



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 7 April 2009

Mardi 7 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR
LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm sharing my time this morning with the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I thank the House leader for leading this off for us this morning. I'm pleased this morning to be able to rise here and continue the debate regarding the Budget Measures Act and other matters for 2009.

It's no secret that Ontario is feeling the effects of this global economic crisis that we're all faced with. The impact on our economic growth, the impact on jobs and investments, is directly affecting the province's individuals, its families, its communities and its businesses. Job losses in the province have hurt families—there's no question about that—in the communities throughout this province. I know that my colleagues will be speaking to matters such as this, particularly the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. We've seen job losses in our mills, we've seen job losses in factories, and government revenues continue to decline at this point in time. The challenge that we're faced with in this budget and over the next period of time is very significant, but it's one that the people of Ontario will be able to meet, and they will overcome the difficult economic times we're faced with today.

On March 26, my colleague the Honourable Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance, presented our government's sixth provincial budget. This budget takes imme-

diately actions to make Ontario more competitive, not only now but in the future as well. A strong, competitive economy helps families and businesses take advantage of the next generation of growth while maintaining and enhancing the province's very cherished public services. The McGuinty government's 2009 budget helps families weather this particular economic storm while ensuring Ontario's economy becomes stronger and even more competitive, so that when prosperity does return, not only in Ontario but other jurisdictions—and certainly it will return—families and businesses will benefit.

Five years ago, the McGuinty government was elected on its commitment to improve public services. Ontarians need those public services so that we can each of us reach our full potential. We needed to improve public education, our universal health care, the modern infrastructure necessary to support this province, and support for vulnerable citizens and a greener Ontario. When we came to office in 2003, our schools and hospitals were deteriorating. Class sizes were too large and more doctors and nurses were desperately needed. We were faced at that time with a \$5.5-billion deficit.

Between the years of 2003 and 2008 the province experienced strong revenue growth. This period of growth and prosperity allowed our government to make much-needed investments in these key public sector services. For five years, our government has invested in these public services to help ensure Ontarians do indeed reach their full potential. We managed spending in a prudent fashion, not allowing our average annual expenditure growth to exceed our average annual revenue growth. In other words, we ensured that we had more revenue coming in than our spending. We eliminated the deficit left by a previous government, and our debt-to-GDP ratio is lower than when we came to office. Today there are more teachers in our classrooms, more students in our colleges and universities. More families in Ontario have a family doctor and patients have shorter wait times for various surgeries and other key medical procedures. The Ontario child benefit is providing children who grow up in lower-income families with a better start in life. Our partnerships with cities and towns across the province are leading to infrastructure renewal throughout Ontario. We've invested in innovative companies and we've cut the cost of doing business.

Our government saw economic storm clouds on the horizon, and as a result we laid a foundation to respond. We are able to continue to support Ontarians because of the five-point economic plan that we put into place. This plan encourages growth and job creation through ongoing

investment in skills and knowledge, infrastructure, business partnerships and lowering business costs. Our government prepared for this economic storm by investing \$18 billion in infrastructure during the past two years. Shovels are already in the ground; we've seen job creation and sustained more jobs, some 85,000 in 2007-08 and more than 100,000 jobs during the last fiscal year.

However, the scope and scale of the global economic crisis that began in the fall of 2008 were both dramatic and unanticipated by all jurisdictions. Jurisdictions around the world are going into deficit because of declining revenues and the need to stimulate economies. Unfortunately, Ontario is no exception. The province has continued to experience the effects of the global economic challenges, resulting in significant revenue declines. But in order to help families and businesses being affected by the global recession and continue to take action to ensure Ontario is more competitive, so that our families and businesses benefit when prosperity returns, we too are forecasting a deficit budget.

0910

Changes in the 2008-09 fiscal outlook are primarily driven by revenue declines of \$3.5 billion, a decrease of 3.6% from the 2008 budget forecast. As a result, our government is forecasting a deficit of \$3.9 billion for the 2008-09 fiscal year and a peak deficit of \$14.1 billion in the coming fiscal year. To put this into perspective, as a percentage of the gross domestic product, Ontario's 2009-10 deficit is well below that of the United States. It is about the same as that now anticipated by our own federal government.

Our government has a track record of prudent management of expenditures. We found some \$111 million in savings in the past five months. We eliminated the deficit that we inherited. To that extent, we have laid out a prudent plan to balance the budget by 2015-16. To increase efforts to manage spending while protecting core public services, our government has a plan.

We'll hold the average annual rate of growth in core program expenditures below the rate of average annual growth in revenue, adopting efficiency practices and managing overall expenditures, including a \$1-billion efficiency target in 2011-12.

We'll expand the mandate of the Ontario Buys program to generate savings in the broader public sector by proposing certain mandatory procurement activities such as collaborative purchasing.

We'll propose to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to freeze MPP salaries at their current level for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

We'll limit salary increases for deputy ministers and senior managers earning \$150,000 or more during 2009-10.

And we'll reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5% over the next three years through attrition and other measures.

The 2009 budget helps Ontario families weather this economic storm, but frankly it does much more than that. This budget invests in infrastructure and skills training to

create jobs and help Ontario workers get the skills they need to succeed. This budget supports the most vulnerable Ontarians in these particularly challenging economic times. This budget helps develop new opportunities in the green economy. This budget invests in innovation. The McGuinty government is proposing a comprehensive tax reform package that includes moving to a single sales tax on July 1, 2010, and providing tax relief for people and for businesses.

The 2009 budget announces significant measures to preserve and create jobs today. Proposed initiatives will help people through this tricky economic environment while also enabling Ontarians to contribute to the province's future competitiveness by enhancing our infrastructure base, investing in the skills and knowledge of our workforce and supporting key sectors of our economy.

These actions build on the significant investments that the McGuinty government has made since 2003. Our government is investing \$34 billion over the next two years as a relatively short-term stimulus to encourage economic growth and to help Ontario families. This stimulus represents 2.9% of our gross domestic product, which is above the minimum recommendation from the International Monetary Fund for short-term stimulus action. We are looking not only in Ontario, to our federal government and abroad, but looking at international indicators for the nature of the investments that we should be making as an economic stimulus package.

This stimulus package is not only significant in its size, but it also meets the key criteria of being timely, being targeted and being temporary. Strategic infrastructure investments provide jobs in the short term as well as building a strong foundation for tomorrow. The McGuinty government is allocating \$32.5 billion for infrastructure projects over the next two years. These will support an estimated 146,000 jobs in 2009-10 and some 168,000 jobs during the period of 2010-11.

This includes a record \$648 million in 2009-10 for provincial highway projects in northern Ontario: ongoing widening to four lanes of Highway 69 to Sudbury and Highway 11 to North Bay. Certainly these improvements will be well received by those who use that highway, whether it be as part of a commute, for recreation, or most importantly, for the purpose of transporting goods and services for business purposes.

These expenditures will include the widening of Highway 11 and 17 near Thunder Bay. As I said earlier, I'm sure that the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan will want to reflect on what this is going to mean for his communities.

We're also investing additional funds to improve resource access roads, remote airports, winter road networks and the remediation of the Mid-Canada Line radar sites.

These investments build on our government's \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure investment plan, which will be completed in the 2008-09 time frame, a full year ahead of what had been our scheduled plan. In fact,

the province has more than 30 major infrastructure projects under way, each worth more than \$100 million. I think it's worth repeating: across this province, 30 major infrastructure projects worth more than \$100 million each.

I can speak to just one of those within the broader jurisdiction of where my riding is—the Durham consolidated courthouse, a very significant provincial infrastructure initiative that was planned, implemented and is currently under construction.

Among those shovel-ready projects that are set to go across the province, we're looking to rehabilitate social housing, including energy efficiency improvements and the creation of new affordable housing units for lower-income families, seniors and particularly persons with disabilities. Provincial highway and bridge projects in northern Ontario, the Kitchener-Waterloo region, the Niagara region, Guelph and Brantford certainly are all included.

This is not a comprehensive list by any means, but it does point out some of the priorities and some of the geographical distribution nature of the expenditures that are being made.

Municipal developments, which would include libraries and local transportation projects, are also on the list of initiatives to be undertaken with this infrastructure funding. New medical school spaces, strengthened post-secondary infrastructure, modernized facilities at Ontario's colleges and universities and additional support for research and infrastructure are also to be considered within the infrastructure envelope. We'll also be making capital investments to support and enhance the tourism sector.

The McGuinty government understands the economic benefits of a highly skilled and educated workforce. It's a cornerstone to our future economic growth. That's why this budget allocates nearly \$700 million over two years in new skills training, literacy initiatives and enhancements to existing programs to help workers get the skills they need for the jobs of tomorrow.

But it's a serious problem that 70% of unemployed Ontarians do not receive regular employment insurance benefits. We need the federal government to ensure that Ontarians have equitable access to the EI program, especially during these particular economic times.

Recognizing the employment challenges faced by our youth in this difficult economic time, we're also increasing spending on summer jobs. We're extending that expenditure for youth by 57% to nearly \$90 million in the 2009 year, helping more than 100,000 young people get summer jobs. That would be an increase of approximately 25% from the 73,000 that were supported last year.

0920

Our government is also committed to partnering with key sectors to help them become more competitive so they continue to make major contributions to Ontario's economy. Our budget announces support for key Ontario sectors, which include manufacturing, forest products, mining, agriculture and small business.

Our government is committed to improving the quality of life for Ontarians, particularly those who are most vulnerable in our community. Giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is the right thing to do; it's the right thing to do for our society and it's the right thing to do for our economy. The current economic environment has made immediate measures to support vulnerable Ontarians and families even more critical. As part of an aggressive strategy to help families being hurt by this recession, we're accelerating the poverty reduction strategy by proposing to speed up the phase-in of the Ontario child benefit a full two years ahead of schedule—and what better way to help support low- and middle-income families than through the enhancement of the Ontario child benefit? This would provide lower- and middle-income families with up to \$1,100 annually per child starting in July 2009, almost doubling the \$600 they receive now and expanding eligibility to almost 115,000 more families than in 2008.

Additional aspects of the 2009 budget's poverty reduction strategy include doubling the Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit, as announced in the 2008 budget, so that low- and middle-income seniors living in their own homes would get up to \$500 in support for their property taxes starting in 2010, helping more than 600,000 seniors over the next five years. We want to continue working with the federal government to invest \$1.2 billion over the next two years to construct new affordable housing and rehabilitate existing social housing. We're increasing Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits; we're helping low-income tenants avoid eviction by providing more than \$5 million annually in stable funding for municipal rent banks; and we're raising the minimum wage to \$9.50, which became effective on March 31, our sixth increase since 2003. Additional support for seniors includes further enhancing the Ontario property and sales tax credits to ensure that senior couples who receive the guaranteed minimum level of income from governments would receive the full benefits from these credits.

I'm mindful of the time we have available to us this morning, and particularly mindful of the fact that my colleagues from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and Eglinton—Lawrence want the opportunity to address this Legislature with respect to the 2009 budget measures bill.

We're going to keep investing in innovation. We're going to keep investing in the skills and education of our workers in this province. We're going to keep investing in the infrastructure, in lowering business costs and in developing those partnerships. We're going to keep investing in those who are vulnerable in our communities, and if changing circumstances demand it, we'll change our plan to make it stronger still.

I would certainly ask at the end of this debate, when it's finished, for the members here to support Bill 162 so that we can move forward with this plan so we can invest in Ontario, so that we can invest particularly in Ontarians, so that we can create jobs and improve the competitiveness for tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member indicated that he was sharing his time, I understand, and therefore I recognize the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for sharing his time this morning, and to remind the Speaker that I'll also be sharing the remaining 40 minutes or so with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to speak to our budget bill. As most know, when you present a budget in the Legislature you are presenting a document that obviously is the result of attempting to balance a whole wide range of competing interests. As a government, I suppose one of the measures you use to try to get a sense of whether or not you've been able to strike an appropriate balance is the responses that you get from members of the opposing parties. I know that when Minister Duncan was presenting the budget here in the Legislature approximately a week or a week and a half ago, we immediately began to see remarks coming from members of the opposing parties that I think, as a member of the government, indicated to us clearly that perhaps we had struck a pretty fair and appropriate balance in terms of the package that we were able to bring forward.

We heard from the members of the official opposition the fact that perhaps the budget went too far; in fact, described as a left-leaning budget by some members of the official opposition. And we heard the members of the third party indicating that to them, perhaps the budget had gone too far, was too much of a right-leaning budget and smacked of the Mike Harris days. So, as a member of the government side, I think it's probably appropriate for us to draw a conclusion that perhaps we came close to striking an appropriate balance in terms of the package that we brought forward in our budget.

We brought forward some pretty radical pieces that we think are necessary under the current situation and economic circumstances that we find ourselves in. One of the parts that I'm especially gratified about is the corporate income tax reductions, especially for the manufacturing sector. As people who have followed this budget closely will know, we have introduced reductions in two corporate taxes: the general corporate tax rate and the manufacturing corporate tax rate.

As I'm sure that most members of this Legislature and members of the public who are interested will be aware, the forestry sector, one that I'm very interested in, has found itself in very difficult economic circumstances. The reduction of the manufacturing tax rate from 12% to 10%, an approximate 14% reduction for them, as well as the elimination of the capital tax, is obviously going to put them in a much better position to compete on a go-forward basis.

I think this is something that the members of the official opposition have found themselves now in a position of expressing a bit of concern about, because clearly these are policies that they were in support of for quite

some time, leading up to the presentation of the budget, and now have found themselves—some of them, at least—in the position of arguing against, which is a bit of a surprise.

Members of the third party, as well, I think, were almost a bit disappointed when we introduced a measure that's going to almost double, as was said already this morning, the Ontario child benefit, from about \$50 a month per child to almost \$100 a month per child—a doubling of the Ontario child benefit fully two years ahead of schedule. Clearly, it's something that we're very proud of over here on this side of the House. It's not the only poverty reduction measure that we continue to move forward on during very difficult economic circumstances, but obviously, I think it's one of the most significant pieces that we can move forward on. Quite frankly, I think there are a lot of people in the Legislature, and even in the community, interested in these issues who thought, given the circumstances that we find ourselves in, that the poverty reduction strategy may have been a piece that was pushed to the side. We're all very proud on this side of the House that in fact that was not the case.

We also heard in the budget a part that I'm very excited about: the continued commitment—and I want to underline that—the continued commitment to an investment in infrastructure in the province of Ontario. When we came to government in 2003, we all talked quite regularly about what we felt were three deficits that we inherited: a fiscal deficit, a service deficit and an infrastructure deficit. And we have, since 2003, I think most members would acknowledge, been investing significantly in infrastructure in the province. Our ReNew Ontario program—\$30 billion—has been met and completed, and the budget document brought forward a further commitment of \$32.5 billion, \$27 billion of that being provincial money that will be expended over the next two years. Clearly, this money is going to go a long way to maintaining and creating jobs in the province of Ontario. I think we can all look within our own ridings for a lot of examples—personal, local examples—of projects that have occurred over the last four, five or six years that have significantly created jobs and met infrastructure demands that, quite frankly, for a long time were going unmet. Obviously, this infrastructure is necessary for our businesses to remain competitive, so I, for one, am thrilled that this commitment is still there.

We are hearing now from most national governments and subnational governments, I think, all across the globe that one of the things they can do to get us through this difficult economic circumstance that we find ourselves in is to invest in infrastructure. Our budget is doing that, but once again, I think it's important to underline that our government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, had identified infrastructure investments fully six years ago. While we continue that support for infrastructure investment in the province of Ontario through our last budget, I really do want to remind people that we've been there for the past six years, since our election in 2003. We're hearing everybody else talk about it now, but I

really want to mention that for us, this has been a six-year commitment. It's especially important for me as a northern and a rural member who is responsible for several small municipalities. I look at communities in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan like Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Conmee, O'Connor, Gillies and Atikokan—very small communities of 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 people. But the determining factor for those communities is that they all manage extremely large land bases, and on those land bases that they manage as municipal organizations, they have very small tax bases from which to support their infrastructure requirements.

0930

So I'm very thrilled that our infrastructure investments over the last six years and going forward now, as exhibited by our \$32.5-billion recommendation here in this budget, will continue to help those smaller communities, especially in northern Ontario, meet their competitive needs through infrastructure investment, and also help residents in those smaller communities maintain reasonable and affordable tax rates. Without this investment from our government, (a) those tax rates would have to go through the roof to support those infrastructure investments or (b) quite likely their municipal councils would simply make decisions not to make those infrastructure investments because, quite frankly, they wouldn't be able to afford them.

The member for Pickering–Scarborough East also spoke a little bit in his comments about our continued commitment to public services. I think that under the situation we find ourselves in, many people in the Legislature and in the public were afraid. They were worried that our long-standing six-year commitment to public services would not continue to receive the support that it has since we formed government in 2003, especially health care and education—core public services that people rely on. We know today, as a result of the budget that was introduced a week and a half ago, that is not the case; that we will continue to make those key investments in public services, we will continue to provide them an increased amount of resources so they can continue to provide the services that we all rely on.

I know that in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan we have seen significant investments in the health care field. I had an opportunity about a week ago to run into the CEO at a hospital event in Thunder Bay. Actually, Justin Trudeau was in town and we had a wonderful fundraiser. They raised significant money for the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation at that event. I had an opportunity to talk to the CEO and, I must tell you, he came up to me in an unsolicited nature and thanked me for the investment our government continues to make in the health care field. I think he was very concerned, given these difficult circumstances, that we might see reductions that would result in significant layoffs. Of course, that hasn't been the case.

