2 billion in social and affordable housing over the next two years. This would include more than \$700 million over the next two years for social housing rehabilitation and energy retrofits, over \$360 million to help create new affordable housing for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities, and \$175 million over the next two years to extend the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program. Through this investment, we would renovate 50,000 social housing units and build 4,500 new affordable housing units.

1520

Nous sommes convaincus que cet investissement débouchera sur la création de 23 000 emplois à court terme dans le secteur de la construction et de la rénovation, tout en améliorant la vie des personnes à faible revenu.

Tout ceci s'inscrit dans notre plan de prospérité consistant à rendre l'Ontario compétitif.

It's part of our work towards a better future for every Ontario family and every community across the province. Low-income families, single men and women, senior citizens, victims of violence, persons with developmental disabilities, those suffering from mental illness and those who struggle with homelessness all benefit from affordable housing.

Housing goes beyond providing someone with a place to live. It gives Ontarians a chance to go back to school, find employment and start a family. For example, one of the residents of Genesis Court in St. Catharines is a young woman who told us how affordable housing has changed her life. After moving to a wheelchair-accessible apartment, she is now attending school again. Soon enough, she will be able to get a job to support herself and give back to the community. Investments in affordable housing are more than mere dollars; they are investments in the dignity, pride of home and sense of community that every person in Ontario deserves.

We have also invested \$100 million through the 2008 budget that will repair about 4,000 units and help nearly 10,000 Ontarians, \$127 million for the DOOR program to help create and repair affordable housing, and \$80 million for off-reserve aboriginal housing. I had the pleasure of visiting one of these construction projects in Ottawa, at 20 Rochester Street, in the riding of Yasir Naqvi, where we were joined by my colleagues the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur; M. Jean-Marc Lalonde, le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell; and Mr. Phil McNeely, MPP for Ottawa-Orléans. As a result of the \$100-million investment that we made last year, we are investing \$1.8 million through Ottawa Community Housing, replacing windows and making other structural changes to update and upgrade this aging building. There, I spoke to a woman who told me, "For the first time since I've lived here, I'm not ashamed to tell people where I live."

I was very pleased to be joined at that event, along with my elected colleagues from the Legislature, by Chris Laundry, executive director of Nepean Housing; Vic Delaunay-Belleville, president, Nepean Housing; Karen Sexsmith, managing director, Co-operative

Housing Association of Eastern Ontario; Dave Lewis, manager, Cumberland Housing Corp.; Catherine Boucher, executive director, Centretown Citizens Ottawa; and Perry Rowe, executive director of the Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre and chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness.

In addition, we are delivering close to 35,000 rent supplements that will help make rent more affordable to Ontario families. In our poverty reduction strategy, which was also highlighted in Minister Duncan's budget, we've committed \$5 million per year to the provincial rent bank program. This program has prevented more than 18,700 evictions to date and helped vulnerable families stay in their homes, rather than being forced into shelters.

Our efforts don't stop here. We are working to develop a long-term affordable housing strategy for Ontario to ensure the most vulnerable among us can obtain decent, affordable shelter. Later this spring, we will start consultations across the province to hear from Ontarians how they see the future of affordable housing. I would encourage all MPPs, just as many of us did during the poverty reduction strategy, to hold our own community consultations in addition to the ones that I'm going to be hosting along with my parliamentary assistants, Mario Sergio and Carol Mitchell. We will be looking for progressive, inventive and financially sustainable ideas, ideas that make Ontario a better place to live, work and play.

Affordable housing remains a priority for our government, and that was highlighted in the fact that we are matching the federal contribution, to bring the total to \$1.2 billion over the next two years. It's extremely important for ensuring the stability and well-being of Ontario's families. After all, we believe that every Ontario family should have a safe, healthy, affordable place to call home.

I thank all of those housing providers from the municipal sector and the not-for-profit sector for their good work at the grassroots level. We look forward to partnering with them and the federal government in the years ahead. Merci beaucoup.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. John O'Toole: I acknowledge the minister today, and his response with lots of numbers, but I want to make it very clear: Our government's position has always been to provide direct rent subsidy, as opposed to these housing projects which he's outlining today.

In fact, I can recall during the time the minister has spoken about—let's look at the record of what he's done in the past five years. What I'm looking at here is a report that was issued by the Alliance to End Homelessness, a report in his own paper today. This is what they say: "The alliance's fifth annual report card reveals that the number of men, women, youth and children using homeless shelters in 2008 increased by 15.2%. There were 747 homeless families with 1,179 children (under 16 years old) last year." In summary, Perry Rowe, the chair, said, "It's an appalling, shameful situation." They have nothing to be proud about and nothing to brag about.

Add to that the dire situation announced recently in the budget. The most vulnerable, the lowest-income earners, will be the hardest hit. They will be paying on every consumption, from rent to cable TV to their cellphone to their telephone bill to their energy; you name it, they're going to be paying 8% more. What have they done—because they know they're weak on this file. They've come out today and they've announced this great tranche of money.

I should say this: It was almost forced on them by the federal government. They're the lead share on this, and in fact they're now matching that money, shamefully matching the money. But what is it? It's another post-dated cheque. There are two years of implementation. By the time they get the paperwork done, even the contractors will be paying 8% more to refine the heating system or put in the sub-metering—oh, by the way, the sub-metering on energy has been ruled out by the Energy Board—so that these apartments, often not well-maintained under this government, are going to be paying more for energy.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can tell you right now they're shouting because we've touched a nerve. Why is he standing in his place today when in five years they virtually haven't done a thing? Last year there were 134 new units. I can't believe the shamefulness of this getting up today, announcing this federal money that they're going to spend in a program over two years. Most of this stuff is post-dated cheques, until after the next election. It's shameful. It's like some of the \$300 that you're going to give them in these cheques, these payoffs, will go to pay the increased rent, because all of this maintenance is going to be charged somewhere to the tenants. So I'm still concerned. I think they've got it wrong. I'm not surprised. They don't have a long-term plan.

But I can say to you that I'm more specifically concerned about the budget itself. The budget is another tax grab on the most vulnerable people—not always, but often renters—and I would say to you that on this side of the House, we're there to defend the people who are the most vulnerable in society. It seems that the Liberals have turned their backs on them once again.

There's more talk in this report, and I'm referring here to the Alliance to End Homelessness. This is what they said. I'll send the minister a copy when I'm finished speaking here, after a minute and 27 seconds. If I was to be asking the minister to do something, it would be to make a clear commitment on the number of units. In my riding of Durham, for instance, I hear this frequently and I say, "I'll raise it with the minister." So I'm raising it with you today: What is it that you're promising to Durham region today? This is a community of 600,000 people. They need to have their fair share of this funding. If you get a chance to respond to this, maybe you'll clarify the record. How much of this announcement of \$1.2 billion are you going to flow to Durham region? We see it as an issue. You've made the promise. You're the government. What's the plan? Either you're just making

an announcement or you have no plan whatsoever that I can figure out.

1530

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to rise on behalf of people like Angel Robinson. Let me tell you about Angel Robinson. Angel Robinson is a young mother of two children. She has a 13-year-old and a three-year-old. She put her name on an affordable housing list when her first child was born. Angel is still waiting for affordable housing. She gets an income on mother's allowance, on social assistance, of just over \$1,000 a month only because she has a special food allowance, and she spends almost as much—\$17 less than she receives—on her housing. She is the face of the precariously housed in Ontario. She will not be helped by this announcement one iota. She is typical of the 125,000 households—families, not individuals—that are waiting for affordable housing across Ontario as we speak; 70,000 in the greater Toronto area alone—70,000.

Now, in response to this, what do we get? We get a decrease in the funding that Dalton McGuinty has given to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He should be depressed, not gleeful. In fact, there's a big drop of almost \$222 million, 25%, from his budget from three years ago and a 6% drop from the current year. That's his budget, and that is how much Dalton McGuinty values affordable housing. He slashed this ministry more than any other. So please, don't rise and be joyful about a cut in your own budget, Mr. Minister. That's certainly important.

This announcement will not help Angel Robinson or anybody who lives in privately rented housing. It will not help non-senior households. It will not help those who do not have disabilities. It will not help, in fact, about 90% of those in Ontario who are waiting for affordable housing.

Yes, it's a good thing that Toronto social housing will be refurbished, and it's a good thing that social housing across Ontario will be refurbished, but that accounts for about 5% of the housing need, and yet it's half of the new budget. To quote Michael Shapcott, senior policy fellow at the Wellesley Institute, he said, "People living in social housing, seniors and people with disabilities all deserve healthy and affordable homes. But so do all the other Ontarians who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads."

Compare this to Alberta. Alberta spent about 24 times more per person, about \$3 billion of provincial dollars on homelessness in its budget—Alberta of all places. Yet here we have a so-called Liberal government that is spending far, far worse than one of the most regressive Conservative governments. That's nothing to be gleeful about.

Finally, that's nothing to celebrate for the Angel Robinsons of the world; these are the faces of precarious housing in Ontario. Some 4,500 new units, and again we don't know what they mean by "affordable," because certainly we have seen this government build what it calls affordable housing in the past; housing that you

need to be making \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year to be able to afford. That's certainly not housing that's affordable for somebody on OW; that's certainly not housing that's affordable for somebody on minimum wage; and that's certainly not housing that is affordable for Angel Robinson and her two children. Will she have to wait for the second child to reach 13 before she reaches the top of that list of 125,000—and growing—in Ontario for affordable housing?

The other thing that's interesting to note is that the announcement gave an example of a Liberal riding and a housing project. I certainly hope that the housing projects are not all going to be built in Liberal ridings. Few though they may be, certainly we hope and we will follow up to make sure that they are spread across all of Ontario, and certainly spread to people like Angel Robinson.

So, in conclusion, this is not joyful news; this is a sad and shameful day for Ontario. It's a sad and shameful day for people like Angel Robinson and all of the other tens of thousands of people who are waiting for crumbs from this master's table, and crumbs is all they're getting. Crumbs is what this housing minister is giving them and hoping they'll be satisfied. They are not.

PETITIONS

ROUTE 17/174

HIGHWAY 17/174

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition that is printed in both official languages, so I will be reading the first part in French and the second part in English.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a besoin d'être élargie à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8, afin d'améliorer la sécurité routière;

« Attendu que la route 17/174 a été reconnue par le passé pour sa condition dangereuse ainsi que le taux d'accidents annuel notable;

« Attendu que cette route représente la principale voie d'accès à la capitale nationale pour la population ouvrière de Clarence-Rockland, Alfred et Plantagenet et Hawkesbury;

« Attendu que les comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell ont manifesté leur intérêt à effectuer une étude environnementale destinée à l'agrandissement de la route 17/174 en passant une résolution au conseil;

"Whereas the city of Ottawa passed a council resolution asking that either the province or the united counties of Prescott and Russell take the lead in the environmental assessments; and

"Whereas both the federal and provincial governments have each committed \$40 million towards the widening of Highway 17/174;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide the necessary funding to the

united counties of Prescott and Russell to undertake the environmental assessments required for the widening of Highway 17/174 from two to four lanes between Trim Road and Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8.”

I gladly add my signature to the petition.

MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

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

“Whereas to impose a total ban on an activity or sport under the guise of protecting the public from injury as presented by ... Bill 117 to amend the Highway Traffic Act, section 38.1, ‘No person shall drive or operate a motorcycle on a highway if another person under the age of 14 years is a passenger on the motorcycle,’ would be an injustice to us, the people of Ontario; and

“Whereas the restrictive aspects of this proposal far outweigh the minor risks associated and confirmed by the annual Ministry of Transportation statistical safety reports, and further, there is no clear distinction that ‘motorcycle-related injuries’ apply to Ontario streets or highways, as stated in defence of Bill 117;

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

“Request that Bill 117 be rejected and not become law.”

I’ve also signed this, and Megan will take it to the clerks.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Burk’s Falls health centre. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Burk’s Falls ... 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

“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 Noel.

BIOGAS FACILITY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I have a petition from the London Optimist Sports Centre at 6 Cuddy Blvd., London, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the construction of a biogas facility in proximity to the London Optimist Sports Centre would be detrimental to the health and safety of the patrons of the sports centre; and

“Whereas it is within the jurisdiction of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from granting environmental approval of the biogas facility;

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

“We wish to lodge our objections to any environmental approval of a biogas facility at 8 Cuddy Blvd. in London, Ontario by Z7529 Almira Truck Service Ltd.”

The applicant respectfully requests that the Legislative Assembly refuse to grant such approval.

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

1540

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funds the school health support service through community care access centres across this province for children with special needs who require physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech-language therapy in public schools and in private and home schools; and

“Whereas the Minister of Children and Youth Services envisions an Ontario where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential; and

“Whereas school-aged children with complex and multiple disabilities residing within the Erie St. Clair CCAC region receive a severely eroded level of service that denies them the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential; and

“Whereas school-aged children with complex and multiple disabilities residing in Sarnia–Lambton can now no longer receive these school health support services from Pathways Health Centre for Children, the children’s treatment centre in our community that employs paediatric specialists who work with these children from birth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately transfer funding and responsibility for delivery of school health support service to school-aged children with complex and multiple disabilities from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and community access care centres to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.”

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have a petition regarding property tax assessments.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the MPAC tax assessment system, the near impossibility to

predict one's assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried they may be forced to sell their homes; and

"Whereas changes are needed that will make Ontario's property tax system stable, understandable, fair and sensitive to homeowners; and

"Whereas property assessments in Parkdale-High Park have risen between 28% and 45% between 2005 and 2008;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Support the 'freeze till sale' plan to bring fairness to Ontario's property tax system so that new assessments happen only at the time of sale and when a building permit is obtained for renovations totalling more than \$40,000."

I certainly agree with this and will give this to Carmen to be delivered.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

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

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

"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 affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: Today I've had two occasions to speak on this important issue and now I have thousands and more to come. The petition on this issue reads as follows:

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

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

"Whereas Clarington is" indeed "a growing community of over 80,000; and

"Whereas we support the continuation of the Lakeridge Bowmanville site through access to on-site ser-

vices, including emergency room, internal medicine and general surgery;

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

I am pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas:

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

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

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

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

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

"To reject the recommendation of a bridge at Kettle Island and to select a more suitable corridor to proceed to phase 2 of the interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study."

I agree with this petition and send it to the table by page Megan.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "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 on behalf of my constituents.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: 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, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

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

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

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition which is emblematic of a problem in our society. It reads as follows:

"Whereas consumers rely on timely and accurate information from insurance companies and other financial institutions when they apply for access to locked-in pension funds; and

"Whereas the disclosure of wrong or incomplete information about pension fund access can have devastating consequences for the consumer; and

"Whereas the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) is currently limited in its power to enforce standards for the disclosure of information about access to pension funds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact the necessary laws or regulations that will enable the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to hold financial institutions fully accountable for information they give clients about access to pension funds."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of many seniors who are having difficulty with their pensions.

BATHURST HEIGHTS ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr. Mike Colle: I've got a petition from the good people of the Bathurst Heights ESL centre in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 2,000 adult ESL students being served by the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre, operated by the Toronto District School Board, in partnership with the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas this is the only English as a second language (ESL) learning centre in this area of the city located directly on the Spadina subway line, making it accessible for students across the city; and

"Whereas newcomers in Toronto, and in the Lawrence Heights area, need the Bathurst Heights Adult Learning Centre so they can succeed in their career opportunities; and

"Whereas the proposed revitalization of Lawrence Heights threatens the existence of the centre;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that any revitalization of Lawrence Heights include a newcomer centre and ensure that the Bathurst Heights centre continues to exist in the present location."

I know that the member from Trinity-Spadina also supports this. I'll affix my name, but I can't affix his name.

1550

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 30, 2009, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: "To whom it may concern:

"My name is Shannon Horner-Shepherd, and today I will be going in to US Steel to receive my notice that my services will no longer be required. I began my employment with US Steel (Stelco) almost exactly 11 years ago, May 24, 1998. How do I know that exact date ... it was the day that I breathed a sigh of relief that I had found stable employment and it was one week after I learned that my newborn daughter, Gabrielle, would probably not live to see her first birthday. You see, at the

time, I was a single mom of two children, Sumer, four years old, and Gabby, five weeks old. I felt blessed that in the turmoil of learning that my newborn daughter had been born with Trisomy 13, a rare genetic disorder that, at best, would see her being severely physically and developmentally disabled and, at worst, cause her a premature death, I had a 'good' job. It was my job at the steel mill that gave me a feeling of safety and hope, a feeling of security, that I would be able to look after both of my children and be able to provide the care that would be required to help Gabby live her life to its fullest potential. I had health benefits, something I had never had before for my children. I had job security for the rest of my life. I wouldn't need to worry about how I would pay for the medications, the therapies or all the added necessities that come along with having a child with a severe disability. I had hope.

"Today, as I stand before you, my hope has been replaced with worry, my heart has been filled with dread and my shoulders are burdened with stress. I am still the mom to Sumer, who is now 15, Gabby, who has just had her 11th birthday, and also Justin and Nicholas, my twin sons, who are five years old. Gabby is still alive, and yes, the best-case scenario was true ... she is severely physically and developmentally delayed, but she is alive. I will be filing for my unemployment insurance on Monday, but I know that with the severe backlog of EI claims, it will be weeks before I see my first payment. As I have been honest with you in baring my heart, I will be honest now. I, just like thousands of other steelworkers who are now out of work, don't have weeks to wait. I have done my best to minimize the collateral damage that will be done once I lose my job. I have tried to explain to my boys that right now 'mommy doesn't have the money' to buy the Hot Wheels set that my sons so badly want ... how do I make them understand that the simple toys that they want are enough money to buy milk and bread and diapers for their 11-year-old sister? How is it that I have gone from being envied by others for having a stable job and health benefits to being pitied for being a steelworker and that I will now be living below the poverty level?

"Have I lived past my means? I don't think so. Did I buy a wheelchair-accessible house last year so that I didn't have to worry about Gabby falling down the stairs and fracturing her spine again? Yes. Have I purchased a van that can be wheelchair accessible if and when Gabby has a stroke and becomes permanently wheelchair-bound? Yes. I have tried to get through the last 11 years with being the least amount of burden on the system because I could theoretically 'afford' to have a disabled child? Yes. Have I put money aside so that my other children will be able to attend college or university in the future? Yes. Have I lived beyond my means? No. I've just simply 'lived.'

"Now, I am praying to the same person I prayed to 11 years ago, but this time I am not praying that my baby girl lives just one more day, makes it to one more Christmas or sees one more birthday. No, this time I'm praying that I'll be able to keep my house, feed my kids

and find a job that will help cover the medical expenses. I need a job that provides security and stability. I know that EI cannot cover the expenses that I have in a month, that I will have to choose between Easter presents for my kids or gas in my van to take Gabby to doctors' appointments. I will try to accept the fact that I am no longer employed in a sector that has job stability and was once, along with the auto workers, the pride of Ontario. I will accept the fact that I, just like so many others, will have gone from being able to provide the little extras that we all long for to not being able to provide basics. I will wake up each day as I did starting 11 years ago and pray that we make it through just one more day, week and month and maybe, just maybe, someone will hear me, and my prayers will be answered."

The budget that was delivered last week by the government did not answer the prayers of Shannon, did not answer the prayers of her family. In fact, today New Democrats, just like Shannon and just like so many other people across this province, are profoundly disappointed with the government's budget. It's a budget that misses the mark. It misses the mark in so, so many ways for the hundreds of thousands of women and men who have lost their jobs just like Shannon and the many, many more who are just a pink slip away. This budget has made their lives even harder.

I thank the members for allowing me to read that letter into the record because when I heard it for the first time, about a week and a half ago, I didn't know what was in the government's budget. But when I reflected upon how I would put into words the profound disappointment—profound disappointment—that we feel in this budget, I thought the best way to do that would be in the words of a woman like Shannon. In a steelworker's home in Hamilton a week and a half ago, when she read out the speech after learning that she was no longer going to be employed at US Steel, there wasn't a dry eye in that crowd. I told her that when I got the chance, I would make sure that I let the people in this chamber, particularly the government members, know the kind of pain and anxiety that she is facing with her job loss. To Shannon Horner-Shepherd, I think we all owe a debt of gratitude because she bared her soul. She bared her life, and gave me the opportunity to illustrate to members in this chamber and to the rest of Ontario exactly what real people in this province are feeling: the fear and the anxiety.

That fear and anxiety have not in any way been assuaged by this government's budget. Ontarians were looking for a budget that actually delivered hope, that delivered real hope, but we didn't see it. Instead, we ended up with a budget that provides some short-term jobs. We were hoping for long-term jobs. We were hoping for a budget that was going to provide long-term jobs, a budget that was going to lay a long-term economic vision for this province, but we didn't see that.

Instead of bold vision in tough times, women and men of this province got what? They got an 8% tax increase. An 8% tax increase is what the women and men of this

province got instead of getting real delivery in terms of hope for the future so that people like Shannon and so many others would know that eventually they would have a long-term job to go to. But that didn't happen. Instead they're going to have an 8% increase on the basic necessities of life. When Shannon goes with her child to take her to that doctor's appointment, it's going to cost 8% more to fill up that van with gasoline. Instead of a jobs plan that reinvigorates our industrial sector, we got a massive overhaul of the tax system in the province of Ontario. That is not what Ontarians wanted. That's not what they were looking for in this particular budget. They were looking for relief, and instead they got a tax hike.

Budgets are about priorities, and it's clear that the McGuinty government's priorities are miles apart—miles apart—from the priorities of worried families in this province. For those reasons, and for others I'm going to be outlining today, New Democrats will definitely be voting against this budget.

1600

The first issue I want to spend some time on is the harmonized sales tax. I think it's really clear and really important to put out there that there's nothing harmonious at all in the harmonized tax. There's nothing harmonious about the tax at all. The new tax hike is going to put 8% on goods and services that were previously not taxed—8%. We've said this time and again over the last couple of days: 8% on everyday purchases that families have to make. Filling up the car or van on the way to work, 8% more; paying the monthly electricity bill on home heating, 8% more; buying an inexpensive pair of shoes, 8% more; newspaper and magazine subscriptions, 8% more; getting your hair done, 8% more; paying the Internet bill, 8% more; buying prepared foods under \$4, morning coffee and doughnut, going to the hot dog stand, 8% more; for new homes over \$400,000, 2% more. People think, "2%? That doesn't sound like much. What's the big deal with 2%?" Well, on a \$350,000 home, which is the average home price in this area, that's an extra \$7,000.

These tax increases are not just to get us through the economic crisis; these tax increases are permanent. These are permanent measures that families will feel the brunt of not just for weeks and months to come, but forever. They're going to be felt immediately, and they're going to be felt over the long term, long after the Dalton dollars are handed out in the next year and a half or so. With joblessness rising and people settling for lower pay, family incomes are not rising. Tax hikes are going to have a real, measured impact on families with already strained budgets.