I know seniors in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan were thrilled as well, because many of them have been the recipients of an incredible amount of resources that

we pumped into the health care sector. Of course, they are the ones who are benefiting from increased access to more cataracts, more hips and knees, more MRIs, more cancer and cardiac interventions. I know they are thrilled to see that is going to continue.

I want to mention a bit, as the member for Pickering–Scarborough East had as well, about where we find ourselves when it comes to our fiscal situation. For five and a half years now we've actually paid down debt in the province of Ontario. The debt is now lower than it was when we came to government. We've paid off the \$5.6-billion deficit that we inherited when we came and have run three or four balanced budgets since we formed government in Ontario. We find ourselves this year anticipating about a \$3.9-billion deficit, and of course this has been the subject of some debate. I think it's obvious for all of us that nobody is interested in going into deficit but I don't hear anybody suggesting that there was necessarily a way around it this time. We're finding ourselves in very challenging situations. We know that people are counting on continued investments in key public services and we have some challenges, obviously, in terms of managing this deficit on a go-forward basis. But I do know that when we look south of the border and find out what is going on in the United States and many other national and subnational jurisdictions on the planet, most people have not found themselves with any other opportunity or option besides deficit financing. We continue to go forward with that under the appropriate measures of moving forward significantly with investments in our key sectors.

One of the things that I found and was very happy to see in our budget, one of the things that I know we as northern members had lobbied for, was continued support for the forest industry, and not only in northwestern Ontario; it's a key, significant player all across the province but clearly has more of a presence in northern Ontario. Our budget contains significant pieces that will continue to support that industry on a go-forward basis. I was thrilled to see that we had some of those key investments still in there.

I have to tell you that over the course of the last three or four years or so, there's been a great effort made—I would say primarily by the members of the third party and their former leader—to try to paint Ontario as being the only jurisdiction that seems to be suffering when it comes to the loss of forestry jobs in Canada, or in North America. They have spent a fair bit of time trying to paint that picture and saying that it's only this government's fault for the reason for layoffs in the forest industry. Of course, people know that's not quite the case. I want to take a minute just to paint a bit of a picture, if I can, of what's gone on in other jurisdictions in Canada in the forest industry, and tie it back into the resources and the support that we've provided in our budget to continue to try to help this industry get through this very difficult economic time.

As I said, the two jurisdictions in Canada that probably most closely parallel Ontario when it comes to the

forest industry are Quebec and BC. They are the only other two jurisdictions that have a forest industry that's on the scale and size of that which exists in Ontario. If you do even the most cursory bit of effort to try to find out what's gone on in both British Columbia and Quebec, it becomes pretty apparent to people that those jurisdictions, which are on a similar scale and size to Ontario, have had, if not similar challenges, more egregious challenges than have actually occurred in Ontario.

The former leader of the third party was in the House the other day speaking on this and he ran off this long litany of communities in northern Ontario. He rhymed them off and announced the mill closure in every one. We're aware of that, and we know that, but what he tries to do is portray that as being the only jurisdiction that has the problem. Here are some of the jurisdictions in BC: AbitibiBowater in Mackenzie; Domtar in New Westminster; Cascadia Forest Products in Nanaimo; Domtar in New Westminster; Abitibi in Mackenzie, two mills; Canfor Upper Fraser mill in BC, Canfor Taylor mill; Weyerhaeuser Vavenby mill in Clearwater—all in BC. The list in BC—the most recent list that we've been able to get our hands on—clearly shows that in British Columbia, their forestry sector has closed 57 mills since 2003 with a job loss approaching 12,000 people. British Columbia has actually seen more mill closures and more job losses than has the province of Ontario. But if you listen to the former leader of the third party, of course he would have you believe—anybody who is interested in this issue in the province of Ontario—that there are only mills closing in Ontario and nowhere else in Canada.

If we look to our neighbour Quebec, which is very fortunate in terms of the energy costs that they're able to provide to their industry, here's what has gone on in Quebec: Tembec in Matane, pulp mill closed; Kruger, Trois-Rivières, specialty papers closed; AbitibiBowater, Donnacona, paper closed; AbitibiBowater, Shawinigan, paper closed; Kruger, Trois-Rivières, specialty paper closed; Kruger in Trois-Rivières, closed; Domtar, Gatineau, closed; Bowater, Dolbeau, closed; Bowater, Dolbeau, newsprint closed; Bowater, Gatineau, closed; Kruger pulp mill, Trois-Rivières, closed; Cascades, kraft pulp in Jonquière, closed; Cascades, Saint-Jérôme, fine paper closed; Tembec, Saint-Raymond, specialty paper closed; Kimberly-Clark, Saint-Hyacinthe, pulp and paper closed; Domtar, closed. The list goes on and on—another five Krugers, another three AbitibiBowaters, another several Domtars and Tembec, and the list goes on and on. In Quebec, almost 9,000 job losses in their forest industry with about 55 or 60 pulp and paper and sawmills closed.

If we listen to the former leader of the third party, he doesn't want people in Ontario, and especially northwestern Ontario, to know that's the situation because he spent a lot of time over the last three or four years trying to convince people in northwestern Ontario that the only place that there is a challenge in the forest industry is in Ontario, and that the only place that there is a problem—it's been laid at the feet of our government as if there was some magic wand that we would wave.

0940

We have brought significant resource to this sector and our budget continued that support. We bring forward a continued and enhanced energy rebate program for those large pulp and paper companies operating in the province, which will provide them with \$18 per megawatt—this is a significant resource—a rebate of \$18 per megawatt of energy for those large pulp and paper mills still operating in the province of Ontario.

While the focus in northwestern Ontario has often been primarily on energy, it's important to remind people that that is not the only support that we brought to the forestry sector over the course of the last three or four years. The other support that we brought forward has been continued in the budget. In 1992 or 1993, the responsibility for the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary roads in Ontario for the forestry sector was downloaded on to the backs of the companies by the NDP government of the day. That was about 16 or 17 years ago that the NDP made a decision that now, sawmill companies and pulp and paper companies in Ontario, it was going to be your cost to bear: the construction and maintenance of primary and secondary roads in the province of Ontario. We took that cost back about three years ago.

Until 2004 or 2005, when we uploaded the cost from the forestry companies, about a 12- or 14-year period existed during which the forestry companies had the responsibility for those road networks, as downloaded to them by the New Democratic Party. I don't know how many tens of millions of dollars, if not hundreds of millions, that took out of the pockets of forestry companies over that 14- or 15-year period, but I can tell you, it was likely significant. In the last three years, that roads program alone contributed close to \$225 million, the roads uploading program that our government brought in.

While we often focus on and spend most of our time discussing the energy piece—and I've outlined briefly for you some of the resource that we have provided for energy support in the province—we have also, over the course of the last three or four years, brought significant help to them in terms of uploading the costs of primary and secondary construction and maintenance off the backs of those companies, and this budget continues that support for that particular piece.

Finally in the budget, we have continued the stumpage rate reductions on a couple of different species in the province of Ontario for forestry companies, which is going to significantly enhance their ability to stay competitive as well.

As I mentioned earlier, in British Columbia, 57 closures and almost 12,000 people laid off in that industry; in Quebec, well over 8,000 people laid off in the industry, and 56 closures; in Ontario, 43 closures, with under 8,000 employees—obviously, a significant challenge for forestry; obviously, lots of people directly affected, experiencing job loss in industries that have been there for generations.

It's important that I highlight that our government has brought significant resource to support this industry, and

it's important that I highlight for people interested in this particular topic that it is not only Ontario that has faced the challenge in this industry, despite attempts to paint that as the picture over the course of the last three or four years. It is something that is affecting not only all jurisdictions engaged in forestry in Canada, but quite frankly, across the globe.

I see that my 20 minutes is up, and I'll now yield the floor to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I will now recognize the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's very frustrating to have only 19 minutes to speak about so many good things in this budget.

I just want to compare what is happening in Ontario and what is happening in the rest of the world, and to understand that we are all globally connected. I just want to put the general international perspective into place.

Many times, we've talked about the global context of this economic meltdown, and it's something that we have to take into account because Ontario is a trading nation and depends on exporting its goods and services, goods especially. If you do a survey of the world, you'll see that the Celtic tiger—Ireland—for instance, is just going through its second budget in six months. It was the tax haven for all kinds of IT companies. Everybody was saying, "Ireland—we've got to copy, emulate Ireland. They have the answers." Well, Ireland is basically, as I've said, in deep, deep trouble.

Another model country was Iceland. Iceland is basically bankrupt. The only thing they're able to do now, their only industry that shows signs of life at all, is tourism. What they're doing in Iceland is, because the value of their currency has fallen so much, if you pick up the Toronto newspapers, television or web, you'll see all kinds of inducements to go to Iceland and buy cheap goods and services in Reykjavik. That's what they're reduced to. It's basically become like a big Walmart because of this economic collapse.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's not fair.

Mr. Mike Colle: No offence to Walmart. I didn't mean to downgrade Walmart—a lot of good jobs there.

In Hungary—and the socialists across the way will note this; I'm sure they're following closely—the socialist prime minister just resigned because the economy is collapsing in Hungary despite the IMF giving them hundreds of millions of dollars to stabilize their currency.

If you have friends or relatives in Britain, you will see the economy in Britain is in a tailspin like never seen before since the days of Clement Attlee. They've never been in such an economic slump.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The Queen is pawning her jewels.

Mr. Mike Colle: To the point where, the socialist member from Welland says, the Queen is almost pawning her jewels, sad to say.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Michelle Obama is helping her out.

Anyways, if you look at Germany, which has one of the most sophisticated, cutting-edge economies, the green economy that we hope will be part of the future economy here in North America, the United States and Canada, despite having the cutting-edge green economy of the world, Germany's economy is in deep, deep trouble: unemployment like you've never seen before in Germany. With all its wind turbines, with all its solar energy infrastructure, with all its innovation, Germany is in serious, serious trouble.

In France there's massive labour unrest. That's what is happening in France. The workers are losing their jobs, cutbacks etc. There's serious labour unrest in France.

If we go to California, the most prosperous, incredible, iconic state of California, we know that they were \$18 billion short. They had to be bailed out in terms of survival in California. That's where the American dream is: "Go west, young man." You can't even go to California.

We also have Michigan. You saw the documentary on CBC the other day where you could buy a beautiful two-storey brick home in a nice neighbourhood in Detroit, a reasonable neighbourhood, for \$500. For a two-storey brick home in a reasonable neighbourhood in Detroit, for \$500 they were trying to sell homes.

In China, 25 million people at last count lost their jobs in the last month—up to 25 million people.

In Alberta, the great oil-rich province of Alberta, all of a sudden their royalties are literally drying up—oil at \$50 a barrel. It's on the brink of recession. And BC, the great province of BC.

The other provinces of Canada: Some of them are doing quite well because they're getting equalization money from Ontario. We're still helping Nova Scotia. We're still helping Prince Edward Island. New Brunswick was able to lower taxes with Ontario's money. That's great that they're able to survive somehow with Ontario's money.

But if you look at the whole world, we are in unprecedented times. This is economic climate change.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Capitalism. How do you like it so far?

Mr. Mike Colle: Capitalism is on its deathbed, many say, because of many, many reasons that I won't go into.

The context of this budget has to be understood. This is not an Ontario problem. This is not a Canadian problem. This is not Prime Minister Stephen Harper's problem. It is not Premier McGuinty's problem. It is all of our problem. Every country and every jurisdiction, national and subnational, faces the same horrendous challenge of how we provide goods and services to our populations, and at the same time create a new economy, at the same time balance our books, at the same time create research and innovation that creates jobs for the future.

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No one really has the answer. I think everybody has parts of the answer, and those who claim they have the solution are either living in a fool's paradise or they're totally unrealistic. The best and brightest people in the United States, in Europe, in Asia—in the whole world—

are trying to grapple with this unprecedented economic climate change. Look at Japan. The incredible economy of Japan is almost at a standstill. Taiwan, which was an economic powerhouse, is caught in this economic climate change.

So what we've tried to do here in Ontario is to deal with the real challenges that face the world and the real challenges that face Ontario. We know full well that if the United States does well, they will be buying Canadian lumber, Canadian paper products and Canadian trucks. But we cannot survive on our own here in Canada or in Ontario. We need the help of the Americans, and we hope and pray that their economy, the English economy and the EU economy will rebound. So we are trying to do the best we can in unprecedented circumstances that have baffled the world's best economists and brightest minds and leaders. Whether it's Gordon Brown in England or Barack Obama in the United States, no one has a clear vision because this economic meltdown is so unprecedented.

We've tried to take the best ideas of what they are doing in other countries and jurisdictions. One of the consensus issues is that one of the things you can do to get us through the economy is invest in infrastructure. So in this budget there's an unprecedented investment in infrastructure. When we talk about infrastructure, it means building sewers. I know it's not very sexy or newsworthy, but we have to rebuild and build sewers throughout this province in many of our urban areas, and that creates jobs. We have to repair and build bridges; that creates jobs for men and women. We have to repair and build roads and schools. We have to invest in our public transportation system.

That's what we've committed to in this budget: \$32 billion over two years in providing good jobs for men and women who have the ability to work. As you know, in Ontario, when it comes to construction and building—I know that the member from Durham appreciates this—we have some of the most talented and skilled men and women, whether it be designers, engineers, draftsmen, machine operators or people who operate tunnel boring machinery; we have the world's best workers when it comes to construction, bar none in the world. They can match their skills, their work ethic and their engineering capacity with any workers in the world.

We are going to encourage them, with this budget, to rebuild our roads, bridges, sewers, hospitals, schools and public transit so that they're building this infrastructure, which puts money into the economy. That money in the economy will mean that those plumbers—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Durham doesn't care about the plumbers, but if the plumbers get a job, if Josephine the plumber gets a job, Josephine the plumber is going to be able to buy shoes for her children, gasoline for her car and groceries at the corner store. That keeps the corner store operator in business; it keeps the shoemaker in business; it keeps the economy active because Josephine the plumber has a good-paying job. That's the

way it works. Whether it's Josephine the plumber, the engineer or the construction worker at Local 183, when they work, they buy groceries, they buy shoes and they buy furniture, if they need it.

The important thing is to make sure that our skilled labour, whether they're in Sarnia or in Scarborough, get a chance to work, whether they get a chance to work in building public transit or in repairing our housing stock. The Minister of Housing has fought for the federal government in partnership, and they've agreed to partner in providing \$1.5 billion of money for jobs in repairing public housing. Our drywall workers, our plumbers, our carpenters and our sheet metal workers will retrofit the energy systems in our public housing, they will repair the washrooms and they will repair the hallways and the roofs. These are good-paying jobs for working people. This infrastructure money which is in this budget—\$1.5 billion in housing infrastructure alone over two years—means good jobs for highly skilled workers who we have in this province.

Again, the investment in public transit is not only an investment in moving people, it's also an investment in revitalizing neighbourhoods and spurring development. If you fly over Toronto or look at a map of Toronto, where there are major investments in public transit, you'll see that there are apartment buildings, office buildings and there are workplaces because of the access to public transit. If you look at a map of Toronto, all up and down Yonge Street you'll see the concentration of people, apartments and workplaces. If you look along Bloor and the Danforth, you'll see the same thing. The Danforth line—you'll see that's where people want to live and that's where people want to work, so property values improve and increase. People want to live near public transit. You not only get jobs in building those light rail cars or in digging those tunnels, you also get jobs in building apartment buildings and in building and retrofitting neighbourhoods when you invest in public transit.

If you look up Yonge Street at Finch and up at Sheppard, you'll see the Mel Lastman miracle. North York used to be basically a farmer's field at Sheppard and Yonge, but because of Mel Lastman's vision and his battle to bring public transit into North York, you'll see at Yonge and Sheppard an amazing metropolis—because of that investment in public transit. There were jobs not only for the subway workers; there were also jobs for all the men and women who were building those towers, those apartment buildings and office towers, in the Yonge and Sheppard hub.

That's why this investment that our government is going to make in public transit—along Eglinton Avenue; in Scarborough, rebuilding the SRT; in the Finch line that goes from Humber College in the west all the way out to Don Mills in the east; all along the Finch corridor; and all along Eglinton Avenue—would not only be jobs for the next number of years for the men and women who will lay the track, dig the tunnels, dig the right of way; it will be jobs in the related spinoff industries of building apartments and retrofitting neighbourhood homes. People

will gravitate towards those investments. So there are not just the jobs in public transit. There are going to be more jobs for the Amalgamated Transit Union, there are going to be more jobs, obviously, for the people in the construction trades, but also all the related support services, plus the economic spinoffs in the neighbourhoods. The investment that we're making here in public transit is an investment in the future vitality of cities.

The investment in York region: We sometimes don't pay enough attention to the incredible dynamism in York region. The city of Vaughan, for instance, is almost 300,000 people. They need better public transit, and one of the investments we're making is the bus right of way with Viva in York region that connects York region through public transit. That means people will be able to get to work and people will be able to invest in those transit routes as they're being built in York region.

Brampton: As I've said before, Brampton is one of the largest cities in Canada right now—600,000 people in Brampton. We're investing in Brampton.