At the pump, the tax grab is going to add 7 cents to an 85-cents-a-litre fill-up. That's a bite; that's a bite out of the pocketbook, absolutely. But what happens in the summer, and we know it's going to happen, when gas goes up to \$1.35 a litre? It wasn't so long ago that it was up that high. Then we're going to have another 10 cents on top of that, foisted on people by Dalton McGuinty's

budget. People aren't looking forward to that. Already they can't afford to make ends meet. Already people are struggling, and yet this government thinks it's the right time to ding them again with an 8% tax increase.

We're not talking about nickels and dimes. The average household already spends about \$2,000 a year to heat their home and another \$2,000 to pay for electricity. What that means is that with this new tax increase, an extra \$320 is going to come out of each and every person's pocket just to pay the taxes on these utilities, on these bills. When all the extra costs are built in, the extra 8% on the coffee, the doughnuts, inexpensive shoes, what's going to happen? It's very, very obvious. The cost of day-to-day life is going to increase, and that increase is a direct result of this government's decision to ding people with an 8% tax. It's going to cost families a lot more just to get by, and that's the vision that this government brings to the table in a time of economic crisis when people are so concerned, so worried about the future. And what response do they get from their callous government? They get a whack over the head with a new tax.

The McGuinty Liberals are claiming that companies will lower their prices as a result. That's what we're hearing, right? As a result of this harmonization process, companies will be saving, and those savings are going to get passed on to the consumer. That's what Dalton and Dwight would have us believe. After all, between big corporate tax breaks and the end of the sales tax on inputs, corporations in fact are the ones that are the big winners in this budget. But does anybody here really believe, does anybody across Ontario really believe, that oil and gas companies are going to be passing on their savings to consumers, to people like you and me? I don't think so. In fact, I don't think anybody believes that there's actually going to be a reduction in prices as a result of the harmonized tax. What about home heating and electricity? Everybody expects, I'm sure, that Enbridge in Thunder Bay, Hydro Ottawa and Union Gas are all going to be reducing their prices to offset this 8% tax increase, right? I'm sure that's what people expect.

In fact, when you don't get your rebate, when you don't get your price reduction you should be calling Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan and your Liberal MPPs and have them explain why it is—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oh, I'm sorry. Thank you, Speaker. I'll use the proper titles.

Will Tim Hortons bring their coffee and muffin prices down? I somehow doubt it. Will Ontario home builders take that \$7,000 hit? I don't think so. I think that quite the opposite is going to happen. In fact, I'm sure of it. I don't believe it, New Democrats don't believe it and families and people in Ontario don't believe it either. They don't believe it because it's something that has been tried before. That theory has been pitched. It has been pitched many times, and it used to be called trickle-down economics: the old theory that says that corporate tax cuts are going to eventually create jobs and prosperity

for everyone. Well, it hasn't worked. It doesn't work and it hasn't worked.

We don't have to look farther than the United States for an obvious case study of this. Years of slashing corporate taxes have gone hand in hand with deregulation. The result has been that millions of families are losing their jobs, losing their savings, losing their homes. We were talking just today earlier about the prices of houses in the United States. Things are so desperate there that you can get a house that was once \$400,000 for \$99,000. So it's obvious that those policies don't work. They're policies that don't work, and yet this government hangs its hat on it.

Thursday's budget couldn't have been more clear about this government's commitment to that very same suite of policies, to trickle-down economics. They're giving \$4.5 billion in corporate income tax cuts over the next three years. That's obscene. It's obscene because it's a tax on corporate profits, and the companies that need help in this brutal recession are not the companies that are making profits right now. The ones that make profits don't need the help. It's the ones that aren't making profits that need the help. The government has its priorities backwards. At the same time, this budget took \$2.3 billion out of the pockets of hard-pressed consumers. In other words, \$4.5 billion is being shovelled out the door to exactly the wrong companies at the wrong time.

The government could have chosen the side of ordinary Ontarians by tabling bold, new job plans for the people of this province. It didn't. And in the midst of what's perhaps the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Ontarians should be very worried. There are struggling companies out there in real need. They are losing money and they are laying off workers and cutting hours, wages and benefits. They're not going to benefit. These companies are not going to benefit from the corporate income tax cuts and it's not going to help them stem the worries and frustrations being felt by the people who work for those companies.

I wonder how the Premier came to support sales tax harmonization. After all, it wasn't so long ago—only in November of 2008—that the Premier and his finance minister rejected the HST. Recommendations made by his task force on competitiveness, productivity and economic progress said that he should be implementing the HST, but he rejected it out of hand at the time—both the finance minister and the Premier. In fact, when the report came out, the Premier worried about the impact of HST on who? Who did he worry about the impact on? He worried about the impact on families, the Premier did, not so long ago. Here's what he said:

"Not only from our treasury perspective but from the perspective of consumers, some things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel and other things like that that are really important to consumers would go up in cost."

Talk about crocodile tears. And didn't we find out about the sincerity of this Premier and his words a mere

six months ago when, just a few days ago, instead of being concerned about the families in this province and the effect that the HST would have on them, he turned full circle and rammed it down their throats? So now the very suffering of families who are going to have to worry about things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel and other things like that that are really important, the Premier says, to consumers—because the costs will go up with the HST. He doesn't care about that anymore, apparently. The finance minister and the Premier don't care about that anymore. They're not concerned anymore. I don't know why.

Things have gotten much worse, actually, in the last six months for families than they were when that report came forward. Things are much worse today and the outlook is much worse today than it was when that report was first delivered into their hands. But for some reason, notwithstanding the fact that back then, in musing with the Premier about why it was a bad thing to put this HST in place, Minister Duncan mentioned that it wasn't time to tinker with the province's tax regime—that was some time ago. Why is it that after a few short months go by and things look much, much worse than they did then, the finance minister and the Premier turn full circle? It's unbelievable that when things got worse, the government, instead of making things better for people, chose to bring forward a budget that makes things better for large corporations and turned its back on regular folks in this province.

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Less than six months later, deeper into the economic crisis, the government is proposing full-scale tax harmonization. The McGuinty government has gone from cautious to callous and has put big corporate tax giveaways ahead of jobs and ahead of a basic jobs strategy that would put workforce protections in place in this province.

Budget 2009 shows that this government has struck a backroom deal with the federal Conservative government. As a result, Mr. McGuinty has taken a page right out of Stephen Harper's ideological playbook. The budget offered the government a chance to make smart and sound investments, to guarantee long-term job growth, and again, the government missed its mark.

New Democrats believe that the key to any smart long-term jobs strategy is investing strategically to secure Ontario's future industrial capacity. The government have not done that at all. Instead, they've chosen the easy way out by shovelling taxpayers' hard-earned money out the door without ensuring that long-term jobs of the future are going to be created right here in Ontario. Make no mistake: New Democrats do support infrastructure spending. But if this government was serious about positioning Ontario's economy for the future, they could have brought forward a buy-Ontario policy with real teeth.

I'm going to give you an example. New Democrats are strong supporters of funding public transit systems, but that spending should be creating real long-term jobs right

here in this province. We've called for a buy-Ontario requirement that 50% of the value of all transit vehicles purchased in Ontario be made in Ontario. Similar provisions already exist in the United States and Quebec. This province can be a global leader in manufacturing cutting-edge transit vehicles, but only if subways and streetcars are manufactured in Thunder Bay and buses are manufactured in Mississauga.

New Democrats are strong supporters of spending on bridges and roads and sewers, but the steel that goes into those projects needs to come from Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie, not offshore.

There was an opportunity in this budget to turn Ontario into a green energy technology leader, but nowhere in the budget is there a hard requirement that 60% of the content of new wind and solar projects be manufactured here in Ontario. Quebec has exactly that policy, and, as such, they have ended up in a situation where they are the lead manufacturer of wind turbines across the entire country.

So here's an example—I've already actually given one example, the example of the human costs of not implementing an effective buy-Ontario program, because if we had an effective buy-Ontario program, we would still be making steel in places like Hamilton. People like Shannon would still be able to have a job; she could make sure that her family's needs are being looked after, ensure that her disabled child gets to those appointments, that they have gas in the van to be able to move around, make sure that they still have a roof over their heads and can make ends meet. Just like I said in my opening remarks, in Shannon's words, she's extremely concerned, like so many Ontarians, about just keeping a roof over their heads.

Shannon is looking for the government to institute a buy-Ontario program for infrastructure that would require that most of the steel used in taxpayer-funded projects is coming from Ontario. That's not a lot to expect, that a government understand the value—the necessity—of maintaining a decent manufacturing and industrial sector in this province. It's the backbone of the good jobs that people in this province have been able to rely on to create a decent standard of living and quality of life not only for themselves and their families but for the communities that they live in. In Shannon's view, a policy just like that would have helped US Steel to get her and her fellow laid-off steelworkers back to work. Like most workers, she would like some sense of security from the government that they won't let her family and all the families in similar situations fall through the cracks.

Unfortunately, the government did exactly that. They brought down a budget that is letting not only Shannon but many, many families—steelworkers, auto workers, forestry workers, manufacturing of all sorts, workers who do that kind of work, are all falling through the cracks because of the lack of vision and lack of leadership that this government has shown in its recent budget.

Here's another example: Dominic has worked at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant for 22 years as an

assembly worker, spot welder, NC operator and quality control inspector, and now as a machinist. Previously, Dominic worked for seven years in the forest industry as a lumber scaler. Dominic feels that manufacturing—the key to Ontario's economy—is drying up at an alarming rate and fears that too many plants are being shut down at breakneck speed. Dominic says this: "Once these industries shut down it is very expensive to start them up again. Our ability to produce real goods would be gone, leaving us to the mercy of foreign countries and corporations. This is especially dangerous at a time of war or economic uncertainty." If Ontario had a real requirement that 50% of the value of transit vehicles were manufactured in Ontario, then Dominic would feel that his job was safe.

I want to talk a little bit more about the other way in which this budget missed the mark. The government could have demanded real accountability for taxpayer-funded assistance programs for the ailing companies that we're going to be shoring up. There's close to \$3 billion allocated in the budget for distressed industries, but there's no indication that the government has learned the lessons of the past, and so there's no requirement that real accountability is going to be tied to the monies that flow to help these industries. There's no doubt that government has an important role to play, and we support the need for government to play a role in ensuring that the core manufacturing and resource sectors emerge from this economic crisis and that they emerge in a healthy state, that they emerge robust and able to employ workers again in this province.

But we also believe that the companies have to be held accountable for the taxpayers' dollars that are being funnelled their way. I've mentioned this many times before, and I'm going to mention it again, because we firmly believe that that requires a number of things: one, iron-clad job and investment guarantees. We need to know for sure that as our dollars get flowed to these companies, the result is going to be that workers in this province are going to be put back to work, that the jobs are going to stay here, and that the investments that companies make in terms of research and development, in terms of the development of new products, happen here in the province of Ontario. In order to ensure that the accountability measures are put in place, we need accountability provisions that put the public and workers on the management boards of these companies. We need to have a voice in the decision-making that's happening. If our dollars are going in, then the accountability comes with us having a say in the decisions that are being made.

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Similarly, there's an opportunity as well to ensure that those dollars are treasured and used wisely by the companies by making sure that we have equity shares in return for the taxpayers' dollars.

Finally, we want to make sure that there are hard caps on executive compensation. We brought this issue to the table because we believe that the companies that are getting government aid have to make sure that their top

executives are not simply walking away with the money. We have to avoid the kinds of debacles that have already taken place across the border—things like AIG, if you remember that embarrassing moment not so long ago. We cannot have that happening here, and the only way to guarantee that we don't have it happening here is to make it very clear that those companies that accept assistance and aid from Ontarians agree to putting a hard cap on the salary of those executives.

I want to talk a little bit more about what we think could have been done in terms of creating jobs in this budget.

Since June 2004, almost 300,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. That doesn't include 18,000 direct jobs lost in the forestry sector, which has devastated many, many northern Ontario communities. Every part of this province has been hit hard by job loss, from Chappleau to Windsor and from Kenora to Cornwall.

Under the McGuinty Liberals, Ontarians have lost more than 30% of their high-paying manufacturing jobs. Some 30% of the good jobs in this province are now gone. That's \$13 billion ripped out of Ontario's economy. For the past five years, New Democrats have sounded the alarm over the loss of manufacturing jobs, and we have put forward constructive solutions: solutions like a jobs commissioner and a reasonable industrial hydro rate for such energy-intensive industries as forestry, steel, chemicals, pulp and paper. These are the good ideas the New Democrats have brought to the table, and we will continue to fight for those ideas.

But regrettably 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs is really just the tip of the iceberg. It's just the beginning of the issue. Dalton McGuinty has dithered during Ontario's manufacturing maelstrom, and bold action is needed if we are serious about sustaining good jobs and renewing our manufacturing sector.

I want to be blunt. It is just too damn easy to close a plant in the province of Ontario. Corporations are being allowed to continue to pull up stakes far too easily. Yet there is little in the way of protection for hard-working Ontarians. In this budget, the government had an opportunity to reassure these Ontarians that a lifetime of blood, sweat and tears for a company would actually account for something. The government had a chance to ensure that every last penny of back wages, of vacation pay, of severance and pensions would be paid out by a company if it runs for the border. But I looked in vain in the small print of this budget for any indication at all that the government would establish a wage protection fund that would protect the wages of workers. I looked in vain for any enhancement at all of Ontario's woefully inadequate pension backup so that pension benefits in this province are actually truly protected. I looked in vain for some sign, any sign, that the government would make an amendment to the Employment Standards Act that would force companies to sit down, to have a conversation, to try to come to some solutions with workers and with governments before a plant closes; to try to find whether there are alternatives to keep those plants open.

Did I find any of that in the budget? No, I did not. These things are simply nowhere to be found. Workers yet again are left holding the bag.

Another job measure that we thought should have been in the budget was an ambitious MUSH sector energy retrofit program: municipalities, universities, school boards and hospitals. There should have been a massive retrofit program for those institutions. There also should have been a measure that would have made environmentalism truly affordable by allowing homeowners an opportunity to pay for their energy retrofits out of long-term energy savings. People simply do not have the dollars sitting on the shelf to upfront the costs of retrofitting their homes. They don't have that money. If they didn't have it before, they most certainly don't have it now. Yet, there's nothing there to provide that opportunity upfront for people to start engaging in these kinds of retrofits in a proactive way. It would have created thousands of good-paying jobs in construction all across the province—jobs for someone like Keith, who is a construction worker living in Windsor.

Let me tell you a little bit about Keith. For over nine years, Keith has worked in every sector of the construction field: residential, commercial and industrial. Throughout this time, Keith has developed a diverse set of skills that has allowed him, even during the typical construction lull over the winter months, to maintain relative job stability and a steady income. Spring has arrived, and in spite of the variety of skills and work experience that Keith possesses, he still has not been able to obtain work in any division of construction. Layoffs have always been a reality in his field, and in Windsor during the winter months particularly. However, the economic crisis and the current lack of work have only served to intensify Keith's concerns for his future. Keith is exactly the kind of person who would really have benefited from a large-scale retrofit program, but unfortunately this government did not deliver that opportunity to Keith in their budget.

I want to talk about the jobs crisis in northern Ontario, because the scale is absolutely enormous. I had the opportunity to spend some time in northern Ontario over the last couple of months, and I can tell you that communities are devastated. People are worried that whole towns are shutting down. There's no opportunity for young people. It's unbelievable to see what's happening in northern Ontario right now. There was hardly a mention at all in this budget about the good forestry jobs that have been lost in northern Ontario—Buchanan Forest Products in Terrace Bay; Tembec closures in Mattawa, Marathon, Hearst, Cochrane and Spruce Falls; Domtar in Nairn, Ear Falls, Espanola and Thunder Bay; AbitibiBowater in Thunder Bay and in Thorold. The list goes on.

The north has lost over 11,000 direct forestry jobs since this government came into office—11,000 direct jobs. For every one of those jobs there are four other jobs: 44,000 indirect jobs have gone as well. We've lost a good portion of our value-added forestry sector in this

province—just completely gone, devastated. If this continues, Ontario may not be able to be making paper anymore at all. We'll just be shipping our trees, shipping them away, and the jobs that go with them, to the US.

We know the demand for forestry products is down. Absolutely, we know that. But the skyrocketing energy prices that are driving many of the companies out of business are the result of this government's lack of action. They just cannot compete. They just cannot compete because of the energy prices. Ontario's all-in electricity price is about \$72 a megawatt hour. It's one of the highest in all of Canada. It's certainly higher than in Manitoba. They have an industrial hydro rate in the \$40 per megawatt hour range—\$40 versus Ontario's, \$72. AbitibiBowater in Thunder Bay has the highest energy cost of all of their 25 mills across North America. Their Thunder Bay plant has the highest energy cost of 25 of their mills across North America. For AbitibiBowater to be profitable, the general manager indicated that they need a \$50 rate. To quote an article from the *Globe and Mail*: "At some point, with demand for paper down, AbitibiBowater will have to decide whether to pull out of Thunder Bay and consolidate production elsewhere."

So it isn't just an issue of demand in the forestry industry. It's about the McGuinty government ignoring practical, tangible policies, like an industrial hydro rate that will sustain these good jobs.

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I want to talk a little bit about child care in this province. The McGuinty government has shown little to no commitment to properly funding child care in Ontario. Five years ago Dalton McGuinty promised \$300 million for affordable child care spaces across Ontario, but he didn't deliver. The March 2008 budget, a year ago, didn't even have a line item for child care. This year we see more of the same: not a line item for child care.

But what is even worse is that there are 22,000 child care spaces to be cut by the end of this fiscal year. It's shocking. It's absolutely shocking, the inaction of the McGuinty government on the child care file. This is exactly the kind of uncertainty that parents and children don't need in an already volatile economy. This is while there are tens of thousands of eligible children on waiting lists across the province. The existing system doesn't even scratch the surface of the need out there, yet this government is saying they're not even prepared to support the meagre, paltry level of child care that's currently provided to families in this province. More than 23,000 families are on waiting lists in Toronto, Ottawa and London together. Cutting subsidized spaces is going to have a destructive effect on the system, and it's going to destabilize Ontario's child care from one end to the other.

Parents, advocates, antipoverty activists and ordinary Ontarians called on the provincial government to save these spaces, to address the funding shortfall that was left by the federal government. Once again, today we heard the minister, instead of taking ownership of this file, instead of acknowledging and recognizing that child care

is a provincial responsibility and doing something about it, simply turn her face to the federal government, blame them and say, "It's all their fault." Well, it's not their fault that the provincial government refused to make good on the \$300-million promise that was made some five years ago. That's not Harper's responsibility. That's the responsibility of the McGuinty Liberals, yet they have not fulfilled that promise. Now here we are, several years later, and the federal dollars—not the provincial dollars; the federal dollars—that were shoring up our child care system have been pulled out from under us, and there's no plan for this government to deal with the devastation that that's going to cause families and children.

The absence of child care funding in the federal budget was disappointing, there's no doubt, but it wasn't surprising; everybody expected that it was coming. It's something that this government also suspected was coming for months and months. The McGuinty government has simply shirked its responsibility on child care.

Full-day learning is not a replacement for adequate, affordable, accessible, not-for-profit licensed child care. The further shame of the matter is that the full-day learning that was announced a couple of years ago still does not, in this budget today, have a funding allocation.

New Democrats demand immediate action to maintain the current subsidized spaces and further investment to expand affordable, accessible, not-for-profit, licensed child care in this province. We know that this can be achieved by the government.

I want to revisit the story of a young mother. Her name is Susanne; she's from Toronto. She's on 25 child care centre waiting lists. It's unfathomable. It's unbelievable: 25 waiting lists she has put her name on for her children.

She has been on the waiting lists since she was only a few months pregnant. She and her husband have put down deposit after deposit after deposit, just to get on those waiting lists. They took time off work to tour the child care centres so that they knew where it was that they were hoping to put their child, in terms of a placement. She followed up regularly, Susanne did; she followed up constantly. She's done everything she could to try to get that elusive space.

Now, with only a couple of months left in her maternity leave, she still does not have child care, and she and her husband have to undertake an untenable plan: Each of them has to take some time off work, unpaid time off work, something which they can ill afford.

The Premier presented a budget which not only reaches further into the pockets of average people with the harmonized sales tax but it does not address the basic access to services like child care in Ontario. Affordable, accessible, non-profit, licensed child care programs are an investment. They're an investment in our children's future. They're an investment in our province's future prosperity. They are not social programs.

Child care is an economic imperative for families and women. Such child care allows parents, especially

mothers, to attend school, to go to continuing education or to actively seek employment. It is an essential component to any poverty reduction strategy. In fact, you only need to look at what happened in Quebec when they brought in their universal child care program. There was a 50% reduction in child poverty.

If this government thinks it can pull the wool over people's eyes by saying that it's dealing with child poverty in this province and yet not put in place a universal, not-for-profit child care system that's accessible to all families, then they have another thing coming, because everybody knows—it's known around the world—that that's exactly what will help significantly reduce child poverty.

I would suggest that the government take another look, a second look and a third look. They've seen two Ministers of Children and Youth Services walk away. Two very strong women walked away because this government has failed children in this province year over year.

I want to end by saying that the New Democrats in this Legislature have known year after year, as budget after budget comes down, that this government is out of touch, and we've seen a government out of touch as we've watched jobs leave by the hundreds of thousands, not just in the last couple of months or the last couple of years.

But I have to tell you, Speaker, we were shocked to see the callous way that the people of Ontario were treated by their government just a few short days ago when this budget was introduced. Not only are some of the most important issues not being dealt with, issues of the long-term shoring up of our manufacturing industrial sector, issues of child care for the families of this province, issues of providing hope for people that this crisis can be weathered and that the storm eventually will be ending and people will eventually be able to get jobs back—we didn't see any of that in this budget. Shockingly, what we saw instead was a government that preferred to spend its budget on giving swaths and swaths of money to Ontario's corporate sector while whacking regular folks, regular people, the women and men of this province, with a significant tax increase that's going to make every day more unaffordable at a time when families can least afford that kind of tax increase.

In ending my remarks, I have to say this: The depth of disappointment and frustration and anger that we feel over this budget is only exceeded by the depth of the anger and frustration that the people of Ontario are telling us that they hear in terms of this budget as well.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: We've had the opportunity over the past few days to hear, first, from the finance minister in the introduction of the budget and all of its inclusions, we've heard from the leader of the official opposition and now we've heard from the leader of the third party. Now it's the opportunity for us members to be able to speak to this year's budget and all of its inclusions from all of the points of view that are likely to be expressed over the course of the debate.

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I want to start by talking a little bit about what this budget is about; what is the intent, what is the focus, what is the theme of the budget.

This budget is about a variety of things. It's about helping families at a time when we're in a global recession, an economic climate that we haven't seen in 80 years, a time of some economic upheaval, not just in Ontario, but throughout the world. It's about helping families during this period of time when we are faced with this degree of economic change. It's about taking actions to make Ontario more competitive. It's about not ending up at the end of this recessionary period standing still, but ending up at the end of this recessionary period, as we come through it and out of it, in a position of leadership. In the absence of action, the best we could hope for might be to tread water, and that's certainly not good enough for Ontario. It's about stimulating the local economy, the Ontario economy, as we work through this recessionary period.