Mississauga: There are one million people in Mississauga.

These are cities that need this kind of infrastructure investment so they can continue to provide employment and transportation. The GO expansion is another incredibly good investment that we have in this budget, because where there are GO stations, you take pressure off the roads and you revitalize and expand neighbourhoods.

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So these are the incredibly important decisions that were made in this budget, and I'm sure the Minister of Finance knows that there's much more work to do. Given the fact that we're in this unprecedented economic meltdown, there's something very substantive in investing in infrastructure, and there are many other investments we're making, like in public housing and in the energy retrofit investments we're making. These are important investments as we get through these troubled times. Those investments that we make in public transit and housing—those rail lines for public transit, those subway stations, those retrofitted public housing buildings—will be there for the next generation. So you've got an asset that's going to continue to be there because the investment is going to be made now.

The basic thrust of the budget, as I said, is to try to get us through these troubled times by infrastructure investments. Yes, there is deficit financing here, but as I challenged the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka yesterday when I said, "Name me one jurisdiction in the world that isn't into deficit financing," he could not name one. He knows that every country in the world is faced with the same daunting task. That's why even Prime Minister Harper, to his credit, who claimed about a year ago that there would be no deficit, saw that the economic climate change was coming and recognized that he would have to go into \$56 billion in deficit too. That's what is happening to all the ideological, you might say, governments of the world. Ireland talked about great capitalism,

Iceland, great capitalism, but everybody realizes now that there's no more room for straitjacket ideological perspectives.

We have to look at the reality. That's why we've worked with Prime Minister Harper, because he knows that Ontario is critical in the future recovery of this country. The government in Ottawa knows, like we know here, that the public has no room for partisanship when the economy is in such troubled times. That's why we're working with Ottawa in infrastructure; we're working with Ottawa in modernizing our competitiveness. We have to do that. So I'm glad to see we're getting that co-operation, and I hope this budget will get us through these tough times. I have the greatest of faith that this is a budget that really tries to do what needs to be done. There is no magic solution, but I think it really does a great job of bringing in pragmatism, initiatives of investment and infrastructure, dealing with, again, a very challenging time so we can keep people working and keep food on the table and continue to grow for the next generation.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I listened intently to the three members of the government side who spoke over the last hour. I want to apologize to my mother. She thought I was going to speak in the last hour, and we didn't know the government was going to take an hour, so some other day I'll speak on the budget.

What I want to talk about is the politics of this. Dalton McGuinty in the 2003 election is on the TV in our living rooms, saying, "I won't raise your taxes," and what does he do? He brings in the largest single tax increase at that time of \$2.3 billion in new health taxes. He's chronic. Now we have another election in 2007, and just about as many months after the election he does the same thing. After saying, "I won't raise your taxes, but I won't lower them either"—that was the caveat—this time, in the 2007 election—

Mr. John O'Toole: He's a serial liar.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just a few months later, just about the same timing as he brought in the health tax, he brings in now, again, the largest—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The member from Durham should withdraw that statement. Will you stand up and withdraw?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard it too and I ask the member for Durham to withdraw the unparliamentary remark he made.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, of course.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have to stand up and say, "I withdraw."

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now that I'm up, I think the member from this side is true in his responses. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, I'll ask the member from Durham one more time. You have to—

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

I'll return to the member for Simcoe–Grey, who now has a few seconds.

Mr. Jim Wilson: A short point: I don't know how these Liberal backbenchers can face their constituents. You say one thing in the election, then you bring in historic tax increases. The big issue in the election was taxes and finances. We could see the economy starting to deteriorate. We were warning you on this side of the House to take certain measures. If you want to help the manufacturing sector, help the manufacturing sector. Don't drag every senior citizen and every citizen in this province by increasing basic groceries, haircuts, electricity and hundreds of items by 8%. You didn't campaign on that. Shame on you.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: If I say, "I withdraw," right at the onset, is that a marker for an inappropriate comment during the course of the two minutes?

Look, there's nothing in this budget for the 800 workers at John Deere who lost their jobs down in Welland when John Deere, after almost a century in Niagara region, closed up shop. The most glaring omission from this budget is a buy-Ontario policy. You've got a Premier whose buy-Ontario policy consists of telling people to eat an apple a day. I'm a big fan of Ontario apples but I'm an even bigger fan of Ontario manufacturing jobs.

The government brags about its infrastructure projects; God bless. Many of them are recycled announcements. But that money being spent means nothing unless and until we have guarantees that it's not only going to employ Ontario workers, but that it's also going to utilize products—pipe, iron, steel and machinery—built here in Ontario.

The demise of the manufacturing sector isn't just a modest inconvenience or a blip. The manufacturing sector is the wealth-creating sector. The service sector doesn't create wealth. That's what Ireland, the Celtic tiger, learned. It's only when you have value-added manufacturing that you create wealth. Casinos don't create wealth. They simply separate people from their wealth. It's in the manufacturing sector where you have the value-added component with which you create wealth.

I have a great deal of affection for the last speaker, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, but far be it from me to suggest that this is the death of capitalism. This is capitalism exactly where it was intended to be. Capitalism: How do you like it so far? Globalization: Has it been good to you too? Because it sure as heck hasn't been good to the workers down where I come from.

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

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the government's budget, a budget that is going to reduce corporate income taxes by over \$4 billion, reduce personal income taxes by over \$10 billion, and at the end of the day make our businesses more competitive. The

most important thing a government can do in a recession is to stimulate the economy and level the playing field for our businesses to become more competitive in the global economy, so that they in fact can hire more people, hire more of our fellow citizens, many of whom are facing difficult times. As a result of record investments in infrastructure dollars, municipalities, hospitals, post-secondary institutions and schools, we'll be able to retrofit buildings from an environmental and an energy efficiency point of view. They will be able to hire more people in the skilled trades.

In my own community, in Ottawa, I'm proud of the fact that we were able to deliver a significant amount of infrastructure money last year, through the Investing in Ontario Act: \$77 million. It's going to help clean up the Ottawa River, build more affordable housing and invest in our transit system. All of these capital projects are going to create jobs and get our fellow citizens back to work.

We're investing \$35 million in skilled trades building at Algonquin College in my riding of Ottawa West–Nepean. Why? Not only is it the right thing to do, but because we have an aging workforce. We need skilled tradespeople—carpenters, electricians and drywallers—to get their certifications so they can go out and work on these important investments.

We've also invested in public transit through the gas tax. The city of Ottawa benefited to the tune of over \$36 million to help support OC Transpo.

The personal income taxes are going to put money in people's pockets so they can go and invest in retail businesses throughout our city.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: As we listen to the members opposite, we reflect on three themes, really: taxing, spending and borrowing. As far as taxing, and this issue was raised by the member from Simcoe–Grey, we all will never forget the so-called health tax, the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. And, yes, I guess it was two elections ago that Mr. McGuinty came into our living rooms and looked us in the eye and indicated, "I will not raise your taxes." He even signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, a piece that turned out essentially to be not worth the paper it was written on.

Very recently, this government now has hit the little guy and the little gal with the so-called harmonized tax, a 13% tax, as we know, on just about everything from coffee to coffins, soup to nuts to gym memberships. The harmonized tax: I think of it as a tax that will probably cause more harm than harmony.

I'm pleased that the forest sector was raised again. We all know of the devastation across northern Ontario, not only in recent times but over a number of years. When we talk about the forest industry, we come to realize there's a difference between the budget speech and the actual budget. The budget speech talks about a 16.7% corporate income tax rate cut for the forest industry and other sectors. If you look at the budget, that 16.7% cut is

not in that budget. We will wait for next year's budget. There's a promise that it will be in next year's budget, and we'll just have to take this government on their word.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the available time for questions and comments. I now return to one of the government members to respond, and I recognize again the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I thank the members for their input. I may disagree with it, but I really appreciate the input.

I just want to say one thing, and that is that when we talk about jobs that are, for instance, in public transportation and transit, building subways or streetcars, I know that people in Thunder Bay are happy because those subway cars get built in Thunder Bay. The steel for the subway cars, the steel for the tracks, the steel for the tunnel-boring machinery comes from Hamilton. If they're building subways in Toronto, the sand and gravel comes from the GTA, so the people driving the cement trucks will have jobs. I don't want to see the cement trucks lying idle like I don't want to see the steel plants lying idle. They are good manufacturing jobs because of the investment we're making.

Housing: The wood that will be used in the retrofit, the drywall, the plumbing materials, that will come from other parts of the province. So this investment has a spinoff effect that is important in jobs.

Not everybody can work in a plant. The 9,000 men and women who drive streetcars and buses for the TTC don't manufacture things—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Nobody's working in plants.

Mr. Mike Colle:—but they work very hard.

And the socialist member from Welland doesn't stand up for those 9,000 workers or the 400,000 workers who work in the banks and the insurance companies in the GTA. The over 400,000 men and women who bring a paycheque back to Hamilton, back to Mississauga, appreciate that job in that insurance company because it puts food on the table.

Everybody needs the support—the manufacturing sector, but don't forget people who work in offices and people who drive subway cars or drive buses. They are also part of our economy, and we tried to help as much as we can. Let's pull together as a province through these tough times.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to introduce the family of Everett Kehew, who is page captain today. In the west members' gallery are his father, Bill Kehew; his mother, Helen Mackenzie; and his sister, Jessie. On behalf of all the members here, I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Shortly to arrive at the west gallery is the family of page Renée Bongers, and that is Maria Thorburn and Alistair Thorburn, who are her aunt and cousin, respectively.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce a number of grade 10 students from one of the great schools in Davenport: Oakwood Collegiate. They're about to arrive, so congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and page Victoria Carney, we'd like to welcome her father, Brian Carney, here today.

As well, on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, some additional guests of Renée Bongers: her mother, Christine; her father, John; and her brothers Lucas and Ian, along with her aunt and cousin, who were just recently introduced.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. It's clear that Ontario is in a recession and it's clear that this government has no plan. On this side of the House we offered suggestions prior to the budget in terms of a plan that would actually stimulate the economy and get money into consumers' hands. We proposed a very specific program with regard to auto sales—a tax holiday on vehicles and the retire-your-ride program. The Minister of Finance said that this wouldn't work.

Here are the facts: In Germany, from January 14 to March 31, 600,000 new cars were sold under that program; €2,500 to retire your ride. It was so successful that they've extended the program to the end of May.

I'd like to know from the Minister of Finance why he refuses to implement a very practical program that would encourage auto sales in this province—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did take a close look at it. We looked at it both in the context of Ontario's experience with it and in the context of the European experience with it. What we found was that while it did raise, as I indicated to the member opposite, sales in the shortened period—whenever that incentive was on—as soon as the incentive came off, the sales went back, and overall sales did not improve.

We have taken a number of measures that have been endorsed by the automotive manufacturers and by Canadian manufacturers, including substantial corporate tax cuts. We believe that that is the proper mix to respond to the enormous challenges facing the global economy today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Premier, I want to ask this simple question. The evidence is there that incentives work. This

government chose not to use incentives; rather, they brought down in this House a harmonized sales tax proposal that taxes everything and everybody in this province. Rather than provide incentives, you're slapping the biggest tax on the people of this province they've ever seen. Everything from funerals to haircuts will be taxed. People on fixed incomes, who are already struggling to keep their homes, are now going to be faced with this government's gift of a tax slam against them.

I'd like to ask the Premier this simple question: Why, when other jurisdictions around the world are providing incentives to consumers to help bring their jurisdictions out of recession, does he insist on slapping people with a tax in this province?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to remind the member opposite, in fact there is a large tax cut here for consumers and businesses: \$10.6 billion in personal tax cuts, \$4.5 billion in corporate tax cuts, in addition to the billions that we, as a government, have invested in maintaining and preserving jobs in the auto sector here in Ontario.

We have looked at what other jurisdictions have done in terms of the auto industry, and I'd like to remind the member opposite, this is the only subnational government in the world participating in automotive assistance. That's been lost on the member opposite and his colleagues. I would suggest the package we've negotiated with the federal Conservative government, the one that will help get this economy back to the type of growth it needs, is the right package. Those tax cuts for citizens, tax cuts for businesses are—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: For the people and businesses of Ontario it's frightening. He knows full well, the minister does, that the tax cuts that he talks about, that he is spreading out across this province, don't even come close to meeting the gap that he's created between the affordability that people have to pay their mortgages, to get the daily expenses paid in their lives. Why will this minister not admit that his timing is all wrong, that what people in this province need is a government that understands they're struggling through these tough economic times, that he will set aside this incredible tax grab that he's putting on the people of Ontario and that he'll turn the page and move toward incentives rather than punishment? When will he do that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians will see a permanent tax cut in their overall numbers. Revenues to the government of Ontario over the first four years will be down \$2.6 billion.

These are challenging times. Our government has put together a \$32.5-billion infrastructure plan to employ 300,000 people. My colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure will have more to say about that. In the longer term, we have taken the constructive measures that have been recommended by, I should say, virtually every economist and business. I think most Ontarians understand that it is these types of initiatives that must be

undertaken to get this economy back on track, to get us the growth we need to protect and enhance the vital public services that all Ontarians require.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the executive summary report was released from London Economics International. I'm sure you'd agree this is a very reputable firm in the energy sector. They shed some light on how you, Premier, and the Minister of Energy have kept people in the dark in terms of the effects of your so-called Green Energy Act. They've confirmed what we in the energy industry have been warning the government all along, and that is that businesses and consumers in this province will be hit with increases in their electricity bills of at least 15%, and as high as 50%. Was the Premier aware that this Green Energy Act would result in such a massive rate shock to residents and businesses who already are struggling in these difficult economic times?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that we did appreciate the interventions yesterday. I would say again to the honourable member, I'd be very happy to sit down with him and the team that his caucus has hired to try to compare the numbers.

There are three things that I would like to comment on related to that report. One is that it doesn't amortize the costs the way the costs are amortized in the electricity sector. If we make an investment in transmission that lasts for 50 years, we pay it over 50 years. It has a rate base impact over that time, but they've made different assumptions in the study. It does not give credit to electricity consumers for the benefits of conservation initiatives. It costs them against the consumers but it doesn't give them any credit for the reduced use that would flow, and it assumes, as an example, that the Green Energy Act would not displace any other projects or expenditures which might otherwise be contemplated. These are three examples where we think the report could be improved. I'd be happy to spend more time working with the honourable member on it.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again to the Premier: We've discussed the real projected cost to consumers, including seniors and those on fixed incomes, and it's nothing close to what the Premier and the ministers have been suggesting. We know that the average bill is going to go up by at least 15 times what the minister's saying—and as much as 50 times what the minister is saying—because he said 1%. That's more than \$840 per year when you factor in the recent HST McGuinty tax grab.

Premier, why are you so focused on putting the economy of this province in peril, instead of being right and straight with Ontarians and letting them know the real cost of your spend-and-green disguise?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think part of our difficulty in having a discussion with the honourable member on this issue is that he's not even quite sure what his report says, and he's certainly not presenting consistently what I've said with respect to the pricing implications of the Green Energy Act. What we've said is that we think there will be a 1% per year increase associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act. That's not 1%; that's 1% per year, and obviously that's very different than what the honourable member has presented.

At the heart of it, though, we also think it's important that the group hired by the opposition takes into consideration the opportunities for people in Ontario and here in this Legislature, in our government buildings and in our homes, to reduce the amount of electricity we use. A strong proportion of the cost associated with the Green Energy Act, and captured in its numbers, is for these very initiatives. Why don't they give the people the benefit of the reductions in the actual use of electricity?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: In respect to what the minister has been saying, it's very difficult to present consistently inconsistency.

Ontarians are entitled to have the facts, not muddied waters. We've become, under your watch, a have-not province for the first time since Confederation. This is a time when we need to attract and retain investment, not scare it away with ever-increasing costs. It's clear from the responses outside of this Legislature that more cost-effective ways may exist and should be explored to achieve similar and higher amounts of avoided emissions and build a green economy. Are you willing to pull this legislation off the table, rethink and look at what's best for both the government and the economy and, most importantly, hard-working Ontario families?

Hon. George Smitherman: No, we won't be pulling the legislation back. We are, with the assistance of a legislative committee, looking for opportunities to enhance the bill, and I know that members on that committee are going to work hard to do so. We've always expressed our willingness to consider amendments as they come forward on numerous occasions. I've offered to meet with the honourable member to talk about those.

But he alluded in his question, I think rather vaguely, to the emerging policies of that party on energy. Are they, as six or seven of their members have said, in favour of the continuance, on a long-term basis, of coal? They were once against that, and as a government, we've taken seriously the reductions, moving towards the elimination, by 2014, of coal. Do they believe in carbon capture and storage? That sounds rather expensive to me. They're going to take those smoke stacks and shove them into the ground? Where is their cost foundation for this?

We're moving forward with the Green Energy Act. It's an ambitious and bold opportunity to transition the economy here in the province of Ontario. But we look forward to the opportunities to get more input from the—

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

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The recent budget makes it very clear that there are two fundamentally different approaches to job creation in this House. On buy-Ontario, this government refuses to set a specific level of Ontario content in green energy projects. The NDP says that we need a 60% Ontario content in all green energy projects, as they do in Quebec. Wind turbines and the steel frames that support them must be made here in Ontario. The NDP has a buy-Ontario program with teeth. Why doesn't this government have one?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. We've had a number of opportunities to speak to this in the House and I'm sure we will have more. It's only natural, especially in times of great economic challenge, that we want to do everything we can to support our domestic and our provincial economy. I understand that.