So there are a variety of things that are happening: taking care of families; ensuring that we retain and grow our opportunities and our competitive advantages; and using this as an opportunity in Ontario to support the economy, particularly as it relates to things like our basic infrastructure—our water, our sewers, our roads, our bridges, our public transit—an opportunity to invest in those and rebuild those.

We've been through tough times in the past. This isn't the first time; it probably won't be the last. But certainly Ontario is up to this particular challenge, and we're up to it to a large extent because we are Ontario.

If there's one comprehensive part of the budget that's likely to be recognized at the end of the day as the fundamental part of this budget we're into now, it's our comprehensive tax reforms. That's personal tax reforms—individuals and their families seeing reductions in their personal income tax—as well as the other tax measures. I'll probably touch upon a couple of those, and I know others in this chamber will speak to them as we move through this period of debate.

I think that when we look back on this in the future, we'll look to this as a necessary shift to ensure that Ontario not only retains its current economic advantages, but positions itself well to attract new investment to Ontario.

What does new investment to Ontario mean? It means jobs. It means jobs for our families, it means jobs for our children, it means jobs for our neighbours. Going through the types of tax reform structures that we're envisioning at this point—it's not about enhancing the profit margins of the corporations; it's not about paying additional dividends to the shareholders. Our part of the bargain is to ensure that businesses have the economic climate to invest in this province to retain and create jobs. Their part of the bargain is to produce those jobs so that our children and our neighbours and our families have places to work in this province as we move forward.

It's really a pretty simple equation when you think about it; the equation being, how do you ensure that your

business climate is such, your tax structure is such, that businesses can and want to do business here, and in return for that, they provide the jobs that allow us to support our families; send our children to the colleges and universities; ensure we have the health care we need; allow us, when we have to, to support aging parents beyond what the system does for us; allow us to ensure that those extras we want when our sons and daughters are getting married—that we can provide the type of atmosphere that we want to provide for them, that in those very special moments in their lives, we have the capacity to be able to support them. So we're making some fundamental changes in our tax system, both from an individual perspective and from a corporate perspective, to allow us to do many or all of those things.

Now, the tax package overall is a pretty balanced package, when one looks at it. There will be pieces that over the next days and weeks people will point at and say, "Well, you're doing this for this person or corporation," or "This is going to happen to me on an individual basis," or "I'm going to pay a little bit more for this service here," but when you begin looking at the whole package, it's a pretty balanced package.

In effect, at the end of this process we're into right now, over the next four years, we're projecting that government revenues will actually be reduced by about \$2.3 billion. We're not looking at fresh, new tax dollars to enhance the province's bottom line. We're actually saying that going through this process that we're into is going to cost the province on its revenue stream.

Why is it going to cost the province money on their revenue stream? Principally because we're putting money back into the system to support individuals and families of lower and moderate income, seniors who need support with things like tax credits and with their property tax. We're putting money back into the system to ensure that those individuals and families who can least afford it are not impacted by some of the changes that are proposed in the tax structure. So this is not a net gain to the province of Ontario. This actually, in the short term or mid-term, will be a loss to the revenue stream.

Now, the objectives are not to ensure that those losses continue. The objectives are to ensure that the business climate is such that we will see more jobs, more opportunities for people to invest back into the economy, more opportunities for the economy to grow, and ultimately that we will be in a better place than we are today with the situation we have.

Now, in doing all this, we're not about to abandon the principles, the core values we have as a government, to ensure that we have quality public services. We haven't invested hundreds of millions and billions of dollars in health and education, we're not building new hospitals, we're not planning to do the types of retrofits in schools that have been ongoing—we're not planning to abandon those initiatives as a result of the current economic climate. What we're saying is that we have to continue with those initiatives. We have to ensure that from the standpoint of a solid public service base that we have

rebuilt over the past five years, we're going to continue down that road.

We're going to ensure that our students have class sizes in which they can learn. We're going to ensure that young people have an opportunity to go beyond secondary school, with higher graduation numbers, on to post-secondary education. We're going to ensure that when we go to the hospital, we can get the service we need. We're going to add to the medical spaces at our medical schools so we can put more doctors into the system to support our families. We're going to continue to build on the core public services for which this government has become known over the past five or six years.

We're going to do that in the context of the current economic environment, at the same time as we fundamentally reform some of our tax structures and support families and individuals during that period of time. While we're doing this, 93% of Ontarians will actually pay less on their personal income tax—93%.

Now, we all know that that means there will be some who won't pay less, and there are those within the province who will probably pay a little bit more. There will probably be many of us who are in this room right now, either as legislators or we've come here from other fields of endeavour—we have those of us who might have been in education, those of us who come from engineering. We have doctors and lawyers, and engineers within this room—

Interjection: Accountants.

Interjection: Farmers.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: And accountants and farmers. I suspect that very few of us, if any, will benefit from the income tax reductions that are proposed. We can probably include ourselves, for the most part, within that 7% who aren't going to be advantaged directly by the shifts we're making, and that's appropriate, because we do find ourselves in a very special and unique position within the province, not only in what we do, but we fit within that context of folks who are beyond the lower-income group within our communities, and I suggest, for the most part, beyond those who are in that modest middle-income group.

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Part of the discussion that will be ongoing over the next period of time will be around the single sales tax. We expect that will take up a fair amount of our time and discussion during the coming days. You know, for those low-income and more moderate-income families, not only will there be direct tax relief—and that's part of the negotiation with the federal government, so that we can blend the two taxes into a single sales tax—but there are, I believe, about \$4.3 billion being provided by the federal government, \$4 billion of which will be put back in the hands of Ontarians as we make the transition to a single sales tax. Once that transition is in place, there will be ongoing tax credits for lower- and middle-income families, not unlike what currently exists with the GST, to provide direct tax credits for those who are paying slightly more on certain products by virtue of a blended tax.

In addition to the rebuild of our tax structure, there are other things that this budget is focused on.

During the past couple of years, we've put about \$18 billion into capital investment—infrastructure, hospitals, schools, roads, sewers—in support of municipalities across this province. In this budget, we're committing to some \$34 billion in economic stimulus over the next two years. About \$32 billion of that will be in exactly those kinds of things I was just speaking to: the roads in our communities, the need to upgrade old water systems, the need to put in place new sewer systems, the need to rebuild bridges that are falling down in rural communities, the need to rebuild social housing in many areas and the need to invest, with our municipalities, in basic municipal infrastructure. Not only are we getting jobs from this—tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of jobs during the next two years—but we are putting in place an infrastructure base that will carry us forward for the next 40 and 50 years in communities, and in some instances rebuilding—for those of us who can't see below the ground, there are those who work there, who work in the water lines, work in the sewer lines. They know what's been under our streets for the past 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 years. We'll rebuild that infrastructure with this money so we have a strong basis on which to grow.

Yesterday, the Minister of Transportation introduced new legislation in regard to the melding of Metrolinx and GO Transit so that we can move forward more effectively and more quickly on public transit investments. Well, certainly dollars within this \$32 billion of infrastructure funding are going to help to support that very public transit infrastructure we need in urban centres within this province. We're anxious, I know, in this House to see that legislation, the capacity of a new board to be able to move forward on the priorities, and our capacity with the dollars available to support those priorities. The sooner we can have shovels in the ground, the better, both from the standpoint of creating short-term employment, in relative terms, in the infrastructure, and also the continuation of our economic growth in longer-term employment. If you put a new bus route in, you've got to have drivers, and it's not just one driver. Bus systems run seven days a week, 18 or 20 hours a day. You start putting in the number of staff you need to run that bus route, and it's not one bus driver; it's five and six and seven and eight jobs one is creating. It's the old multiplier effect in many ways; infrastructure investment most often results in a multiplier effect.

A community that needs to build a new recreational facility to support the desires and aspirations of their residents and their young people: Those have to be staffed, and those become good-paying jobs in the community, in which they can help to support their families, grow their community, and invest back in their own community.

So I'm looking forward, I know, in my riding, and my communities in Pickering and Scarborough East are looking forward to this investment of infrastructure funding for a whole variety of activities, whether that's

the roads and the bridges, the sewers, the water, the municipal infrastructure, or the completion of hospital projects that are currently under way that are so vitally important to what we're doing.

We set out not long ago, it doesn't seem, with our \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure initiatives, and we achieved that in 2008-09. As a matter of fact, we're a full year ahead of what we had scheduled to put in some \$30 billion worth of investment in infrastructure in the province. When we started out on that plan, there were those who looked across the floor at us from the other side and said, "How can you possibly spend that kind of money on infrastructure? How can you commit to those kinds of dollars?"

Now we see ahead of time that those infrastructure initiatives—over 100 hospital projects. Virtually every riding that we have here has hospital or related projects going on. If it's not in your riding, it's certainly in the one next door. In my riding I don't physically have a hospital, but I very much depend upon the riding to the east and the riding to the west, both of which have one site of our hospital system and both of which my constituents depend upon for service, and we're investing in both of those sites as part of the Rouge Valley Health System.

I'm particularly anxious, as we move through this budgetary process, to hear from members on all sides—members of our caucus and members of the opposition. I want to hear about how they feel about the corporate income tax cuts that are being proposed. I want to hear how they feel about the reduction in the rates for manufacturing to 10% from 12% effective July 1, 2010. I want to hear about the personal income tax cuts that are being proposed. I want to hear about the infrastructure funding proposals. I want to hear about the child tax benefit enhancements that are being expedited, as well as the whole list of activities within this budget that are intended to support families, retain and grow our competitiveness in the economy and ensure that Ontario has a bright future, because we are Ontario.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Quite a presentation by the member from Pickering–Scarborough East; opened up on taking action with respect to competitiveness and let us know of the downfall of standing still or the absence of action. The member will know, also, as finance parliamentary assistant—he did put out the question at the very end of his remarks that he wants to know how we feel about the corporate income tax cuts that are proposed. Well, that's the problem that we have: These corporate income tax rate cuts are proposed; they're not in the budget papers and they're not in the budget. That's probably the obvious problem that we have with this.

I took a look at page 11 of the budget speech. This is the budget speech; this is not the budget. With respect to the corporate income tax rate, it leads off—it's like a bit of a fairytale—by stating, "Starting on July 1, 2010." Well, the fiscal year commences tomorrow. I guess it's

commences at 12:01 this evening. These corporate income tax rate cuts will not be in the budget. As the parliamentary assistant has rightly indicated, they're proposed. It's proposed that they will be reduced to 12%, which is a 14.3% reduction. The general rate would be reduced to 10% in 2013, which is a further 16.7% reduction. Regrettably, and I say this "regrettably" for those corporations that could use the assistance, it's not in the budget. Too bad.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to my old friend my colleague the member from Pickering–Scarborough East. He came up through the same ranks as I did, from municipal politics. We were mayors at the same time. I often listen to what he has to say, particularly around economic issues, because it has been our responsibility and our duty and, I guess, our privilege to serve in this Legislature for pretty much the same amount of time. He found himself on the finance committee, as I did. We travel the province yearly to listen to what people have to say in terms of the finances and then we offer our advice, as the committee, to the Minister of Finance. I have to say, and he will recognize this and perhaps give some credence or some discussion to it in his rebuttal comments, that we made a number of recommendations, first of all, that the finance committee did not buy into because it was Liberal dominated, but secondly, in terms of what the opposition was suggesting—the way this government and finance minister should come forward with a new budget—none of which were listened to.

1700

When I heard him say today that he wants to know what the members opposite are thinking, that opportunity prevailed and that opportunity was possible for him throughout all those times in November, December and January in the snows, when we were out there talking to ordinary people, when they were telling us what they really wanted, when the poor came forward and said that what they really wanted was an increase in the ODSP and the Ontario Works rates because people were starving, literally starving, with the monies that they were given—only to see reflected here in the budget another paltry 2%. This government has never been able to get away from that.

That's all the time will allow me, but with all respect, we've given you what we think of this budget long before it was presented.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for his insightful comments on the budget. Last Thursday's budget was a bold move in these trying economic times.

As the member said, the budget reduces taxes for 93% of Ontarians and supports those who need it most. The government could have sat back and made cuts, as

previous governments have done, but we chose to invest in Ontario.

In my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I attended the Lindsay and District Chamber of Commerce Evening of Excellence dinner last Thursday. I had the opportunity to talk with many local business people, and the vast majority of people I spoke to applauded the bold moves that the government has taken. The head of the Kawartha Lakes economic development association, Andrew Wallen, says that this budget is good for business and good for my community.

I greatly appreciate the comments that were made earlier, and I believe that this government is taking the steps that are required in these trying economic times.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Pickering–Scarborough East should know that this government has done anything but be straightforward with the people of Ontario.

What we're really concerned about here today is that these are a series of post-dated cheques. That's what these really are. In fact, it's not just the cheques to deflect your attention from the costs and distract you; the timing of the cheques that will come into your home is slightly before the next election. That's got to tell you something.

The other thing is the amount: When they say \$1,000, that's basically telling you that the cost will likely be in excess of that, probably a couple of thousand dollars, because they will never give you all of your own money back.

I'm concerned. We had a meeting. We had three different accounting firms in my riding of Durham on Friday morning: Hobb & Company, BDO Dunwoody—they interpreted the budget—as well as a small business group which had a chartered accountant there. They said, "You know, this is going to affect the people who can least afford it. This is going to affect small business, those businesses under \$50,000 to \$100,000 in revenue." These are home-based businesses, people who have been unemployed and are looking for a second career.

Every single thing a person of modest means does, right from paying their hydro bill, their heating bill, their telephone bill—all of them are going up. It's tragic. We figured it out. We have analysts who looked at this, and they would say that something in the order of \$25 a week of additional—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, the government and indeed the minister are saying—and they're laughing at this. These are honest people who are being trashed by this government. They're reaching into your other pocket—not the health care pocket; that's \$3 billion—and taking \$25 a week. You should be very leery—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I'll now return to the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I certainly want to thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, Beaches–Each York, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Durham for their comments.

Very quickly in the limited time, one has to look at the history first to see that our business education tax reductions are scheduled over a period of time, and those continue; our capital tax reductions are scheduled over time, and those continue, as well as the fact that we expedited the manufacturing, forestry and mining sectors on those fronts a year ago. So one needs to look to that history to see how one stages tax reduction so that everyone can adjust to it and plan accordingly.

To my friend from Beaches–East York, the ODSP and the OW, again, have been increased this year—I think we missed one out of our budgets in which there wasn't an increase, but we've been consistent in providing some growth in that area. The Ontario child benefit is going to come into full effect some two years ahead of schedule. That is very significant to lower- and modest-income families and their children. The minimum wage rose, I believe it's today, by 75 cents. We will be some 50% higher than where minimum wage was as we finish that up a year from now.

To my friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, thank you for your comments, and I appreciate your being on board for the budget. I know your constituents are looking forward to the many things that will help them.

Finally, to my friend from Durham, whom I've known for many years, he has referenced around when cheques might go out in the context of the rebates that are being provided. There's a point where you're making the transition to a single sales tax. Thus, if it's coming into effect July 1 of next year, it makes sense to provide some dollars roughly ahead of that, at midstream during the first year of implementation and then as the year wraps up. It makes structural sense to provide the money at points in time when it would be most effective. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to just do a sort of review of what we've seen in this budget with the difficult economic times that we've seen around the world and, of course, last fall.

I'm concerned about the consultation on this budget. It goes back to our debate in the House in the fall session last year when the government wanted the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to have their meetings and their consultations before Christmas. Of course, we all know what happened: hardly anyone showed up at the meetings because it was the Christmas season and people hadn't been prepared for that. Normally, stakeholders across the province had been used to working with the government, historically, in the months of January and February.

We were told at that time that it was an emergency to get this out the door; we had to meet quickly with the

people because we all knew the situation in Ottawa at that particular time. What was happening was that the federal government was bringing down their budget, and they made a commitment to bring it down in late January. So we obviously thought, with this consultation that really didn't take place, that we would call the House back and do a provincial budget sometime in mid-to-late February. What actually happened in the end was that the House came back in mid-February, but we didn't have the budget until last week. So we never really saw that consultation period in January and February that we normally would have seen.

In my own riding, I did a couple of consultations in Midland and Orillia. We had some 40 stakeholders out, and we got a lot of feedback on what people were expecting of the provincial budget. It actually occurred right after the federal budget, so we had good input on the kind of infrastructure dollars that we probably would expect. The fact that the federal government put infrastructure dollars on the table—obviously there's a commitment with the infrastructure programs that we would see the same thing happening at the provincial level, if there were going to be joint agreements.

What we found to be a surprise was that immediately when it was leaked out—and I guess there's no such thing as a secret budget anymore, because we had a series of announcements leading up to last Thursday. What we immediately found the most difficult was that we were going to an \$18-billion deficit by this time next year based on \$3.9 billion for the year that ends today and a \$14.1-billion projection that will end a year from today, adding to a total of \$18 billion.

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The biggest problem—we on this side of the House have promoted the reduction in corporate business taxes. There's no question about that; we support that. If we could divide the budget into sections that we would vote on, we would support that particular section of the budget. Unfortunately, we can't support the whole budget, obviously.

It's such a joke when you see the Minister of Finance making a fool of himself day after day, talking about, "Why did you not vote for the budget?" Obviously, that's why you wouldn't do that. We would not vote for a budget if we didn't agree with everything in the budget. As I said, if it was a separate vote on business taxes, we'd be there to support it.

If I had a choice of things that I thought were positive in the budget, I would applaud the fact that you have some personal income tax savings there. That's not a problem, because people take that money and reinvest it in their families. That's what we believe in. And you know what? As the member from Uxbridge mentioned, if it affects us and we pay a little bit more in provincial taxes, it's not the end of the world. I don't hear people screaming around the room for people in our category of income.

I also want to say that I would support the increases in apprenticeship training, and tax credits for that particular

sector. But what I won't support is—why are you not changing the apprenticeship ratio? Here we are, talking about job creation. We want to compare ourselves to the rest of the country—they do this, and all these harmonizations take place in the Maritimes, but the apprenticeship ratio in the Maritimes is 1 to 1. What is it here in Ontario? It's 3 to 1. Why does Ontario have to be different from the rest of the country? We continually bring this up. They brag about the apprenticeship tax credit, but when it comes to ratios, where you can bring more young men and women into trades, they turn a blind eye on the people.

That's all I support in it.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is heckling me over there, and he's saying, "What about housing?" Well, you know, it would be great if we'd actually see something happen in housing, but we don't see it. It takes forever to get something off the ground. Take a look. Take—

Hon. Jim Watson: Walk down the street.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, you can walk down the street. The problem is—and the minister should know this, and it's what all of the stakeholder groups are saying as well—the time frame is way, way too slow. There's way too much red tape. There's too much red tape, too many consultants involved. The next thing you know, one year goes by, two years go by, three years go by, and at the end of five years, you finally see a 30-unit building up, or a 30-unit renovation.

Something that the Minister of Municipal Affairs could provide to this House in a quarterly report is, how many have you opened? Tell us, in a quarterly report, how many have started and how many have been completed. That's what I would like to see, because as far as I'm concerned, the process is very, very slow.

Now let's talk about the harmonization for a while. The harmonization—

Hon. Jim Watson: It's on our website.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the minister: I've had two projects in my riding, and it has taken five years to get each one of them built. Most of the money is gone, and most of the time has been held up by your ministry and by Canada Mortgage and Housing. They are not streamlined to build affordable housing. That's the problem with the system. If you can streamline that system, you'll be a hero. Anyhow—

Hon. Jim Watson: Stop attacking the municipal sector.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, no, a developer wouldn't take that long. The process we use for affordable housing is much too slow, as far as I'm concerned. It would be nice to see quarterly reports, or a biannual report, on just how many are started and where they are in their phases of completion.

But the harmonization is what I want to chat about for a minute. The government, of course, has waffled all over the place on harmonization, and eventually decided to implement it with this \$1,000 rebate. We call it

something else. You're not supposed to use this particular word; it sounds like "tribe." It's a rebate of \$1,000. And of course we all know that one payment comes due shortly before the election in 2011. That wouldn't be anything that the government would plan intentionally; we know that. They're much too honourable to plan something like that.

My understanding is that when the Maritime provinces put in harmonization, they reduced the percentage of the provincial sales tax. They didn't have to give back a rebate. They just made it more affordable for the people.

I know the leader of the third party and I thank her for her comments in her speech. But there are a number of things I want to put on the record. I think people throughout the province should know just what new things they're being taxed on. I'm getting different feedback from my constituents in my e-mails and my letters than what the member from Uxbridge was getting. He was getting all these positive e-mails, and I think the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock went to the chamber of commerce and everybody was positive up there. I guess there were no real estate agents, lawyers or accountants at that one, because I'm hearing just the opposite. By the way, Minister, while I'm here on the floor I do want to congratulate the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We share a very large boundary, and no doubt you'll be hearing about quarries and water taking permits very shortly. I hear about them all the time and I'm quite sure you'll hear about them as well, and maybe we can work together on that.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I didn't see you up there. Were you up there at the by-election?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: We're not talking about by-elections here.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: The heckling should refer to the bill.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm trying to concentrate on my speech.

Hon. Jim Watson: Garfield, when were you up in Kawartha?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: March 5.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Some of the things that are included in the harmonization that haven't been included in the past: all of our gasoline and our fuels; conferences and seminars for small organizations or large organizations that want to attend a small conference or seminar somewhere—they'll be paying tax on that from now on; any adult footwear costing \$30 or less; prepared foods, a hot dog for \$4—you'll have to pay tax on that now; new homes get a partial rebate; tobacco, which I don't have a problem with but a lot of people would; personal services; hairstylists; dry cleaning; car washing; engine shampooing; veterinarian care; professional services; rental of commercial properties; real estate commissions; newspapers and magazines; taxi fares; limousine fares; admissions under \$4; Internet access fees; landscaping; golf green fees; postal stamps; courier fees; home reno-

vations—so that sort of takes away from Mr. Flaherty's tax credit on home renovations; domestic air travel; audio books for the blind; gym fees—here we are trying to promote a healthy lifestyle, and now the first thing we do, after the Minister of Health Promotion has made all these fancy announcements of what she's going to do, is announce that we're going to tax gym fees; and of course homes over \$500,000. There's a number of others. I brought up one in the House the other day that came from a very strong businessperson in my community, Josl Huter, from Mount St. Louis Moonstone ski resort, who phoned our office, very upset over the fact that even lift tickets at a ski resort would be taxed as well.

Something else that is very important that we have to mention here is just what will happen to our deficit. This is where, as a parent and grandparent, I am very concerned about our children's futures. I think everybody sort of plays that card one way or the other when they're thinking, "Well, we're all here for the benefit of Ontarians and future Ontarians, but I'm someone who doesn't like debt. I like to have my Visa card paid up. I like to have all my bills paid. I feel comfortable that way." So when I see these numbers, they scare me: in 2009-10, another \$14.1 billion; 2010-11, \$12.2 billion; 2011-12, \$9.7 billion; 2012-13, \$8 billion; 2013-14, \$5.8 billion; 2014-15, \$3.1 billion. Finally, and that's if everything's going perfectly, they say that it'll be zero. But counting next year's budget this coming year, they'll add \$53 billion to the provincial debt until the year 2015-16. Those are scary numbers because, at that point, the accumulated debt will be over \$200 billion.