When it comes to monies that we're investing in public transit in the province of Ontario, 82% of those dollars will be invested right here in the province of Ontario, and we are proud of that.

With respect to our new Green Energy Act, we've made provision within the legislation itself to put in place a specific figure, and I would appreciate any advice that the honourable member may offer in that regard.

I'm also advising Ontarians on an individual basis, for example, when we go out there and shop for food, to give preference to Ontario foods. Those are the kinds of things that we need to do on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, we don't want to go so far down that protectionist path that we're saying that we wouldn't want Americans to buy the 85% of the cars that we produce up here for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government likes to talk about the fact that the transit construction work is Ontario-sourced. How could it not be Ontario-sourced? It's construction work. Nobody is fooled by your talk of 82% domestic content.

The bottom line is this: This government says 25% domestic content is good enough in purchasing transit vehicles; the NDP says we need an aggressive buy-Ontario transit program with 50% Ontario content. Why is this government stubbornly sticking to a watered-down Ontario-content requirement that is going to cost us jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague speaks of 25% and 50%; we're at 82%. We're seeing that 82% of all the monies that are going to be invested in public transit will be spent right here in the province of Ontario to support our economy, our workers and their families. We think that's pretty strong and pretty bold.

Again, with respect to our Green Energy Act, we're now going to consider options as to what we might do there to ensure that we are doing everything we possibly can to have those dollars spent inside the province of Ontario.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague, if there are specific recommendations she has in that regard, we would welcome those.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government also likes to trumpet something that they're calling Ontario Buys, but Ontario Buys has got nothing to do with ensuring that the multibillion-dollar purchasing budget of this government is targeted to creating good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. The NDP would have a specific domestic content requirement for all purchases made by government, hospitals, universities and schools. There's an idea for you. Why has this government failed to implement a real buy-Ontario program in the midst of the worst job crisis since the Depression?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I may have something that speaks to that specifically: 95% of our almost 45,000 government suppliers are located in Ontario, so we are doing everything that we can. I think that's a pretty impressive figure, but we think there is more that we might do. While my colleague might belittle, for the time, our efforts made through Ontario Buys, we think that we can, as a government, go further than any government has ever gone before without running the risk of being honestly labelled as protectionist.

The other side of this—I understand where my colleague is coming from—of course, is that we are a powerful exporter of goods, and should the rest of the world decide to stop buying Ontario goods, we'll be in serious trouble. So we're going to continue to walk that line—

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

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: With each passing day, it becomes very clear that the budget tabled last month is anti-jobs and anti-growth. Each month, thousands of Ontarians are being thrown out of work in the construction sector in this province, yet the government imposes a tax of 8% on the soft costs associated with new housing construction and renovation. Both the industry and the construction trades warned this government against such a move. How could the government impose an 8% tax on the construction industry when thousands and thousands of Ontario construction workers are losing their jobs each and every month?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: An important part of the budget is the \$32.5 billion we're going to invest in infrastructure, in schools, roads, bridges, hospitals, public transit and the like. On top of that, there's our Green Energy Act, which is designed to stimulate construction of new renewable sources of electricity, everywhere from remote parts of northern Ontario to farms in the southwest. We think that we're going to do a lot of good when it comes to creating new construction opportunities for workers right across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are the real facts: In the GTA alone, the housing industry generates 360,000 jobs and hundreds of thousands more of spinoff jobs, but de-

mand has fallen dramatically in the past year. Now, many homes are going to be subject to at least a \$30,000 tax increase, further reducing demand. Will this government admit that when it comes to the housing industry, its HST is a job killer, pure and simple?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that it's important to understand what we're doing here. We did listen to the housing industry, and we did, of course, want to take into account new costs when it comes to our home buyers. We've provided an exemption for homes at \$400,000 and less. I think the federal exemption only goes up to \$350,000; we've exceeded that by another \$50,000. Furthermore, the full effect of the new single sales tax doesn't take effect until you buy a home that's \$500,000 or more.

If you look at all the homes sold annually in Ontario, the overwhelming majority are resale homes—used homes, so to speak. Then there are brand new homes; the overwhelming majority of those are valued at less than \$500,000. In fact, they're at less than \$400,000. We're talking about a small proportion of homes that are sold on an annual basis that are over \$500,000. Our concern was for folks who are buying homes at less than \$500,000.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are the facts on the HST: Ordinary families are going to be forced to pay 8% more for gas at the pumps, 8% more for home heating. A struggling GTA housing industry is going to be slammed by a marginal tax rate of 32% on homes priced between \$400,000 and \$500,000. This is going to cost Ontario tens of thousands of construction jobs and, as a result, reduce demand on other goods and services. When will this government admit that the HST is bad for the GTA housing industry, it's bad for the economy and it's bad for Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One hundred and thirty other countries have already done this; they've put in place a single sales tax or a value-added tax. Four other provinces have also done this as well.

We are confident that we can do this and do it in a way that protects our families: 93% of Ontarians will get a personal income tax cut under our approach. We're putting in place, as well, a new Ontario sales tax credit. This is permanent as well: \$260 each for adults and children. We're also going to reduce the level of taxation at the lowest tax level, the lowest income level, so that Ontario's low-income families will pay the lowest level of income taxes in the country. We've tried to be thoughtful, balanced and progressive in doing things that both stimulate growth in the economy and protect families at the same time.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Premier, as you know, the Smart Systems for

Health Agency spent \$647 million of taxpayer money, with very little to show for it, before you quietly disbanded it last September. Unlike Quebec, Alberta and BC, which are going to have their e-health systems operating by 2010, Ontario will not have a system until 2015. Premier, the Deloitte report of 2007 was critical of the agency. In response to that report the CEO, Michael Lauber, explained that there was an unclear road map that had been given to it by your government.

I ask you today, although your own health minister refuses to be accountable to taxpayers, will you call in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the agency?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: In the member's question there were several items which were factually incorrect. First of all, the road map that the member refers to is the mandate provided by the previous Progressive Conservative government when they set up Smart Systems for Health.

In fact, Smart Systems for Health helped to lay the infrastructure upon which we are building a better and more efficient electronic health strategy for the province. Among its successes, Ontario spent a lot of time and energy building the wait-time information system, for example, to make sure that all Ontarians have access to timely surgical procedures. That is now connected to every surgeon's office in the province of Ontario. I would say that no other province in Canada has this in place.

Moving forward, unlike what the member said in her question, eHealth Ontario is aiming to give every patient living with diabetes in Ontario an electronic health record by 2012. The agency is also tracking the—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The response of the minister is a little bit of a joke. He was in charge from 2003 to 2007. It's unfortunate that he didn't give a road map to the agency. We know there was a problem because they quietly disbanded it. I say to you, Minister, that there is even more reason for a value-for-money audit by the Auditor General today, given what Deloitte and Touche said, given the fact that none of the information that you said was in public accounts is there, and given the fact that now, in the first three months of the new eHealth agency, we're already finding that spending is more than \$200,000 for food, accommodation and catering. And we're now hearing that consultants are flying back and forth to Edmonton and you're paying for it.

Hon. David Caplan: The member is, once again, factually incorrect. In fact, yesterday she issued a news release claiming that the government had spent—

Mr. John Yakabuski: No wonder they don't have a road map; they're always flying.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew, you've been interrupting on numerous occasions. I'd just ask you to be respectful.

Minister?

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the member doesn't point out that the Conservative caucus itself spent

\$667,000 on travel, food and accommodation in the year 2007. I think that an agency which has a mandate to have electronic health infrastructure in the province of Ontario is far wiser spending than two thirds of a million dollars by the Conservative caucus on food, travel and accommodation.

But it's even worse: In the member's press release yesterday, she said that the McGuinty government has spent \$647 million on the Smart Systems for Health Agency. In fact, it was under a previous Conservative government that \$150 million of that was spent. Why is this member trying to hide her party's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he just made.

Hon. David Caplan: I'll withdraw, Speaker, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Thousands of auto parts workers across the province have lost their jobs, and tens of thousands of others fear every day that they will be laid off. The government has finally stepped up to the plate and provided some assistance to auto manufacturers. However, why is the government refusing to provide similar financial support for the auto parts plants that are equally at risk and that contribute billions of dollars to the Ontario economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Firstly, as the member is aware, assisting the auto manufacturers obviously assists the entire supply chain. As a result of that, the parts suppliers—and you're absolutely right, I say to the member. They're an incredibly important part, not only of our auto industry, but our provincial economy. But assisting the manufacturers assists those suppliers as well.

The United States established a program that, in essence, does what Canada already does for the auto parts suppliers, and ends up doing it more expensively than we have in Canada. So in fact, the financial assistance provided by the US for, in essence, receivables insurance already exists in Canada. We will continue to work with the parts industry to continue to make it a global leader around the world.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, blind faith is not enough to keep the auto parts plants in business. It's not good enough just to hope that the automakers will use their government support funds to pay their suppliers when this is not a condition of the support. It's not good enough to say that the support from Export Development Canada against defaulting on payments will keep auto parts plants alive. Many of Ontario's 600 auto part plants are at risk of shutting down unless the McGuinty government comes through with direct emergency financing of these plants.

Once again, why won't the Premier step forward and ensure that the survival of these plants and the jobs of thousands of Ontario workers are not at risk?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Again, the calls for assistance for the parts industry arose, in part, because the United States treasury announced a \$5-billion aid package for the auto parts manufacturers. Under the program, it protects supplier receivables in the event that GM and Chrysler suppliers go under, in exchange for a fee of about 2% to 3%. In Canada, that system, that program, already exists. Last year, the charge was 0.75%, and it ends up covering 90% of the value of the shipment and is used pretty widely. Requests obviously continue to go, and last year, my understanding is the crown corporation provided \$3.2 billion in such funding to the industry alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Michael Bryant: We have the program in place. The fee is less than it is in the United States, and I'm confident that that program will continue to have that kind of success.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Yesterday, together with the Premier, you hosted the fifth annual Premier's summit on agri-food. I'm proud to say a number of the participants are from my riding in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

For the past five years, the Premier's summit has provided a forum for farmers from across Ontario to engage with our Premier and our minister to discuss both the challenges faced and the opportunities that exist in agriculture and the agri-food sector. As a government, we have always invited the input of our farmers, and, as a result, we continue to provide support with over \$1.2 billion in farm income support programs. We are encouraging innovation in the sector through the Premier's award for agri-food innovation, which is presented to the award recipients at this annual summit.

Could the minister provide this House and Ontario's farmers with more information about the Premier's award for agri-food innovation?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very appreciative of the question from the honourable member. We did have an excellent summit yesterday. Certainly our agriculture partners very much appreciate that our Premier is the first Premier in the province of Ontario to annually gather agriculture leaders to provide us with some advice.

After the summit in 2004, by the way, the Premier was so impressed with the innovation that was reported at that summit that our government created the Premier's award for agri-food innovation. It's a \$2.5-million program that's awarded to outstanding farm innovators. This year, the deadline for applications was December. We had more than 180 farmers participate in the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: As a result, there were awards made yesterday: the Premier's award and the minister's award, and there will be 55 regional awards—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The minister and the ministry staff worked hard and were very dedicated to hosting these summits, along with the Premier, and that is very much appreciated by farmers. My farm constituents have told me how much they appreciate our recognition of their important contribution to our provincial economy and the opportunity for their representatives to speak directly with the Premier and the minister.

The Premier's summit puts the spotlight on agriculture in Ontario and allows our government to foster innovation, which is a critical area for partnering with this industry. The fifth annual Premier's summit on agri-food demonstrates our continued commitment to Ontario's agriculture and food sector. Ontario's agri-food industry generates more than \$33 billion annually to our economy and employs approximately 700,000 people. I can't say enough about how important this sector is to the economy of this province and to our—

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The summit is a tremendous opportunity to showcase the innovation that's taking place on the concession roads right across rural Ontario.

I'd like to just offer two examples that were recognized yesterday. The first one was for the Premier's award. Fifth Town Artisan Cheese Co. from Picton received \$100,000. Now, this is the innovation that's happening at that business. They are Canada's only platinum LEED dairy. They're a cheese manufacturer, and they use sheep and goat cheese. This is a state-of-the-art facility. They use solar, wind and geothermal technologies. The dairy sustainability theme is carried through the entire enterprise with environmentally friendly waste processing, as well as green cleaning agents.

The minister's award winners were Hillside Gardens Ltd. from Bradford—this innovation showcased traceability—

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

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many families in my riding do not have a family doctor. One family of four was told by their retiring doctor that their patient files would be sent to a record storage and retrieval service and they would be charged a small courier fee to retrieve their records.

Minister, this family contacted the service, and they were told it would cost them \$339 each for the family of four for their medical records. Do you feel it's reasonable to charge this family over \$1,200 to retrieve a copy of their medical records?

Hon. David Caplan: It's difficult for me to comment on the case. I'd be very happy if the member would want

to forward to me the correspondence or any records that have been provided.

The member started her question talking about there being many without family physicians. I can tell the member that we're doing much to reverse the years of inaction, to boost access to doctors and to family health care in Ontario. I can tell you that we've turned a corner and that we now have more doctors per capita after a decade of decline. There are 1,794 more doctors in Ontario today than there were in 2003. In fact, this past year the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario registered a record number of physicians in the province of Ontario.

I would be very happy to review the case that the member has brought forward. I would be very interested in seeing the details and I would be happy to follow up with the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I'm happy to forward you the e-mail for this one particular family, but the reality is that this is a retiring physician who is practising in my community and hundreds of families are affected, not one.

People without a family doctor are subjected to being treated like second-class citizens by your government. This family does not have a family doctor or access to all the services they would have if they were part of a family health network. Are you going to force this family to pay over \$1,200 to get access to their medical records, especially at a time when they don't even have a family physician?

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member wrote her supplementary without listening to the answer to the question. I said I would be very happy to review the matter. The member is clearly not interested in a reply.

The facts of the matters are these: These fees, as such, are regulated by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. I would be happy to review the matter, but the facts of the matter are clear: When the member's party was on this side of the House, they did nothing to increase the supply of doctors in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, it took the action of this government to reverse that trend. We've increased medical school spaces, we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member—you asked the question. I would just encourage you to please listen to the response. Ten seconds.

Hon. David Caplan: The member is not interested in a response; rather, a platform and grandstanding. Our government has taken action to increase the supply of doctors. In fact, 2008 was a banner year for the registration of physicians in the province of Ontario, something that all members of this House should celebrate.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I stood alongside my steelworker brothers and sisters to support the remaining 600 National Steel Car

workers who are on strike, trying to keep their jobs from going to Alabama. These workers have already been hit hard by reduced hours, and now they're being asked to take a 25% cut in wages and benefits. I offered to meet with the National Steel Car's CEO to find out how we can get back on track, for example, with the Canadian Wheat Board to keep hundreds working and supporting the local economy.

Will the Premier contact National Steel Car chair and CEO Greg Aziz to work out a plan to keep this company operating in Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member knows that this province has one of the best labour relations records in the entire world. We're confident that the parties will work together. We know that when the different interested parties meet at the bargaining table to resolve their differences, they can get an agreement done. We have always felt that that is the best place to resolve differences. That's why 97% of all collective agreements are done without work stoppage. That's because we have employers and trade unions and employees and all stakeholders rolling up their sleeves, working together to keep our province moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I cannot believe that answer.

National Steel Car is the largest single-site rail car plant in North America, an ISO 9001 company whose rich Canadian history includes building rail cars, passenger trains and planes, the Avro. The workers at National Steel Car and US Steel-Stelco need a plan from this government to keep the steel industry going to create ripple-effect jobs across Hamilton industries. For example, the Premier could contact the federal minister responsible for the wheat board to encourage him to buy Ontario-made rail cars and not lease them through an American company.

When will the Premier meet with National Steel Car to find creative solutions and to work out strong, competitive incentives to keep National Steel Car in Hamilton and from going to Alabama?

1110

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I say to the member is that we continue to work with all parties to ensure that a collective agreement can get done. And we do this—

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I don't think the member wants to listen. But what we do—

Mr. Paul Miller: You're not answering the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to please listen to the response. Thank you.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know that the employer and the trade union are doing everything they can to come to a collective agreement. I know that because our Ministry of Labour mediators and conciliators are there assisting. They are the best in the country. They are called upon to be at the table to help the parties resolve those differences so that they can get on with working and moving

forward. That's why we have the best labour relations that this province has had in over 30 years.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As our province moves forward in building a knowledge-based economy, we know that investing in skills and education is a priority. Attracting more people to post-secondary education and training will ensure that Ontario's workforce remains on the competitive edge in the global economy. In my own community, St. Clair College and the University of Windsor are doing tremendous work in promoting their programs and encouraging more students from all over Canada, and around the world, to seek education there. We know that post-secondary education will be essential in the new economy. With more students on our campuses, we are seeing additional strain on our facilities, classrooms and labs. Minister, what have you done to ensure our post-secondary education institutions are able to withstand the influx of students?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question and he certainly raises a very important point of the value of the bricks and mortar side of post-secondary education. I've been very proud that this government, particularly in this mandate, has put a real emphasis on infrastructure at our colleges and universities, both through the 2007 fall economic statement and the 2008 budget. Through both those budgets, we invested \$190 million at 12 different colleges across the province to increase space and address equipment shortages, creating 13,000 new spaces for students, 4,500 of which are apprenticeship students. On the university side, those two economic statements invested \$264 million for capital projects, linking education to economic growth and competitiveness, and we've invested \$400 million in campus renewal.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I know that St. Clair College and the University of Windsor were pleased to receive over \$15 million in deferred maintenance and equipment renewal investments last year. This money is helping them to expand classrooms and ensure students are learning on up-to-date equipment that prepares them for today's modern workplace. With the recent economic downturn, it is essential that we do everything we can to create jobs in the short term while improving Ontario's competitiveness in the long term. Investing in post-secondary infrastructure does just that. Recently our government announced that we will be investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure projects over the next two years. Minister, how do you plan on moving ahead with a long-term infrastructure plan for our campuses?

Hon. John Milloy: I was very pleased that the most recent budget of several weeks ago complemented what had come forward in the fall economic statement and the budget of a year ago, and that was a commitment of \$780 million for our province's colleges and universities. Of course, we are working very closely with the federal

government and want to see this funding complement a similar program that came forward from them.

At the same time, the budget also contained an additional \$35 million for new medical school infrastructure. This capital investment will support the creation of 100 new medical school spaces across the province of Ontario and add to our government's priority of increasing the supply of doctors.

We are working very closely with Ontario's colleges and universities and the federal government to make sure that this funding gets out the door as quickly as possible and—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Premier, buying a home is the single largest investment that many of us will make in our entire lifetime. Governments should do what they can to support that important Canadian value of home ownership, but this Premier is throwing one roadblock after another in front of middle-class families trying to buy a new home. The Premier knows that almost 40% of all new housing in the greater Toronto area is priced at more than \$400,000. If a family were to choose Toronto, they'd face the new McGuinty-Miller land transfer tax and now a brand new 8% sales tax.

Premier, why are you taxing homes out of reach of middle-class families in the GTA?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has put together a tax cut package for average Ontarians that's unprecedented in the history of Ontario: \$10.6 billion. We'll have the lowest tax rate on the first bracket. We've also provided the most generous sales tax credit in the country compared to all the other harmonized provinces.

This package is the right package of corporate tax cuts, business tax cuts, that will stimulate this economy and get us to better and stronger growth so that we can continue to maintain and enhance our vital public services—education, health care—and a better environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That has got to be some massive rebate if it's going to beat the \$32,000 tax hike you're going to impose on middle-class families buying a home in the GTA.

This also impacts on resale homes. The Ontario Real Estate Association estimates that the Dalton McGuinty sales tax will add \$2,300 to the cost of a real estate transaction. From legal fees, moving costs, commissions and home inspection fees, the McGuinty-Miller land transfer tax in Toronto is up to \$3,500 more per home and has already resulted in a 23% drop in sales, let alone the impacts of your so-called Green Energy Act on the cost of home heating.

Premier, given that we want to get out of this recession, private sector job creation will be key. Why are you

trying to strangle the construction and home building industry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite: I just said a moment ago that we have a very generous sales tax that will effectively exempt 75% of new homes in Ontario. Actually, new home sales went up 16% in Nova Scotia and 12% in New Brunswick after the implementation of the single sales tax in those provinces.

I heard Mr. Hudak say on TVO's *The Agenda* that he doesn't think our \$32.5-billion infrastructure—he says, “I don't think that's the right approach.” Christine Elliott said that she read about Tim's position on that and personally believes that we should keep it. Who speaks for that party over there? Are they for a harmonized sales tax? Are they for an infrastructure plan? Who stands and speaks for that party? I can tell you this: This government speaks—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. We've been doing very well.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. The Premier talks regularly about building a caring Ontario, one that provides the tools for all Ontarians to participate and contribute. Last year, the Minister of Children and Youth Services shut low-income people out of the closed-door hearings on the government poverty plan, and then the government never reported back on what they heard from Ontarians who are losing their jobs and falling into poverty. Now the government is restricting its hearings on the poverty reduction plan to just two half-days in Toronto; again, denying the opportunity for poor Ontarians outside of Toronto to speak about the struggles that they are facing.

1120

If the Premier really cares about Ontarians, why won't the government hold broad-based public hearings across Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't speak to the specifics of any committee decisions with respect to what kind of travel they're going to do, but I can say that Ontarians who have paid some attention to our government and the approach we've brought to dealing with issues of poverty affecting too many Ontario families I think will come to the conclusion that our heart's in the right place.

Take a look at this most recent budget. We are just about doubling the Ontario child benefit. We brought forward a commitment that we were to deliver on in 2011 to 2009, from \$50 a month to \$92 a month. We're putting \$1.2 billion into retrofitting social housing and building more affordable housing. We're going to ensure that our low-income earners pay the lowest level of income taxation in the country. So I think it is unfair to accuse us of not understanding and not reaching out to Ontario families who are affected by poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: If the Premier really wanted to build a caring and thriving Ontario, his government would strengthen the Poverty Reduction Act. They would put in place a citizen advisory committee to monitor the poverty reduction strategy, as they have done in Quebec. They would require all ministers to consider and report on poverty impacts of new legislation, as they've done in Quebec. They would put an ambitious long-term goal for poverty reduction in the act, as they did in Quebec. And they would require poverty reduction strategies to include a full range of strategies, as in Quebec.

Is the McGuinty government restricting public hearings to two half-days in Toronto because they know that people living in poverty will compare other jurisdictions and say that this bill is simply not good enough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Listen, I understand that it's never good enough, not only as a constant refrain coming from my colleagues, but in many ways, I personally believe that whatever we have done, there is still always more left undone. And we're going to try to find ways to build on that. But I think, in fairness, it is worthy to stop and consider that we are the first government of any political stripe to put in place a poverty reduction strategy, with some targets, with some specific strategies and with some accompanying legislation. We think that is a good foundation on which to build.

I'm always open to more suggestions from my colleagues opposite, but at some point in time we're going to stop the presses, because somebody over there is going to get up and say, “Moving forward in the way that you have is a good start.”

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Last week was a big week for transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton. I understand that it was always the intent of the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006, to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit. If the proposed legislation passes, it will mean great things for transportation across the region.

Metrolinx's regional transportation plan has a number of initiatives to improve public transit, and I've heard from many in my riding who would like to see these initiatives implemented, and implemented quickly. There are also those from Hamilton who use GO Transit regularly. I have heard from these constituents that they would like to know more about the effect that this potential merger may have on future public transit plans. Can the minister tell us exactly what the merger of GO Transit and Metrolinx will mean for the people of Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the member's interest in public transit. Recently, we announced that this government plans to merge Metrolinx and GO Transit. We believe that, if passed, this legislation would create a single transit agency able to move quickly to

take The Big Move, Metrolinx's regional transportation plan, off the drawing board and actually into service. It will bring the considerable expertise of both agencies together under one roof and allow us to get shovels in the ground quickly on key projects. The proposed new agency will deliver better customer service, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create almost 430,000 Ontario jobs.

I want to assure the member that GO Transit will continue to remain visible in terms of an operating brand and transit service. There will be no service disruption. We will continue to work with municipal governments to knit together a regional transportation network that will serve all their constituents even more effectively.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Minister, I'm pleased to hear that, if passed, the legislation will maintain GO service and that we will see projects move forward at a quickened pace.

Many Hamiltonians took great interest in the final regional transportation plan, as congestion is an issue I hear about quite often from my constituents. Many of those living in Hamilton commute to Oakville, Mississauga and even Toronto.

As part of last week's announcement, we saw funding for five major projects across the GTA and Hamilton. As well, we saw new funding for a variety of GO projects from Niagara to Bowmanville. I'm hoping that this is only the beginning. Could the Minister of Transportation please share with this House what the proposed merger will mean for public transit, especially for those living in Hamilton?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Hamilton plays an integral role in this government's vision of a seamless regional transit network for the five million people living in the GTA and Hamilton. The top 15 transit priorities in Metrolinx's regional transportation plan include projects for Hamilton, such as express rail on the Lakeshore line from Hamilton to Oshawa and rapid transit in downtown Hamilton from McMaster University to Eastgate mall.

Last Wednesday, we saw the province invest \$3 million in a study that will support Hamilton's evaluation of its rapid transit corridors. This funding is essential for planning, design and environmental assessment work to help bring rapid transit to Hamilton on the two proposed corridors. The proposed merger of Metrolinx and GO Transit will allow projects such as these to move faster, getting more people out of their cars and onto public transit. We have a very ambitious plan and we are in the process—

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

SMOKING CESSATION

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and it's related to products designed to promote health, but I feel compelled to ask the minister for a commitment first. Since past behaviour is often the best indicator of future behaviour, I feel that I

should ask the minister if she will commit to answering a question that pertains to her portfolio without deflecting to one of her colleagues. Simply put, will the minister answer a question that I put about health promotion? If I do that, will you answer it?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I thank the member for his comments and I would like the member to know that whenever he thinks about a question and asks me a question that pertains to my ministry, I will be very pleased to answer it.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I, too, applaud the answer.

Prior to the last provincial election, your predecessor announced that as of August 2007, the government would be eliminating the RST on nicotine replacement therapies, including the patch, sprays, inhalers and more. Your government even included this announcement in the election platform, claiming that they would help even more Ontarians quit smoking by removing the provincial sales tax from nicotine patches and making those and other therapies more widely available. Now your government is breaking that promise and hiking taxes on those very same products.

Are you no longer interested in helping Ontarians quit smoking, do you no longer think that nicotine replacement therapies are effective, and if you do, why have you been so silent? Why have you not defended Ontarians from your government's attacks on their health?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Our government is certainly committed to helping Ontarians break the cycle of tobacco addiction. In 2007-08, we provided close to \$15 million for cessation programs, services, training and public education. So far in 2008-09, we have allocated \$9.7 million to support cessation products. Whether it is public education, tobacco control legislation or support of people who want to quit, we have been proactive. And 93% of Ontario's taxpayers will pay less personal income taxes because of our budget. This is very important because it means that Ontario families will have more money in their pockets to spend. Families with an income of less than \$160,000 will—

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

1130

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Colleges, Training and Universities: The largest arts and science faculty in Ontario voted yesterday in favour of a flat fee. This fee is equivalent to a five-course load even if students only take three or four courses. Does the minister agree with this flat fee as a way of compensating for the fact that Ontario universities are dead last in Canada in per capita student funding?

Hon. John Milloy: I had a chance to comment on this yesterday. The honourable member is aware that we have a regulated tuition framework in the province of Ontario. Under that regulated tuition fee framework, universities

may charge students tuition fees on a program or flat-fee basis. He may be aware that the University of Toronto already has a number of programs that are charged on a flat-fee basis, as do 10 other universities across the province. It's my understanding that Carleton University, my alma mater, has had that in place for 25 years.

The question is about the tuition fee framework. Is the policy brought forward by any university consistent with the tuition fee framework, which not only limits the amount of tuition increase that can affect a student; it also mandates universities to make sure that they provide any additional financial help? Because our number one goal is to make sure that no student is ever denied access to university—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Perhaps GO should charge transit riders a flat fee for a 100-kilometre trip no matter how far they're really going, or LCBO customers who buy three or four bottles could be charged for five. It is simply ridiculous to charge students who are already reeling from an enormous debt load and some of the highest tuitions in the province for courses that they're not taking. Does the minister approve of the flat fee that U of T is proposing?

Hon. John Milloy: The program of flat fees has been in place for decades. At Carleton University, it has been in place for 25 years. The issue is ensuring that students do not face financial obstacles when they wish to go to colleges or universities. I'm very proud to be part of a government which has brought in a tuition fee framework which has doubled the amount of student aid, which has worked very hard to make sure that students have the support they need. I find it passing strange for a member who was part of a government which saw tuition fees skyrocket, which cut upfront grants, to stand up and have the gall to talk about not supporting students.

DEFERRED VOTES

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the budget motion.

On March 30, 2009, Mr. Runciman moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 26, 2009, "that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "that this House" and adding the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members please take their seats.

All those in favour of Mr. Runciman's amendment will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Paul	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will rise and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Duncan, Dwight	Naqvi, Yasir
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Kwintar, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Smitherman, George
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable members to stay in their seats.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 60.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the amendment to the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr. Duncan. On March 26, 2009, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr.

McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed. The reverse: the ayes will be 60; the nays will be 26. I declare the motion carried.

It is therefore resolved that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Arnott: For almost a year I have been urging the provincial government to extend GO Transit rail service through Acton, Rockwood, Guelph and Kitchener–Waterloo.

On July 17 of last year, I wrote to federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty to request financial assistance from the federal government for this project. In the fall, I organized a meeting at Queen's Park with officials from GO Transit and the town of Halton Hills. More than once I've stood in this Legislature to call for progressive action on this file.

In December, I introduced a private member's resolution calling on the McGuinty government to complete the environmental assessment and get the trains carrying passengers to work no later than September 2011. Of course I've often discussed the merits of this project with the Minister of Transportation, and did as late as last week.

It is encouraging that the federal and provincial governments are promising to fund capacity and bridge improvements to the Georgetown line. I want to thank my federal counterpart, the Honourable Michael Chong, for his work on this issue. I also want to continue to urge the Honourable Jim Bradley to do what he can as Ontario's Minister of Transportation.

We need to speed up infrastructure projects that will enhance our long-term competitiveness, our environment and our quality of life. Friday's announcement was a good step forward, and I intend to continue pushing the government to keep this train on track.

WORLD WATER DAY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I rise today to recognize a gift of nature that we rarely take time to contemplate. March

22 was World Water Day, an international day of observance and action to draw attention to the plight of the more than one billion people worldwide who lack access to clean, safe drinking water.

Here in Ontario, home of the five Great Lakes, we are fortunate to have an abundance of fresh water. But despite this abundance, our history shows that water security is of universal importance. Few of us will ever forget the terrible tragedy that befell the people of Walkerton in 2000, when seven people died and more than 2,300 people fell ill from drinking contaminated water. The physical, psychological and economic impact of the water crisis on the community cannot be overstated. I am proud to be part of a government that has taken strong action to prevent a repeat of this horrible tragedy.

In my riding of Huron–Bruce, construction of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre's permanent home began last autumn. The centre was established in response to the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry, and it focuses on training for drinking water professionals across Ontario. In particular, small and remote communities, including First Nations, benefit from this centre.

This is just one of the many steps we have taken to ensure safe drinking water. I invite the House to join me in recognizing this important natural resource.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Today I would like to share with the Legislature the wonderful work that local college students in my riding have been doing for the community.

On April 2, two second-year students from Georgian College's early childhood education program stopped by my office and asked me if I would bring their work and message on childhood poverty to Queen's Park.

Sarah McCallum and Anya Pucan, representing their 15 classmates, presented me with over 3,500 handprints that had been created by local children in the riding. The handprints were part of a second-year ECE students' ethics and advocacy class project.

The class as a whole decided to focus on children living in poverty in Canada. The students told me that the ECE professionals are usually the first educators to deal with children in poverty, and it was important for them to understand how and why poverty occurs in this country. McCallum and Pucan shared with me their research findings that one in six children in Canada lives in poverty, and an average low-income, single-parent family lives on approximately \$9,500 below the poverty line.

Also, the students told me that between 2001 and 2006, there had been a 2.3% climb in the number of children living in poverty.

The students gathered over 35 handprints, each print representing 100 children living in poverty in the province of Ontario.

The ECE students gathered the handprints from local day cares and elementary schools in the area. Upon collecting the handprints, the ECE students displayed them at the Georgian College campus in Owen Sound.

The students asked me if I would deliver the hand-prints to the Premier and ask him and his government to keep their commitment of a 25 in 5 poverty reduction strategy.

OSWALDO RAMIREZ

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to congratulate Dr. Oswaldo Ramirez on being named the postgraduate family medicine preceptor of the year by the rural Ontario medical program.

ROMP began as the seed of an idea over two decades ago, providing medical trainees across south-central Ontario with hands-on experience outside the academic arena and in a rural rotation. The medical residents work one on one with a medical preceptor or mentor to learn the clinical, professional, social and academic components involved in practising medicine, receiving intense training that they might not otherwise receive in an urban setting. ROMP works to provide rural Ontario with home-grown physicians to ease the province's ever-increasing doctor shortage.

Its success is largely contributed to by the hard work of physicians like Dr. Ramirez, who has not only demonstrated great skill in medicine but an incredible ability to teach as well.

Dr. Ramirez's award is based on student evaluations that acknowledged his overwhelming efforts to go above and beyond the call of duty for his students and residents. He even made such an impact on one of his students that he was able to convince one former student, Brenda Prebble, to join the Alliston family health team.

This is truly a fitting recognition of Dr. Ramirez's service to his students and the people of New Tecumseth, Adjala-Tosorontio and Essa in general. I join with the residents of our area, his colleagues and Dr. Peter Wells of ROMP in congratulating Dr. Ramirez on this tremendous success and on this well-deserved award.

PATRICIA MOORE

Mr. Michael Prue: Every year on March 24, the people of East York gather together to commemorate the birth of a remarkable woman, Agnes Macphail. For the last 16 years, we have been handing out an award to a citizen of our community who exemplifies Agnes Macphail's commitment to the people of this province and of this country. We award a citizen who continues with Agnes Macphail's legacy in women's rights, seniors, access to housing or any other good social advocacy.