1720

So all these fancy announcements, this infrastructure, the \$32 billion that we're announcing for these great projects across the province—and I agree; many of them are needed and will be very worthy projects, but one of things we have to remember is, our children are paying for this. These are loans against the future. Our kids are paying for these bills. We have to be reminded of that and keep in mind that it took 136 years, from 1867 to 2003, to get provincial spending to \$67 billion. It has taken six years, from 2003 to 2009, to add another \$42 billion on top of that. That's the kind of money these guys are spending, and then they're estimating another \$40 billion on top of that.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can heckle me all you want because you're history in 30 months. You're out of here. You will be out of here. The people will not put up with this kind of nonsense—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Can you not muzzle that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Simcoe North to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I reluctantly withdraw it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to come to order and allow the member for Simcoe North to make his comments without heckling.

I would return to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: So what I am saying is, they've added \$50 billion plus another \$40 billion—\$90 billion in their term if they were to actually ever survive to 2016.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can heckle all you want over there. You can heckle till the cows come home. The reality is, you're spending our children's future. That's what you're doing.

Hon. Jim Watson: King of the downloaders.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, you've got the numbers. Should I repeat them to the general public—136 years to get to \$67 billion; six more years of Liberal government to get to \$42 billion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member for Huron-Bruce and the member for Peterborough will please come to order and stop heckling the member for Simcoe North.

I return to the member for Simcoe North.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They don't want to talk about what they're leaving. Anybody can talk about fancy spending. Anybody can talk about the fact that you're spending \$100 billion here or \$30 billion here. What they don't want to admit, though, is, this is our children's money they're spending. They're putting it on the credit card, Mr. Speaker. You know that, I know that and everybody in this House knows that. That's why it's disappointing.

Where is that money going to be spent? For example, I would like to see some money spent on basic literacy programs. It's an area where the government says they're going to spend money. I work with community-based programs all the time. We've passed a resolution in this House asking for more money to be spent on this particular area. The government agreed to it in this House, so now we're going to watch and see if this government—the Dalton McGuinty government that says they believe in basic literacy and programs for the underprivileged etc.—will actually turn to that.

There are 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost in this province. Many of those people who have lost those jobs have had 20, 30 years' experience in those particular jobs. That's all they've ever done. They do not have the basic literacy skills to communicate in a modern job in a modern society, so they need basic training. The Second Career program is not covering it at all. If anyone supports anything in this House today, I would ask that the one thing you do support is basic literacy programming and additional funding for it. Most of them are ready to close their doors by the middle of next month because their enrolments are up, they're turning people away at the door and they basically have no money to operate.

Most of the work in these programs is done by volunteers who help other people in their community learn to read and write properly, to fill out resumés, that sort of thing. If there's one thing we can add to this debate in a

non-partisan manner, because I know that a lot of it has been partisan—and I make partisan comments the odd time myself, but the reality is, I do hope you will all listen to that, because you've got to be hearing it from the communities. There are 111 of these agencies. You've got to be hearing at home how they're suffering. I've worked with them over the last few months, and I'm passionate to see more money put in those particular areas.

I'm sorry I've only got two minutes left. I know that those on the opposite side would like to hear me speak a lot longer.

There are a number of areas that, if we are going to spend our children's future, we have to spend money on very carefully.

Just this week, I talked to the Minister of Infrastructure. A program that got turned down for the Building Canada fund was the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport out of Oro-Medonte. It's owned by the township of Oro-Medonte, in the city of Barrie. We thought it was an automatic pass for a Building Canada grant. It got turned down for some reason.

Hon. Jim Watson: Where's John Baird? He didn't support it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yeah, well, what we're hearing—and this is back to the minister as well; and you can check with the people in your ministry—is that it was at the provincial level that it got turned down.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Let's get that straightened out, because I've got a commitment from the federal member and from Mr. Baird that the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport program should go ahead. If you're saying over there that it's a dual problem, let's get it resolved. We're talking about economic development for a Places to Grow location, which is the city of Barrie, one of the fastest-growing cities in Ontario. The airport will be built 10 kilometres outside of the city. And you know what? It's an automatic to have Building Canada funding. I know there's a stimulus grant that the federal government is putting out as well. If you can do anything to make that happen, it will make a lot of happy campers up in that particular area, because economic development and expanded runways at airports are very, very positive.

That is really all I've got to say today. I wish I could have another 20 minutes because I've got pages of stuff I never got to, but I do appreciate the fact that we can speak to this. I applaud my members—I know a lot of my other members here will want to speak. We're going to be here speaking on this for days, so stay tuned. Some of us may want to substitute for others, with the leadership thing going on, so maybe we'll be asking for unanimous consent on that.

Thank you very much. I appreciate it very much.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I tried to listen intently to the member for Simcoe North; I really did—and I do commend the Speaker for intervening on at least a couple of

occasions, because even though there's a scant 20 of us here today, or 22, I counted at one point, the catcalls and the heckling, I think, to him was unmerciful. I don't remember having someone, other than in question period, heckled quite so much as the poor member from Simcoe North. The fact that he was able to continue with his speech at all is a real testament to him.

I listened to what he was saying, trying to make some sense—and I would acknowledge that he did deviate from time to time, but given the circumstances, it is not surprising. He was trying to talk about what was happening in his riding. That was the most interesting part to me: trying to find out what was happening in Simcoe North, trying to find out where he thought the expenditures of government money should be and how they might be better spent. I'm not sure that I was able to understand everything he had to say. I hope that the members opposite understood, because they were hardly giving him a chance to come out and say it.

Having said all of that, I commend the member for attempting valiantly to get his point of view across. I am not sure that this House will grant him the rare exception of being able to speak a second time. I am sure that there will be at least one nay, should he attempt to do so. In any event, he has put his mark on this debate, and I commend him for giving it a very game try.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I would have given my spot for the minister—but thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the member from Simcoe North. The member, in the earlier part of his comments—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the government members please come to order and allow the government member to make his two-minute comment?

I return to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Simcoe North, in the earlier part of his comments, talked about how voting against a budget is not a vote against every single measure that is announced in the budget but some particular aspect, and I have heard that from some other members of the opposition as well.

1730

It will be nice to hear, then, which part of the past and present budgets the member actually likes. They're quick to highlight the parts they don't like; it will be nice to know which parts they do like. Do they like the part where there is a \$32.5-billion infrastructure stimulus in this budget? Do they like the fact that there is about \$750 million for job creation and skills training in the budget? Do they like the fact that there is a comprehensive tax reform package in this budget which reduces corporate income taxes across the board and significantly reduces personal income taxes—or is it the fact that the government is spending money on reducing poverty through the Ontario child benefit, or \$1.2 billion in terms of investment in affordable housing?

All of these things in this budget present a balanced point of view towards enhancing our economy, towards making sure that we not only look after our families and our businesses today in this economically challenging climate but also in the long term, putting fundamental principles in place so that this economy grows.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was a good speech by the member from Simcoe North. He reiterated one thing we do like: We do support corporate business tax cuts. What we lament is that there aren't any in the 2009 budget. This government is not even going to look at a general corporate income tax rate cut until July 1, 2010. No one is refuting this. We asked the Minister of Finance about this today; this issue is not being refuted.

We need small business. We know we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in recent history. Small business corporate tax rates should have been cut in this budget. All we got was a promise—and I do point out that what you see in the budget speech and what you see in the budget papers are two different things.

I get phone calls. A number of small businesses are of the understanding that they are getting a corporate tax rate cut during this 2009 budget. That's not going to happen. All they've received is a promise: "Wait till next year. Wait for a future budget." In the budget speech, the date was actually identified: July 1, 2010. That is not this budget. That's not the budget year that commences tomorrow morning. Small business is the backbone. We have two different issues here: a budget speech and the budget itself.

The other major area where we should have seen corporate tax cuts was with respect to manufacturing and processing, whether it be fishing down on Lake Erie, farming, mining, forestry, auto or US Steel. There are no corporate tax cuts for any of those groups until a future budget—not this budget.

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

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'd like to take a chance to comment on the member from Simcoe's speech on the budget. For the Liberals and the governing party to understand this, he did come out with some of the good things he thought were there. What he's trying to understand is: How do we pay for these things? It certainly is going to be your kids who pay.

But I want to go back to 1990, when I first was elected here. Do you know something? We were in trouble in 1990, and guess who was in government before that? The Liberals. All of the sudden we had the NDP in power, and they thought they could spend their way out of it, finding out that they couldn't do that after five years of a \$10-billion deficit, putting another \$50 billion onto our debt.

Now we're right here—*déjà vu*. We've had five years of Liberal government, and now—guess what?—we're in trouble all over again. We still have a Liberal government in here and they've said, "We can spend our way

out of this, but we will beat the NDP. We'll beat them; we'll spend more money than they did. We'll put ourselves into a bigger debt than they did"—and that's exactly what you're doing. You've got to remember—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll give you some extra time. I would ask the government members to please come to order and allow the member to make his comments. I can't hear him, and he's right over there. Please come to order.

Member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Obviously, as did the previous speaker, we've hit a sore note and they woke up over on the other side. But, guys, wake up to what you're doing to us.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Did anyone on the government side hear me when I asked them to come to order and allow the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to make his comments? If you didn't, I would like to ask you again.

I return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I don't have a lot of time as it is. I even had a question in the House today, and you couldn't answer the question. Now you've come up with a bill that we're going to have to vote on, and you tell us that we should vote for everything in this bill, but you can't do that. You people have got to learn from 1990, what happened there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

I'll return to the member for Simcoe North. I'd ask the member for Durham to come to order first, and then I'll return to the member for Simcoe North, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Beaches–East York, Ottawa Centre, Haldimand–Norfolk and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments.

There are parts of the budget, and I mentioned them in my earlier comments, that I thought were positive, and I think that's probably the same with any budget that has ever been delivered in this House. There are obviously things that we agree with and that we disagree with, although when there's only one budget vote, you vote with your party and how you feel. I can't look at this budget and not think about my three little granddaughters and what it will mean with a \$200-billion debt after 2015-16. That's important to me as a family person.

But I'd like to go back to comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I really would like to meet up with you and some staff people on the Lake Simcoe Regional Airport in Barrie, because—and I go back to the Building Canada fund—this particular township, led by Mayor Harry Hughes and his assistant, Robin Dunn, and the airport commission thought they had put together a complete package. They had worked over a year on getting a proposal together, and they were

shut out of this particular application, thinking that the airport was good for economic development in an area serving the city of Barrie, which is the fastest-growing city in Ontario. That's the kind of thing I'm pleased to see infrastructure money spent on, because it will create jobs. If we can meet up with you again, and Mr. Baird, whatever we have to do at the federal level, we will do our very, very best to make this project come to completion.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate everybody's—sometimes in this House we get a little overanxious at times. I apologize to Ms. Mitchell for any comments I made to her, and again, I look forward to further debate in this House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon, in spite of the fact that this House has been rather rambunctious today. I will attempt to give my 20-minute thoughts on the process that has unfolded and what we have found here in the budget.

This budget process lasts a long time. As I said earlier today, it started back in November when the finance committee, and separately the finance minister, started to travel the province to listen to ordinary Ontarians on what they were hoping would be in this budget speech and in this budget bill. We listened intently—at least I know I did, and I think most of the members of the finance committee did as well—to what people had to say.

They talked about the level of poverty and the ongoing poverty in this province. We heard, I think, more people on that issue than any other issue.