This year's winner is Patricia Moore. To quote the nominator of Patricia Moore because I think she said it better even than I could, "Pat is a tireless worker, effective community advocate, and relentless pursuer of social justice. Whether it is tenants being taken advantage of, youth who feel misunderstood or who have lost their way, or citizens who have been victimized, you can always count on Pat to step in and take action. She most definitely is not afraid to speak up!" That quotation is from Satinder Sahota.

Pat has done an amazing job. She is a tenant advocate. She works with youth to help them find jobs and opportunities. She volunteers at 53 division of the police on community liaison. She is an advocate and keen worker for UMOVE, United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere. And she reaches out to those not only in her own community, not only in East York, but across the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario to help those who are most in need. Congratulations, Pat.

BANGLADESH

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today in this House to recognize the 38th independence anniversary of Bangladesh. Recently, I had the honour to speak at a function held near my riding of Scarborough Southwest and organized by members of the Bangladeshi community to celebrate the Independence Day of Bangladesh. Over 200 members from a cross-section of the Bangladeshi community of Toronto were in attendance.

In 1971, Bangladesh became an independent nation following a nine-month war of liberation. An estimated three million people lost their lives in this liberation war. The Awami League under the leadership of the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the then East Pakistan won a majority in the election. Although he was not allowed to form the government, his election served as the catalyst for the Bengali people's right to self-determination.

Sheikh Rahman led the movement and declared the independence of Bangladesh. This event is especially significant because it led to the first-ever benefit concert, an event held in New York City by former Beatle George Harrison and Ravi Shankar on August 1, 1971, playing to a total of 40,000 people at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Organized for relief of refugees of East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh, the event was the first benefit concert and it featured performers such as Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, George Harrison, Billy Preston, Leon Russell and Ringo Starr. The concert raised over \$243,000 for Bangladesh relief and it was administered by UNICEF.

On behalf of this assembly, I extend congratulations to the Bangladeshi community on celebrating the 38th anniversary of their independence.

1510

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The township of Mulmer in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon has passed an excellent resolution which I think is very important for all members of the Legislature to hear:

"Whereas the province of Ontario has released Bill 150, the proposed Green Energy Act ... for comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights; and

"Mulmer has spent substantial time, effort and money over the past two years to develop comprehensive policies to deal with alternative energy projects; and

"The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was poised to approve much of the township's new policy

until an appeal of the amendment was launched by a wind farm developer;

“The wind farm being proposed is for the Honeywood area within the township and may not be appropriate for the site and area in which it is being proposed to be located, given the number of serious and as-yet-unresolved concerns identified during the environmental screening process;

“Since transition regulations have not been released and it is not yet known whether this project will be subject to the proposed new provincial regulations or current processes or requirements;

“There is no indication that the province intends to consult specifically with the host municipality or its directly affected ratepayers in a manner similar to that now conducted by a municipality under the Planning Act, a process which is considered essential to sound land use planning;

“There is no indication that the substantial costs to municipalities in reviewing and commenting on such proposals can be recovered in the same way that they are now recoverable under the Planning Act;

“The township believes that the Niagara Escarpment area is not an appropriate location for large-scale energy conversion projects of any kind and that, at a minimum, a one-kilometre buffer around the boundaries of the Niagara Escarpment plan is appropriate;

“Both the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, up until now, have been in full agreement with the exclusion and buffer area”—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I thank the honourable armchair Speakers as well, too. Perhaps your co-operation will be there during question period.

LE CENTRE DE SERVICES À LA FAMILLE

M. Phil McNeely: Le Centre de services à la famille est un organisme sans but lucratif établi au cœur d'Ottawa qui travaille dans le comté d'Ottawa-Vanier depuis 15 ans. Je suis heureux de vous faire connaître le Centre de services à la famille. Le but de cette déclaration est de promouvoir le 15^e anniversaire du centre. Son engagement auprès des familles a de fortes visées d'ordre préventif telles que le décrochage scolaire chez les jeunes et la détresse chez les parents. La prévention est menée grâce à des activités d'éducation et d'accompagnement.

La brève description suivante donne un aperçu de la mission que le centre s'efforce d'accomplir : faire découvrir et activer les forces de la famille et de l'individu par des programmes et des activités de nature à développer l'estime de soi, à créer des relations interpersonnelles porteuses de sens et à promouvoir l'engagement au sein de la communauté francophone.

Il est opportun de souligner que le 28 mai il y aura une fête de reconnaissance, sous la présidence d'honneur de M^{me} la ministre, Madeleine Meilleur; de M^e Ronald Caza, parrain de cet événement; et de M^{me} Diane Doré,

marraine de l'événement. À cette occasion, les 175 bénévoles du Centre de services à la famille seront honorés.

Il me fait donc plaisir, en tant que député, d'annoncer cet événement et d'assurer notre appui au Centre de services à la famille car nous sommes convaincus que les familles en santé sont l'assise d'une province en santé.

TAMARACK HOUSE

Mr. Bill Mauro: TBayTel Tamarack House is a home away from home for cancer patients. The facility opened in 2004, changing its name from Amethyst House when it moved into the new building. The facility was named after the tamarack tree and reflects the north and the hardiness of its people.

Tamarack House welcomes patients from northwestern Ontario who can stay there at no cost to themselves, their family members or other companions. TBayTel was a key donor in 2004 through a \$100,000 donation, and Tamarack House is funded through the regional cancer care program. This house is ably led by Dr. Scott Sellick, director of palliative and supportive care at Thunder Bay Regional, whose president and CEO, Ron Saddington, provides invaluable support.

Staying at Tamarack House reduces the financial burden associated with travel for cancer care. Four hundred new patients stay at the lodge yearly. In four years, the house logged over 15,000 stays at the lodge, and one third of those have been family members or other companions who have been of immeasurable support. More than one third of the approximately 1,500 new cancer patients treated yearly at Thunder Bay Regional come from many northern, remote and fly-in communities. Many come for complex radiation therapy that requires stays in Thunder Bay for up to eight weeks.

We have many to thank. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, through the regional cancer program, has partnered with the Health Sciences Foundation via the Northern Cancer Fund, which is part of the foundation and continually works to raise funds. I also want to congratulate Glenn Craig, the president and CEO of the Health Sciences Foundation, for his leadership and efforts to support the continued improvement of health care in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. David Oraziotti: I rise in the House today to comment on our government's recently announced budget.

To help Ontario families, we are stimulating Ontario's economy while ensuring that we can continue to enhance important public services, including health care and education. We are accelerating an increase to the Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100 annually, two years ahead of schedule. This means that an eligible family will see their benefit increase from \$50 to \$92 per month for each child.

Our government also listened to businesses when we created this budget. We heard that the single most

important thing we could do to make Ontario companies more competitive was to implement tax reform. That's why we introduced a single sales tax, saving businesses \$500 million per year. That's why we cut business taxes by \$4.5 billion, which will give Ontario the lowest marginal corporate tax rate in North America. There will also be \$10.6 billion in temporary and permanent tax relief over the next three years, and 93% of Ontario taxpayers will pay less in personal income tax.

We are following the lead of four Canadian provinces and 130 countries, which all experienced growth after implementing similar comprehensive tax reform. Our government also made a timely investment of \$32 billion in infrastructure spending. This funding will stimulate the economy and create new jobs for Ontario families while laying the foundation for future growth in the province.

The headline in the Sault Star read, "Liberal Budget Gets Top Marks." In response to our support for the forestry industry, Mayor Rowsell said, "This is very important to the industry and St. Mary's Paper is taking advantage of it."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Je demande la permission de déposer un rapport du Comité permanent de la politique sociale et je propose son adoption. I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption and send it to you by a page who will momentarily materialize—Mark.

The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 133, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to certain family law matters and to repeal the Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne des questions de droit de la famille et abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la protection contre la violence familiale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOXICS REDUCTION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES TOXIQUES

Mr. Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to promote reductions in the use and creation of toxic substances and to amend other Acts /

Projet de loi 167, Loi visant à promouvoir une réduction de l'utilisation et de la création de substances toxiques et à modifier d'autres lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll wait until ministerial statements.

WELECHENKO TRANSPORT LTD. ACT, 2009

Mr. Murdoch moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive Welechenko Transport Ltd.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOXICS REDUCTION

Hon. John Gerretsen: Today I'm proud to rise on World Health Day to introduce an important piece of legislation that, if passed, would help reduce toxic substances in Ontario, create a better quality of life for Ontarians and support the health of our families and our communities.

Our proposed Toxics Reduction Act is another in a long line of visionary yet eminently sensible actions that our government has taken to help ensure that we can breathe clean air, drink clean water and safely enjoy the land around us.

It addresses key areas of concern. Toxic substances are used in nearly all industrial and production activities. They're commonly found in products that we use every day and they can negatively impact our environment and our health.

Ontarians are truly concerned about the environmental and health risks associated with potentially carcinogenic substances. Recent polls show that 94% of Ontarians put toxics on par with climate change as a priority environmental issue that simply must be addressed. Our government has taken a stand to reduce the harm.

We have already taken a number of steps to reduce toxics in our environment, including working on steps to improve the health of the Great Lakes, updating air standards and diverting hazardous waste from landfills. We have also recently banned the use and sale of cos-

metic pesticides. But today we introduce proposed legislation as a cornerstone of our proposed toxics reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall our government's pledge to develop this strategy. We see it as addressing three issues: First, managing the use of toxics would improve the protection of the environment and human health; second, it would give Ontarians the right to know about toxics in their communities; and third, it would help ensure that Ontario is well positioned to compete globally and develop green chemistry alternatives.

Let me stress how critical this third point is to our future success and prosperity. We in Ontario all want a strong economy. We want a quality of life in clean and healthy communities. Ontarians believe, as we do, that indeed we can have both. With this proposed legislation, we want to ensure that the well-paying green collar jobs and investment resulting from innovation and scientific research into green chemistry will happen right here in Ontario. By doing so, we would help transform Ontario into a strong, competitive force in the new green global economy.

Our strategy augments the traditional "end-of-pipe" approach to managing chemical releases by placing a new focus on reducing the use of these substances at the front end of the industrial processes. If passed, the proposed Toxics Reduction Act would enable us to start rolling out the new approach. It would require facilities to track, evaluate and report on their current use and release of toxics, and it would require them to help develop a plan to reduce them both. A summary of each plan would be made public so that Ontarians are aware of industry's use and release of toxics.

We believe that we are taking a fair, rational and balanced approach, one that supports Ontario's businesses during challenging economic times and does not at the same time impose undue regulatory burdens on them. We also plan to ensure that facilities have the early technical compliance and financial assistance they need to develop their toxics reduction plans and to take early action to reduce substances wherever possible.

If this proposed act is passed, we would be investing \$24 million to help support industries in Ontario to transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operations.

We are confident that we are proposing the right steps. Throughout this process, we have benefited from the good, sound and scientific advice of Ontario's toxics reduction scientific expert panel, under the leadership of our co-chairs, Dr. Miriam Diamond, who is here today with her family, and Professor Linda Collins. Both are joining us today in the House, along with other specially invited guests who are in the gallery here at the east end of the building.

Ontarians see a link between reducing toxics in their environment and ensuring a healthy quality of life.

Our government has a vision for the future of Ontario, and this proposed legislation, this strategy, is a crucial part of that. If passed, the Toxics Reduction Act would

help us to better protect human health and be better stewards of the environment. It would ensure that Ontarians are well informed so that they can avoid those toxics that could be harmful. And it would encourage and support innovation in the use of more environmentally friendly replacement substances, which would ultimately make industries more competitive in the world's emerging green economy.

If passed, this bill would make Ontario the leading province in Canada on toxics reductions, and it would secure new jobs and investment at a time when our highly skilled workforce and diverse industries are eager for new opportunities.

Change will not happen overnight, but with support from all sides of the House for this legislation, we can begin the important work of reducing toxics and building a greener, healthier and more prosperous Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to respond. While today's announcement of Ontario's toxics reduction strategy has been much anticipated and long awaited—and we do share the goal of reduction of the use of toxics across this province—I do fear, like the precedent set by the pesticides legislation and the spills bill, for example, that this proposed legislation could quickly veer off course and lose sight of accomplishing its laudatory goals.

I would just go back a year and a half or so. It was on April 27, 2007, that we announced our PC plan to move on toxics reduction. As such, we have been somewhat bemused to see the McGuinty government follow our lead with regard to enacting a plan to reduce toxins.

It was September 24, 2007—I guess that would be about five months later—that the McGuinty campaign during the election mimicked the Tory platform. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Sorry, Minister. I'll continue.

For, example, the minister may recall we proposed drawing on the successful Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act—the acronym is TURA. Five months later, on September 24, 2007, the McGuinty Liberals proposed drawing on the successful Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Act, TURA.

I will have more time during my leadoff to discuss the benefits of the approach we put forward at that time versus the one being proposed today. The basic differences are relatively simple and impactful, and these differences centre around the key element of working with the already established approaches to toxics management currently in place through the federal government and through business best practices, all the while providing those ever-important carrots, those incentives, along with the sticks, to ensure mutually shared toxics reduction goals.

1530

Think back to the spills bill for a moment. At that time, much as this government's own Industrial Pollution

Action Team and its recommendations to government with respect to incentives were ignored—tax-free loans, grants, things like that, in particular for small business, to achieve the clean environmental results that the spills bill was calling for—so, too, I do fear—we obviously have the same need for incentives to help deal with toxics, and I'm concerned these may be overlooked in the approach we see today.

I look forward, with respect to today's announcement, to working in this Legislature towards an effective plan that will see not only government but also business work together to reduce and, of course, where possible, eliminate the use of toxic substances and, as the minister has indicated, their related health and environmental hazards.

I do remind the House that on April 27, 2007, we put forward an election platform, if you will, based on the Massachusetts model. Five months later, the McGuinty government, on September 24, 2007, put forward a similar plan. I think it's very important to call for both incentives and the disincentives, or the sticks, to reduce and eliminate some of these contaminants. But we must work in harmony with the federal government and utilize that federal list of toxic substances. Of course, we agree to requiring business to disclose the use of their product to the public.

Of course, planning is important: Ensure that industry, including small business, has the wherewithal to be able to prepare a plan for reducing and eliminating the use of these toxins. Implementation clearly lies with the individual operation.

As far as incentives, we proposed a toxics reduction fund and we proposed other measures. I think of our proposal for targeted tax measures. Clearly, it's very important. We do have to help small business with some of these challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate you calling on me to speak to this matter today.

First of all, I want to thank those activists who have worked hard to bring this matter forward in this province: the Canadian Environmental Law Association, Environmental Defence, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and the Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition. I want to thank the members of the expert panel who spoke here today. I know that their speaking here today was the tip of an iceberg of a large amount of work done previously.

I'm sure that I've missed people, and I should mention political staff and Ministry of the Environment staff who worked on this, because there's no question that issues of consequence to this whole province don't simply fall from the heavens onto the desk of a minister. They come here because there has been pressure. They come here because people want action.

There's no question that in this province people are worried about cancer. There's no question they are worried about toxic contamination. Anyone who has

stood at the bedside of a family member or relative who is dying or suffering from cancer, anyone who has gone into the chemotherapy rooms at Princess Margaret Hospital and seen the young people and the old people knows that something has to be done. It's not all chemical contamination, but we know that it's part of what is going on in this province.

I'm not happy with the bill as presented today. I'm not happy with the bill, not because we don't need a bill—and I will be working in committee to strengthen it to the greatest extent possible—but because it is a watering down of promises that were made by the government in the last election when they said they would require reduction of toxic chemicals by companies. That is not what's on the table today.

I'm not happy with the government because we are simply in this province in an ongoing process of playing catch-up. While other jurisdictions, California and Massachusetts, have moved long before us, we are slowly catching up. That has health consequences and it has economic consequences. It has health consequences in those cancer wards, and you know that, Minister. It has economic consequences because the world is moving away from fossil fuels and toxic chemicals to green chemistry, and in both those fields, it's the jurisdictions that act early and act profoundly that develop a competitive edge, an economic advantage that will allow them to power their economies in the 21st century. Too slow, Minister, too slow.

You have an opportunity in the next month or two to amend this bill to make it much stronger, and you must make it much stronger. You should put in targets. If you want someone to do something, you set out what you want them to do and the time by which you want it done—if in fact you want it to happen. There are no targets in the bill. I heard the explanation in the press conference, and I have to say to you, as a person who sits in this House and looks at reports on this, that and the other thing that is done, that if there is not a target, it is extraordinarily difficult for us as legislators and for the public as a whole to hold government to account. For me, having a target is an important part of any bill.

I'm very concerned about this government bringing forward a bill when I am not certain that in fact it will be enforced. You, Speaker, have been in this House when we've seen the reports of the Auditor General about the failure to enforce the laws around hazardous waste. We've seen the reports of the commissioner on the environment about the failure to enforce certificates of approval. The question I have to ask myself is, are there adequate resources in this Ministry of the Environment to enforce the legislation that's being put before this House today? I would say, as of the moment, as of the evidence we have, that's not there.

Interestingly, in my last few minutes, there was a report in the Toronto Star today about a farm couple whose cows had been contaminated by water in a creek nearby, a legacy contamination. This government opposed the award to this couple, saying that this award

would set a precedent that would bankrupt the province. So the question I have to ask is, if someone has done the calculation as to how much contamination there is in the water in this province and knows that the volume of contamination would create demands for settlement that would bankrupt this province, where is the large-scale action necessary to clear up that contamination?

I say to you, members of this Legislature and those who are watching, if the government isn't dealing with our historic problems, how can we rely on them to deal with our current problems?

MAURICE BOSSY

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Maurice Louis Bossy, former member of provincial Parliament for Chatham-Kent.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: It is an honour and a privilege for me to rise today and pay tribute to a true gentleman, Maurice Bossy, who, first and foremost, was a family man in every sense of the word.

Joining us today in the members' gallery is his wife, Margaret, and one of their seven children, Andrew. Thank you for being with us today as we express our respect and admiration for a colleague.

Mr. Bossy was born April 1, 1929, and passed away on November 29, 2008. Mr. Bossy served in the Ontario Legislature from 1985 to 1990, representing the riding of Chatham-Kent. The riding had been held by the Conservatives since 1943, and in fact, in most elections up until 1985, the Liberal Party always finished third. Mr. Bossy changed all of that.

During his time in the Legislative Assembly, he served as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing, parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for disabled persons, Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on the Ombudsman, member of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and also served as deputy whip.

Maurice also served in the federal House as the member of Parliament for Kent from 1980 to 1984. In Ottawa, he was Chair of the agricultural committee, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Supply and Services, and was also deputy whip.

1540

We recall his service for an important reason, because he made a difference. He made a difference to his wife through 59 years of marriage, to his seven children, 21 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He made a difference in his community. Mr. Bossy farmed most of his life in the Dresden area and worked 18 years with Canada Packers. For 10 years, he served on the Kent County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, including as chair.

For Mr. Bossy, it was always about family and community.

As MP, he brought the Judy LaMarsh building to Chatham, once the site of the region's Canada pension plan processing centre.

As MPP, the Thames riverfront improvement project in Chatham means tourists and citizens can walk along the river and enjoy it today and long into the future. And the Indian/McGregor Creek flood control project has helped prevent disaster in south Kent, including this past winter. These are government-funded projects that are having and will have long-lasting benefits for our community, thanks to Maurice Bossy.

In the eulogy at his funeral last November, son Gerry Bossy noted how his father dealt personally with constituents. An elderly lady had called his office saying there was a raccoon on her roof and what could the member of Parliament do about it? So Mr. Bossy hopped in his car, got a ladder, went up on the roof and managed to get the raccoon down and the lady was forever grateful.

Maurice was also great friends with the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, always loyal to him and a big supporter when he ran for the federal leadership in 1984. During Mr. Bossy's last days at home before his passing, Mr. Chrétien called him and they spoke for a long time. It was a very emotional moment for both of them. Both had come from big families and both had to work hard despite great odds to accomplish great things.

It was once said about politicians that you can work a lifetime building your reputation and one mistake can destroy it. But for Mr. Bossy, for his entire life, in and out of politics, his stellar reputation for honesty, hard work and commitment to family and community stayed intact. It never wavered through good times and tough times.

Mr. Bossy will be remembered by all who knew him for he is the true embodiment of a great Canadian, and that is perhaps the best compliment we can give Maurice Bossy and I believe the one that he would appreciate the most.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I am honoured to rise today on behalf of the official opposition to pay tribute to the late Maurice Bossy, the former member for Chatham-Kent, who died November 29, 2008, at 79 years of age.

Maurice Bossy contributed much to the quality of public life at every level in Chatham-Kent during his long and successful career.

Born in 1931, Maurice was educated at Pain Court Continuation School and received his licence from the Ontario Real Estate Board. He was also a farmer and then a salesman with a long career at Canada Packers.

Maurice spent 10 years as a trustee with the former Kent County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, including a term as chair. He was also a long and faithful member of St. Ursula Roman Catholic Church and a life member of the Knights of Columbus.

In 1980, Maurice Bossy was elected as the member of Parliament for Chatham-Kent. During his career in Ottawa as member of Parliament, he served as parliamentary secretary to the Secretary of State and parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Supply and Services. Mr. Bossy served in the House of Commons until 1984.

In October 2000, Maurice gave an interview to the local paper about the passing of a former Prime Minister. He was asked about that 1980 election campaign where he was quite straightforward in saying, "I campaigned on the promise to obtain more federal money for Kent. By the time the term was over, I counted on over \$30 million in federal money that had been injected into the Kent county economy."

Mr. Bossy lived up to that promise. He was a consummate local politician. He fought hard for his community to get funding for local projects. As the federal member of Parliament, he also got money that led to the building of the Judy LaMarsh building in Chatham and also obtained funding that led to the cleanup of the Thames River.

In 1985, Mr. Bossy was elected to the provincial Legislature of Ontario. I should point out that his win at that time ended 22 consecutive years of Tory representation in Chatham-Kent. Actually, in one report that I read, the riding had previously been called Kent West and had been in Conservative hands since 1943. Maurice was quoted on election night 1985 as saying, "There hasn't been a Liberal in office since before I was in school" in this riding.

While serving here at Queen's Park, he also served as deputy whip and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing. He was also very focused on the Thames River, securing provincial funding to help with the \$1.2-million riverfront beautification project in Chatham. This fit with Mr. Bossy's belief that increasing tourism in the Chatham-Kent area was his first priority.

I know that sometimes some of us can be overly partisan in this place, and I do have to admit that in 1985 I campaigned for the PC incumbent in Chatham-Kent and therefore against Maurice, but I don't think he ever held it against me. Despite that history, I want to say that Mr. Bossy made a great contribution to Chatham-Kent and to Ontario.

Since I know that no politician can achieve any success without the support of their family, I would like to pay tribute to his family for supporting his long political career and allowing him to make such a significant contribution to his community and to our province.

On behalf of the official opposition, I would also like to extend our condolences to Maurice's wife, Margaret, who is with us in the gallery today, accompanied by her son Andrew. In total they have seven children, 21 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

It was a pleasure to be able to give this tribute today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand up and address you, Margaret, you, Andrew, and, through you, the seven children, the 21 grandchildren and the four great-grandchildren of Maurice Bossy and to really pay homage to his memory.

We are a small town here, and I'm going to start where the member from Sarnia-Lambton and the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex left off, which is to say that we often recount all of the various accomplishments of our members—everything that they did. What we

don't often speak about is what this job entails, and you know it better than anyone else. You know it because you lived through all of the hours that Maurice spent away from you. You know it because you know the cost of public service, and you paid that cost along with him.

This is a very partisan place, of course, but in a very non-partisan way we're all members here serving our various constituencies. We all trust in what is right and we all try to tell the truth. We can argue about what is right, but you can't argue about the truth. So it's always an honour to pay tribute to someone who told the truth and who kept the greatest achievement going, which was your marriage of 59 years.

I know that many people in the community and all those who are watching at home have a very low vision of what a politician is and what a politician does, and we know and particularly our families know and you know that none of that is true. To a person here, many long hours are spent and many sacrifices are made. We have to reapply for our jobs, unlike other professions, every four years, and sometimes more often than that.

Maurice did all of that, and he did it for the right reasons. We none of us are here because of the money, for example, which is a common misrepresentation of politicians. Most members here would have done better financially in some other profession. I know that Maurice as a farmer probably would have done a lot worse, but that's only because I know about farmers. But it's not the money that motivates us, ever, and you know that better than anyone; it is the chance to make a difference in our constituents' lives.

I know, Margaret, that he wouldn't have been able to do it without you. You heard the member from Sarnia-Lambton speak to that. All of us know what our spouses also go through and the support that we have, so really, when any member stands here to speak, we stand here surrounded by a host of witnesses, and this host of witnesses are, first and foremost, our families, and second, and equally foremost, all of our constituents who sent us here to do a job for them that, quite frankly, is a difficult job they didn't want to do themselves.

That's what your constituents do, and that's where they sent Maurice. They sent him to Ottawa. They sent him here. They sent him into committees that would bore wallpaper. They sent him into partisan scuffles that would have frightened prize fighters. They sent him out at night to rescue skunks off roofs. They sent him out in the morning to visit workers at factories. This is what our members do, each one of them. This is what Maurice did. I wish I had known him.

1550

I certainly share his love of the issue of housing. I know he was the housing parliamentary assistant. He was here almost exactly the length of time that I will have been here by the end of this term. I know that this place was probably quite a learning experience for him after Ottawa and that Ottawa was a learning experience after his experience in business. I came from a business background in part as well, so I know the difference there, and he experienced that difference first-hand.

The bottom line, finally, for Maurice and for your family, your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, the legacy that Maurice left, a man who lived through the advent of the automobile, through depressions and recessions, through Conservative, Liberal and NDP governments—he lived through it all—is that of public service. There is no higher calling. You know that and we know that here. It's wonderful and a privilege and an honour to pay tribute to those who pay tribute to their communities, none better than Maurice Bossy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in tribute to the career of former member Maurice Bossy.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mrs. Bossy, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, our condolences to you and your family, and I will ensure that copies of the Hansard are sent to your family as a lasting memory of today. We thank you and your son for being with us.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to read this petition, collected at the Orangeville home show this past weekend.

"Whereas the residents of Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax ... that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Emily.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition has to do with 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. I'm going to give it to page Sarah to deliver, and I affix my signature.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) conducted 22 months of ambient air monitoring and determined that the Clarkson, Mississauga, airshed study area was taxed for respirable particulate matter (PM2.5); and

"Whereas the average annual PM2.5 concentrations measured in the Clarkson airshed were among the highest found when compared to data obtained from the ministry's air quality index monitoring stations; and

"Whereas the interim 24-hour ministry ambient air quality criterion for PM10 was exceeded on several occasions; and

"Whereas the study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; and

"Whereas concentrations of toluene, xylene, styrene, ethyl benzene, trichloroethene and acrolein were higher than those at the 12 Environment Canada national air pollution surveillance stations in Ontario, including those located in Toronto (4), Brampton, Windsor, Hamilton, Sarnia, Kingston, Ottawa, Kitchener and London; and

"Whereas annual average 24-hour nitrogen dioxide concentrations were found to be among the highest when compared to provincial air quality index stations in the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that industrial emissions may contribute as much as 25% of the PM2.5 concentrations in the Clarkson airshed study area; and

"Whereas the MOE stated that it would focus on achieving reductions of the target pollutants from the 57 identified emitters that currently operate in the area; and

"Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution

into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

“That no contract be awarded by the Ontario Power Authority for the operation of any gas-fired power plant that would impact the Clarkson airshed study area.

I affix my signature and present it to Carmen.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O’Toole: “Whereas the proposed harmonization of Ontario’s retail sales tax (RST) with the federal GST has the potential to increase costs to any small businesses and their customers; and

“Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times and organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders’ Association” and consumers generally “have estimated that harmonization would add \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new Ontario home;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, not higher taxes.”

I’m pleased to endorse this by signing it and giving it to Olivia, in her last few days.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kim Craiton: I appreciate the opportunity to read this petition to the House. The petition is signed by a number of people from my riding of Niagara Falls, including Kathy Fisher. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario’s inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

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

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

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

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

1600

SALES TAX

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mike Jackson, the owner of the GM dealership in Collingwood, for sending this petition to me.

“Whereas the auto industry in Ontario and throughout North America is experiencing a major restructuring; and

“Whereas the current economic crisis is affecting the auto manufacturers and the front-line dealerships throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas many potential automobile purchasers are having difficulty accessing credit even at current prices; and

“Whereas a three-month tax holiday of the GST and the PST on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks would stimulate auto sales;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday, and that the Ontario Minister of Finance include the PST holiday in the next provincial budget.”

I agree with this petition, and I’ve signed it. I say to the government, it’s not too late to implement this idea.

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased to present this petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to sign and support this petition, to acknowledge the help of the Lupus Foundation of Ontario and Niagara Falls and to ask page Olivia, on her last week with us, to carry it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Burk’s Falls Health Centre Petition.

“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 Carmen.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition in support of Bill 160, to “Stop the Exploitation of Vulnerable Foreign Workers and Caregivers,” from a group called Couples for Christ. They’re from Mississauga.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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 MPP Mike Colle’s bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law.”

I support protection for caregivers, and I affix my name to the petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s part of 15,000 signatures we have here.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should recognize the importance of rural health care in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network commissioned a report by the Hay Group that recommends downgrading the emergency room at the Charlotte Eleanor Englehart ... Hospital in Petrolia to an urgent-care ward; and

“Whereas, if accepted, that recommendation would increase the demand on emergency room services in Sarnia; and....

“Whereas Petrolia’s retirement and nursing home communities are dependent on easy access to the CEE hospital;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Erie St. Clair LHIN to completely reject the report of the Hay Group and leave the emergency room designation at Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital in Petrolia.”

I will send this down with Emily. I agree with it.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have more petitions from people from Brampton and Mississauga in support of Bill 160.

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

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take 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 have signed this also, and Carmen is going to take this down to the Clerk.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: I have a petition similar to the one read by the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, which 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’s hospital could turn into little more than a site to stabilize and transfer patients for treatment outside the municipality; and

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the McGuinty government take” all “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 support this, sign it and send it to the table with Noel, one of pages who will be leaving here on Friday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Thursday, April 23, 2009, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill, and on Thursday, April 30, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

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That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2009. On Thursday, April 30, 2009, at

no later than 5 p.m., those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 4, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Who would care to lead off the debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It has to be her? Okay. It has to be the minister, I’m advised, to lead off the debate. Or we go in rotation. Further debate?

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a real pleasure. Well, it’s sort of a backward pleasure in the respect that here we are again. Here’s the Liberal government ramming things through. I say to you today that this time allocation motion 115 is a sign that they’re not even prepared to explain why they’re doing this. At least have the courtesy to tell us why you’re going to strangle the voice of democracy here today. It’s tragic.

When I look at the motion here, it’s a long, legally worded document. This is mainly for the people of Ontario. This sums it all up. The style of the government is here at hand. It gives absolute control, almost dictatorial control, to the McGuinty government.

I should say that I have prepared notes, and out of respect for the time allocation motion, we’re not debating Bill 163; we’re debating a time allocation motion which is overriding the democratic debate. They’re closing debate down. They don’t want to hear any more of the reasoned arguments from me or the stakeholders in the province of Ontario.

I would say to you that I'm new to this critic role, so to the viewer, please forgive me for the lack of detailed information that I have at my disposal, because Frank Klees took it all with him—oh, no, pardon me. I shouldn't be saying that. But what I am saying, though, is that I have been in touch with a number of stakeholders, and to those stakeholders, I'm depending on you to line up to express your feelings on this bill and put on notice that—look, I can assure you that with this time allocation motion they'll use the guillotine and it'll be finished. Even this debate is being considered to be irrelevant.

Here's what it says, and this is for you, the viewer. It'll soon be on the website. I'm sure it already is. They're so convinced that they rule the day, they don't even need to listen to us. There will be public meetings on this on Thursday the 23rd and the 24th, and then, on the 30th—pardon me; I'd better read this carefully here because I'm giving information out to the public. On Wednesday the 22nd from 1 till 3 and 4 till 6, and Thursday the 23rd, the same times, I gather, and then on April 30 there will be meetings for clause-by-clause in the event that they want to move some amendments.

I can assure you that there need to be amendments. This is the primary thing that my stakeholder groups have told me. They've told me in e-mails—I have an e-mail here already. This thing here, I should tell the viewing public and the members who are here listening, was introduced on March 30, then it was debated on the 31st, and now we have this time allocation motion. It's going to be heard by the end of April—all done. It'll be law in May, and they'll be pouring concrete in June. We're not opposed to that.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've got to explain the background for the viewing public, just slow it down a bit for the people of Ontario to catch on, to take a breath and to understand. They're spending \$9 billion. In fact, they're borrowing \$9 billion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, see, the people have to know that they have a deficit. The deficit is going to be \$14 billion, and they're borrowing \$9 billion to build some streetcar lines and bus rapid transit and rail infrastructure as well. Some of it we agree with. But wait a minute. What does Bill 163 itself do? It actually does two things. Fundamentally, it does a few more things, but some of them are treacherous, actually. What we're saying it does is, it throws the current Metrolinx board overboard, under the bus: "Good-bye." Do you understand? "Thanks for coming." It's tragic.

A few of them have spoken to me. I could mention them to you. Dictator Mayor Miller—pardon me, Mayor David Miller; Adam Giambrone. They were on the board. I would like to first thank the current—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Are they still the board, I wonder, legally? I think they just threw them over the side rail of the ship. I hope they thanked them, because they worked hard; I will say that. They had two reports before the

final report, which was called The Big Move. The Big Move report is a big, thick document, with a lot of pictures and maps in it, but not many pictures or maps of Durham, though. There's really nothing. There's a bus rapid transit, maybe, if we behave ourselves.

You like to thank Mayor Hazel McCallion. She, I think, was quoted recently in the media, saying, "Let's get on with it. What's the holdup here?" I think that Hazel McCallion always speaks the truth, or at least that I'm aware of, anyway. That has kind of been her motive, to speak the truth, as well as to get them going.

"York region chairman Bill Fisch was also good for a laugh when he proposed widening almost every major road under his control but claimed this was needed for 'transit lanes,'" and it was causing gridlock.