We heard from students talking about the debt load that many students are having to endure when they finish school. We heard about underfunding of educational institutions, particularly those in post-secondary education. We heard from colleges and universities on the need for funding.

In northern Ontario, we heard about the special needs of the north. We heard about the job losses. We heard about the forestry industry, the mining industry, and the many difficulties of living in northern Ontario.

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So, of course, we waited for the big day, which came last week, when the finance minister stood up, hoping against hope that some of these issues would be contained within the budget bill, would be contained within his approximately 45-minute speech, that he would give special credibility to what the people of Ontario told the finance committee and, I'm sure, individually what many of them told him as well.

We looked as well at the numbers. I've been at this quite a while. The first thing is, I open up to the two pages that show the revenues the government has coming in or are anticipated to come in, and then the expenditures—where they're probably going to expend the money during the fiscal year—and I was quite surprised.

On the revenue side, the government actually shows getting about the same amount of money as—possibly

more money than—they got last year. This is in spite of the fact that the economy in North America, particularly our neighbours to the south, has imploded. This is in spite of the fact that we have unemployment rates in places like Windsor running at 15% and 18%. This is in spite of the fact that we have potential job losses in the auto sector that are going to affect tens of thousands of people. In spite of the fact that we've lost 300,000 jobs in this province, we have, on the revenue side, interim expenditures for 2008-09, which ends tomorrow, and it's the best guesstimate they can make, of \$93.427 billion. An anticipated plan—excuse me—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Actual—yeah, okay. That's the interim for 2008-09 of \$93.427 billion. That's the revenues. The expenditures which they have for this interim year are \$97.317 billion. That's all well and good. The minister has explained that there's a deficit of about \$4 billion. But I looked for the plan for 2009-10: This government actually shows a revenue increase that's going to accrue to the province of Ontario of up to \$95.980 billion. It shows that in taxation revenue, it's going to decline ever so slightly. In terms of the government of Canada, it's going to increase by some \$3 billion. In terms of income from investment, including all kinds of things like the lottery and the liquor control board, it's actually going to go up nearly \$1 billion. It shows, as well, increases in other non-tax revenue.

I'm not sure where the government comes off with such rosy figures. I am not sure, seeing what is happening in this province, seeing what is happening in this country, seeing what has happened with our biggest trading partner immediately to the south, with all of the job losses, the revenue losses, the banks being bailed out, AIG being bailed out, the Detroit Big Three being bailed out, where the government thinks that the revenues are going to stay approximately the same or even increase. That's the first question I have to ask myself: Are the government's revenue expectations likely to be met? I would have to suggest that this is looking pretty rosy. I don't imagine that the government's going to do this well. I hope you do, but I don't imagine that it's going to happen.

The second thing I looked at is the following year and how much they're going to spend. The plan is to spend \$108.880 billion, which would result in a revenue shortfall of some \$13 billion, which the finance minister explained.

So I started to look, and I thought: "Where are they going to spend this \$13 billion? Where is it going to happen?" As I looked through the expenditures—and I invite all of you to look at them—some of it is not being expended at all. There is nearly \$4 billion on the following page for contingencies, because I think the government understands that the revenue expectations might be askew.

Then I started to look to where the other monies were going to be expended—and there are some worthwhile projects. No one's going to deny that our roads, sewers, highways, transit, schools, hospitals and everything else

need expenditures. They need money. They need to be refurbished. Our housing needs to be refurbished. Our cities need to be refurbished, and this is probably not a bad time.

But I look at what is not there and I look at the disappointment that I have every single time there has been a budget from this government. I knew the Mike Harris Tories. I was here when they were here, not for a long time, but probably a good time. I was here to watch what they did with the poor. I was here to watch what they did to people who didn't really have an opportunity. I saw that there wasn't a single increase in minimum wages over the entire period. I saw that there were no increases over the entire period to those who are most destitute—those on ODSP, general welfare, Ontario Works—the whole range of people who are the most destitute.

So I was hoping against hope that this government might be a little different. I knew in my heart of hearts that they wouldn't do the same thing I would do, because I'm a New Democrat and they're not. I knew they wouldn't help the poor as much as I would help them, but I was hoping against hope that they would do something. When the minister and the Premier announced last year that they were going to start helping the poor, I got my real hopes up, but I have to tell you they've been dashed.

What this government has done very cleverly is look at what poor they're going to help. They're only going to help one group of the poor. They have earmarked that they are going to help poor children. Do I begrudge \$42 a month to a poor child? I do not. Do I think you should give \$42 a month to a poor child? I do. But I also have to ask all of you, do you think those are the only people in this province who are poor? Do you think it's only poor children who are poor? Do you not know that the biggest number of people in this province who are poor are the disabled, those who are on ODSP? You must know in this province the biggest group of people who are growing into poverty. It's called the colour of poverty. Recent immigrants, people of colour and our First Nations communities tend to be far poorer and live in poverty than all the other groups.

So when I look in a budget at what this government is going to do about poverty, I don't just look at what you're going to do for children. I look at what you're going to do for all of the rest. I have to tell you that this budget profoundly disappoints me. It disappoints me to the core.

In his 3,000-word speech, the Minister of Finance uttered the word "poverty" only once, and this is what he said. He called achieving the government's poverty reduction goal an "uphill trek." He said it was difficult. It wasn't difficult in his 3,000-word speech to give away billions of dollars to the corporate sector, and maybe they need the money. It wasn't difficult in his 3,000-word speech to say how he's going to build infrastructure. It wasn't difficult in his 3,000-word speech to talk about how he is going to change the whole regimen of taxation in Ontario and have a harmonized sales tax. But it was an "uphill trek" for him to do something to help those

people in our society who are poor, unless of course they were children.

The government has always said it would build a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy on the child benefit; I grant that. If increasing the child benefit in last week's budget—where is the comprehensive strategy? That's what I'm talking about. The only other significant action was to match federal funds to repair 50,000 social housing units and build 4,500 new units for seniors and people with disabilities. Again, I welcome the action. Is it enough? Not enough—not for me and not for the people who rely on new, clean and decent housing.

But let's put all of this in perspective. The government is repairing social housing, where only 5% of Ontarians live. Only 5% of Ontarians live in social housing, and only a small fraction of those people who are poor live in social housing, are lucky enough—who are not on the waiting list—to have found a decent place to live which is borne on the income they have. Other than that, there is nothing to help low-income Ontarians who live in private rental housing. There are a few dollars for non-senior households, even though the latest numbers from Statistics Canada show that more than one in four Ontario households are precariously housed. Yes, the McGuinty government should be matching federal housing dollars. I think so. I'm glad you're finally doing it. Instead of just spending their money, you're finally ponying up some of our own as well. It's time that this was done. But they also need to add new provincial dollars to meet the housing needs that have been ignored and neglected by the federal government and by your government in the past four and a half years. The Alberta government recently announced a bold \$3.2-billion plan to end homelessness in that province, which in equivalent terms would equal more than \$12 billion for Ontario, because they are a province of far fewer people and, in spite of their oil, far less resources. That's 24 times what the McGuinty government committed in this budget; they are spending 24 times more per capita on homelessness and housing for their population than we are spending or are committed to in this budget. If you want to know what disappoints me, it's looking to what they are able to do and are willing to do and what we are not doing.

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What about the increase in the child benefit? Sure, it's good. But are there any strings attached? That's what I want to know, because last year when the government announced this new plan, this new child benefit, it also came with some downfalls. When the benefit was increased in July 2008, the government cut off the back-to-school allowance, the winter clothing allowance; cut the basic allowances by \$125 a month so that a single mom and child were exactly \$1 ahead. Now, I want to know: You're giving \$42; what are you taking away? I haven't found it yet, but I'm sure there's something taken away, because the last time that child benefit took away everything, save and except \$1. That was \$1 they had to put food on the table, pay the rent, buy clothing and pay school fees. Was that good enough? I don't think so. When the Premier stood up today and talked about the

child in swimming lessons and the parents who had \$16,000 a year and were now going to get the equivalent of a few extra dollars, \$42 a month, \$500 a year, then it still meant that that family had \$16,500 to spend, not \$16,000. Were they still living in poverty? Of course they were. Could they use the \$400 or \$500? Of course they could. Was it a real, significant down payment to that family? It was not. It's just not good enough.

The Toronto Star editorial stated clearly on Saturday that the McGuinty government budget falls short on reducing poverty. We know that poverty is degrading, and we know that something could be done, and I can only hope that this government will some day understand that it is not just children who are poor and it is not just children who are deserving of our support.

I especially want to talk about the disabled. We invested a fair amount of time in this Legislature last year on the topic of Bill 77. Bill 77 was about services for persons with developmental disabilities. I remember the heady discussions. I remember the government opposite talking about how this bill was going to free up the developmentally disabled and their families; was going to give them options they've never had before; was going to give them the right to contract themselves with service providers so that their children could be better looked after, so that it could be done in the home so that they wouldn't have to be in institutions.

Now, with tomorrow being—I'm trying to think of the word—community development day and many developmentally delayed adults being here, I think it behooves me to talk about what this government has not done, what you have not done for Bill 77, because I looked throughout this budget knowing full well that the minister and the government committed itself to finding the necessary funds to assist those with developmental disabilities, to make this bill a real possibility, to give opportunities where the opportunities have not been had before. I listened to the debate around it in this House, but I also listened to the people, the hundreds of people who came before the committee as it travelled around in places across this province, people with tears in their eyes saying, and they said it eloquently and right, they loved the bill; they wanted the bill to succeed; they believed the bill was the best opportunity for their families. But the whole thing would come down to: What is this government going to do in this budget? What was the government going to do to make sure that the money is there, to make sure that this new opportunity for their children, their families and themselves is going to see the light of day?

And do you know something? I looked in here, and I have to tell you I had tears in my eyes, because there is

nothing here. The actual expenditures for community and social services, the interim 2008-09, was \$8.3 billion. For next year, there is a 2.9% increase, up to \$8.327 billion. That 2.9% increase corresponds almost exactly to the wage increase that has been granted to workers. Where is the money for this new program? Where are the lofty expectations that were given so freely here last summer and last fall when we talked about this? It's not here in this budget.

A person who lives with a developmental disability gets \$999 a month from this government. That's what they get to live on. That's \$12,000 a year, approximately \$8,000 below the poverty line. The government can talk all it wants about giving them a 2% increase. That 2% increase equates to almost nothing. It equates to \$20 a month, \$240 a year. So now they're not going to be \$8,000 under the poverty line; they're going to be \$7,760 under the poverty line. That's all you have accomplished for those who were born disabled and those who became disabled. They're having a lifetime of poverty.

I asked in finance and in estimates—because I'm very concerned about this—how much the government makes in clawing back the monies of those persons who have the temerity, the unmitigated gall, to go out and try to find a job even though they're disabled. We have all seen them. We have seen people with Down's syndrome, people with other developmental issues, in the stores putting cans on the shelves. I've seen them sweeping. I've seen them working at McDonald's. I also know that this government claws back half of all the money they make. I've asked the minister, how much? You take \$85 million off them. That's what you do. I'm looking in this budget to see what you're going to do to let them keep that money.

There is nothing in here for the disabled. There is nothing in here for the poor. There is nothing.

So don't you tell me, members opposite, how great it is that you're giving \$42 a month to children. I'll tell you that's great. Tell me what you're doing for the rest of them. Tell me what you're doing for the new immigrants. Tell me what you're doing for the First Nations community. But most especially, tell me what you're doing for the disabled, because as I read this budget, it is precious little. It is absolutely nothing.

I am ashamed when you say you're doing things for poverty.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
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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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
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Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Michael A. Brown, France Gélinas
Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
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Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
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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
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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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

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des comptes publics**

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

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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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

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