"When not clicking on their BlackBerries, Toronto mayor David Miller and Toronto Transit Commission chairman Adam Giambrone often steered their suburban cousins toward transit sanity."

I'm reading from an article here: "What if Metrolinx Started to Matter After All?" This is by Dr. Gridlock, Jeff Gray. He goes on in this article, which was issued on April 6, just yesterday, I guess:

"However, the last thing Metrolinx meetings needed was to get even more boring." This is an article by someone who watches this stuff. Here's another comment:

"Another time, Durham region chairman Roger Anderson said Metrolinx's plan to charge municipalities to oversee their transit projects was an 'I'm-going-to-watch-you-dig-a-hole fee.'" That's what he said. He said, "I'm going to watch them dig holes faster."

Hazel McCallion, mayor of Mississauga, "never afraid to speak her mind, warned once that Metrolinx was creating a 'bureaucracy that's second to none,'" except that the Smart Systems for Health Agency was a bigger one. "She didn't mean it as a compliment."

I think there's general agreement on this side, and I've heard our leader, Bob Runciman, and other members as well—in fact, we've had members asking about when they're going to get moving on projects. I would say that the member from Wellington—Halton Hills this morning had a question to the Minister of Transportation, or a statement, one or the other, "Let's get on with the plan to provide transit services," to his riding, as I myself have in Durham, to say, "When are they going to get on with it?"

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So on the one side this bill gives the impression that it's going to expedite this development of expanded transit. In fact, they've had a lot of fanfare, a lot of media, a lot of attention—they've announced it about four times since 2006—but they haven't really done much. They talked about doing the Union Station. That was on again and that was off again. They talked about doing a thing up through Greg Sorbara's riding: the York-Spadina subway. They've talked about a lot of stuff, and the Metrolinx board I don't think has had the proper mandate.

What did I say when they introduced the original bill? I think it was in 2004. I took the time to look up the

original bill, and what did we say? The governance model was wrong and there was no funding. On both counts I was right, because this bill, Bill 163, actually cancels the governance model. The governance model, as I said earlier, included four regions. I think each had one member. Toronto had four members. The city of Hamilton: Fred Eisenberger, who is the mayor there, I think was the only member from Hamilton. They had one or two from Peel region—one, I guess, probably Hazel; Bill Fisch from York region; Roger Anderson from Durham region; and Gary Carr. Joyce Savoline, who's the member from Burlington now, quite a good member, I would say, was on that board at one time. She sat on that board as the elected chair of Halton region, and now it's Gary Carr.

The key thing to that governance model was that the chair, who was Rob MacIsaac, and the vice-chair were both appointed by yours truly, Dalton McGuinty. How Metrolinx worked, or didn't work, was that they were given their marching orders by Minister Bradley: "You're going to a meeting with Metrolinx tonight and here's what you're doing." That's how it worked.

So what they have done now is clarified that. They've thrown all those regional chairs, highly regarded people, some of them elected, off the boat and they've appointed not an 11-member board; now they're appointing a 15-member board. Imagine how much that's going to cost. That raises a whole other question. We'll have to issue freedom of information before they get their offices fixed up too much. The new eHealth board spent \$50,000 fixing up an office—unbelievable. It's unconscionable.

I think really that this new board will have to give them the benefit of the doubt. They're all going to be political appointments. I understand that: Robert Prichard, a huge, big-time Liberal, former CEO of the Toronto Star, Torstar organization, a very intelligent man; I will say that. I'm not being critical of him as an individual. I just think he's going to do the bidding of Dalton McGuinty in the hope that he gets to be a senator or something; I don't know. But he is going to be there, leading the parade. I know he said he's not going to stay for long. I think once the thing gets going—when you flush out a lot of money quickly, it starts to worry me. Look at what's happened—Barack Obama: They won't ever find out where the first \$2 trillion went. I'm serious; \$9 billion? Keep your hand in your pocket, I'll tell that you. Keep your hand on your wallet. The price of everything will go up. But we have to get on to build transit.

The other part I mentioned was the funding, and even the initial response from the Toronto Star. I said this in my remarks the other day. The response in the paper was, "Where's the money?" I started off rather aggressively saying that they're going to borrow it. Well, they are going to borrow it. We know right now with the recession, the economic times we're in, the infrastructure spending, it's all borrowed money. It's future taxes, is what it is. It's future taxes for the young people, young families. That's what it is, and it staggers me. Actually, we always remember what happened to Bob Rae when he

started going downhill. He tried to tax, he raised the price of energy, he raised the price of compensation, and I think he even raised all the fees for licences and everything. Dalton is basically on the same bent right now. He's got the HST out there and is probably going to gain another \$3 billion or so a year. He's got the health tax out there. Now, I think this is—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: What I'm told—this is important for the record—is that theoretically they're going to surreptitiously invoke tolls on many of what we would call arterial roads and provincial highways. I would not be surprised, and this could be—

Interjection: You're making it up.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. It's already been in the discussion papers. They're going to have tolls on roads. That's one of the ways they're going to pay for this.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, no. Dalton never tells the whole story. No, no, they're announcing in this legislation that there are going to be financial arrangements made with different partners, they call it. It's the language. You have to be a lawyer to appreciate it, and some of the people who are speaking back aren't, so they don't know what I'm implying here. I'm not a lawyer either, by the way. I don't want that to be misunderstood.

There are other things too, though. What I'm hearing from stakeholders—and I want this to be on the record clearly because I'll be sending this out to them on this time allocation motion. They're trying to shut people up is what they're doing, and the stakeholders will be very interested. One of them said, "How come there's no municipal representation?" This is a proposed amendment here in public, as we're moving through. I would suggest that they could win a lot of friends—we'd like to see them get on with this, but a little bit of responsiveness is in order.

We're just doing this right on the fly because this thing's being rushed without due consideration, but I put it to the viewers today—some of whom I phoned to say that this was up today, surprise, surprise—that even if they put the AMO chair or past chair on there, that's not a bad idea. They flow all the gas money which goes to transit through AMO, so there's a very positive, constructive observation and suggestion. Now the past chair is a very good friend. He's a former Liberal, or he still is a Liberal. Once you've had the Kool-Aid, you never give up. What's his name, the former chair of AMO? There's a new chair now.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario could sit on there and be a nice bridge, arbitrator, mediator between the unelected 15-member board—probably most of them will get a day retainer. It won't be much, probably \$1,000 a day or something like that. Holy smokes, I hope they don't have a lot of meetings. I don't expect them to do it for free, unless of course they just want to do public service. But they could solve a problem there by having AMO represented on the board.

I've heard, and the distinct observation is, that some people are disappointed. They understand, first, that the

municipal representation was often parochial. In other words, it got in the way of implementing the smart card, the transit card. I understand that. Maybe we could eliminate some of this parochialism or this ability to not find consensus by having one respectable member from the AMO organization on the board to bring consideration to the issues of the municipally elected people. I think that's extremely important, and I would encourage it. In fact, I think it's an Ottawa member now who's the head of AMO.

The other part, too, that I would encourage would be ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association. A part that's missing in this big plan—by the way, this plan is a lot of money. We just heard the first blush of \$9 billion. The plan is \$50 billion. We start talking about billions like they're \$100 bills. We're starting to ramp it up. We're starting to sound like Barack Obama—trillions. It's scary because this is all taxes. This is money we don't have. It's like arguing against motherhood. Some things are very important. Probably some of these pages here take transit. Do you take transit here each day?

Anyway, I'm just saying it's important, but by the same token, we have to have things that are affordable. Let's put that whole issue of how this thing's going to be financed, the \$50 billion, into perspective. Move 2020 is the big plan for transportation. It's a big fancy word. People can look it up on the Ontario website and they'll see the Move 2020 plan under transportation, and then under it, they'll see the Big Move plan. The Big Move plan is really big; it's \$50 billion. That's \$5 billion a year for 10 years. There's no assurance that they're going to have the federal government ponying up the big money. There's no assurance that the municipalities will have any money left. They've already hit the tax ceiling, so where is this money coming from? Is it going to crowd out spending for roads and bridges for rural Ontario?

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Rural Ontario is getting left behind, ignored. They don't get any of the gas tax money. Today, not a nickel of the gas tax money at all goes to rural, small-town Ontario unless they have a transit system.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're wrong.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from east of me—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Agriculture says "a minor point." My goodness. Transit for rural Ontario is called roads and bridges, and the member—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'm going to get to you in a minute here.

The member Mr. Rinaldi from Northumberland-Quinte West was the mayor of Picton, I think, wasn't it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No. Wrong again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, there you go; that's two mistakes. Maybe the next time I'll be right.

He was the mayor in that part of eastern Ontario. He should know full well that they don't get any of the provincial gas tax money, unless it's for Handi-Transit or

municipal transit; otherwise, they don't get any of the gas money. That's the only money they get.

The federal money comes, though, and this is perhaps where the member's getting confused. The federal money is not discriminatory. The federal gas tax money goes to all the municipalities, all—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the federal money. The provincial gas tax money does not go, unless it's to transit. It cannot be deferred. And many of the municipalities cannot use it, by the way. The small municipalities that get the provincial gas tax money, which specifically defines how it can be used, cannot use it for operational funding, and they can only use it for capital funding. Most of them can't spend the money. They don't qualify for spending the money. They show that they get it, but they can't spend it.

I would say that we spend a bit of time on the money part, but the \$50 billion, the big number in The Big Move report, could crowd out other spending. My priority would be people first—people first. When we're in social times, as we are now, where the economy is collapsing—over 300,000 families have lost their job; their primary breadwinner has lost their job—I think you should have the control in cabinet, and I would expect the ministers and the Premier to honour their commitments to having a safe, fair society and good health care and long-term care for seniors, those kind of things.

It's all great stuff, but transit is like plugging in a hot water heater. It's going to always be on and it's always going to cost you money. It's not always being used, but you're always paying huge operating costs, big-time operating costs. I would say this: There's no transit system in the world that operates revenue-neutral. On the good side of this debate, it's important to know that GO Transit—I'm not all negative on this. I use GO Transit, and a lot of members here, I'm sure, use GO Transit coming into Toronto; and we need the TTC. We need it to be timely and efficient and affordable. So there are a couple of good things here.

GO Transit operates with about 82% of its total operating revenue from the fare box. It's one of the best in North America, so we should be proud of the GO Transit system. We all could improve. They have their problems with the switches in the wintertime. They have their problems with the CN agreement that they have for the actual tracks and hardware and, I think, the operations as well. There are only very few actual GO employees on the system. It's mostly CN employees.

But I should tell you this: One of the reasons they're very efficient is that GO Transit operates quite differently. My hat goes off to the employees and the employee groups. They work split shifts, because in transit, you move 100,000 people in the morning, and then you move 100,000 people at night going home—to and from; the start and end of work shifts. But during the day, there's nobody on them. There are very few people on the trains. In fact, during rush hour, the trains run about every 15 minutes on the Lakeshore line east, and I take it.

I think it's—I have it on my BlackBerry—at 6:13 it starts. The last sort of express train leaves the station, I believe, before 7 o'clock, and from then on, the trains are every hour. So if I miss the last train that's express out of Union Station to Oshawa, I have to wait for an hour. After 7:30 at night I could probably be home in an hour and 20 minutes, certainly to Oshawa, and I live about 20 minutes past Oshawa. So what I'm saying is the GO operating staff come in to work at about 5 in the morning and around 10 they're done, and then they go home or somewhere for two or three hours, and come back for the rush hour at night. That's a pretty high level of demand for GO employees, to work what I call a split shift. I hope they're compensated fairly. I'm quite serious about this. Having worked in industry myself for 30-plus years, I know that people would work continental shifts, like 10 hours, but not split. They were very averse to split shifts.

I would say the other part, on the good side there, is the fact that GO does get a lot of its revenue from the fare box. What it really means is that the toll they're charging—in my case it's about \$12 round trip to Toronto and back—is a reasonable amount of money, because if you were to drive it would probably cost you \$10 for gas and \$40 for parking. So it's a fairly reasonable fee, if you look at the real cost of getting to and from your place of work or entertainment. In fact, they even have special services for things like football games and hockey games and stuff like that, which is important too. So I think they've got customer-friendly service. I think they're doing their best to enhance that, and Mr. Smith, the chair of that, should be commended. He's also going to be on the new transit board as well.

Now, TTC is quite a different problem. I'm not complaining. I do use it if it's bad weather; I normally walk up from Union Station, otherwise it would cost me about \$2 or \$2.25 to come up on the subway from Union Station to Queen's Park. I'm a cheapskate, so I usually walk it, but it's better than having a gym membership which I never use. Exercise is just walking instead of getting in the car. You can save the gym membership.

But my point there is that even now I think there's a little balance in Toronto—and I'll leave this to the NDP. I think the fees for transit in Toronto—you may only go four, five, six blocks—are getting a bit high. And for affordability, the most obvious consumers are people of modest means. So there's a balance between how much you can charge and the impact on ridership. They may charge more and the revenue will go up, but they'll lose riders. In fact, there was a report the other day that said the ridership is dropping a little bit.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: They're only going five minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: And it's five minutes over time.

But the key there is that on transit—and it's a secondary point that I want to make, as I've made this generously to Minister Bradley before. I introduced a bill about three or four years ago which would have allowed the provincial government to initiate a tax credit for an expenditure when using public transit. Now, in fairness, it came to me from two of my constituents who also use

the GO train, who I saw a few times, and they said, "You're Mr. O'Toole," and all this stuff. "It's nice to see our provincial member riding on the GO train," and I said, "Yes, I'm a person, too." Anyway, we got talking about it, and they said to me—I hadn't really thought of it the way they explained it. They said, "Do you know it costs us \$100 a week to commute to Toronto?" I said, "Oh, is that true?" and they said, "Well, yes, and there's two of us. That's \$200 a week. That's 50 weeks; that's \$10,000." I just about fell off my rocking chair—\$10,000 to commute from Durham to Toronto to work. Holy smokes. That's getting expensive. So I heard them—and I'll be honest with you: We get compensated to commute to work, which most people don't. Of course, I wouldn't be coming here if I wasn't required to be here, so I say that as well.

The other thing, too, though, is that I introduced a bill, because of my constituents' suggestion—I wouldn't use their names—and what it did was say that every expense for the purpose of using public transit would be a tax receiptable and refundable. It would be a refundable tax credit.

1640

Lo and behold—I was so honoured—I had a call from Jim Flaherty, the Minister of Finance federally. I know him. He's a very approachable fellow, a great guy, actually, and I used to be his parliamentary assistant when he was here.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: He's a Liberal.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, he's quite liberal. He's a nice fellow; I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: He's in the Liberal government in Ottawa.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's doing a very excellent job in Ottawa, and I shouldn't digress here.

He's called me personally. He said, "Look, we're going to implement your idea." I said, "Well, it's not"—I had the privilege of my public role here, but I said, "It's two of my constituents. Maybe you should call them." And I said, "I'll have to call you back if they want their names released."

But to get down to it, he took the idea and ran with it. I went directly to Greg Sorbara. I went to him and I said, "Look, Greg, it's a good idea." Neither side of the House has a franchise on good ideas. If we're all listening to our constituents, we'll probably get good ideas without any political hang-ups attached to it. That I leave on the table for Minister Bradley and for Minister Dwight Duncan.

For that matter, the Minister of Agriculture is here today. She's a very professional person. She knows a good idea when she sees it. The celebration of agriculture yesterday was to meet the new deputy minister. A great guy; I've met him before, and I think he'll do a great job. That was a great celebration. Agriculture is very important to Ontario.

Again, you could just bring that to the cabinet table. You're a member of cabinet, and you're one of the shooters there. Just take the idea and run with it. If you do, I'll be the first one to give you credit, because ulti-

mately, it comes from the people of Ontario, and you've got to make transit affordable. That's the real point here: Make transit affordable.

As a matter of fact, the argument should be this: Any expense for the purpose of earning income, under the Income Tax Act, is tax-deductible. If you're self-employed—that's the condition here—if you're self-employed, any expense for the purpose of earning income is tax-deductible. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka would know. He's a small business person, and he always speaks of small business, all the time, actually. I would say that he would know that.

It is important that people who are going to and from buying computers, hooking up Internet connections and all these things—in fact, as I look at the young pages here and my own children, I would say, in five years, why would you be coming to Toronto if you worked in the financial services sector? I have no idea why you would be coming here. It could all be done online. It's called "telecommuting." I have a son-in-law who is a securities lawyer. He worked at Cassels Brock here in Toronto. He was recruited and now is a securities lawyer in the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man is a tax haven. It has a flat tax, virtually, on investment income. He does all these transactions online. His office is one block from his house. That's the future; the future is telecommuting. If we make commuting affordable—that's another part of this bill.

I go back to the basics, the fundamentals of this—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's to get your attention again—I say two things: What's the rush here? Let's get it right. You tried it back in 2006-07. You've thrown the whole thing overboard and started again. It's not called Metro-linx anymore; I think it's called some other name. All of these people will have to be severed, of course. They'll have to be given severance packages. It will cost a couple of million dollars, maybe—who knows?

But what I want to say as well—I've kind of gone through the governance thing. We get it; you've got to change it. Add a municipal representative. We've given you the suggestion. Use the AMO rep. Run with it. You'll probably have our support on the bill.

The second part is, how are you going to finance it? Come clean with the people of Ontario. It's going to be a P3 project, most of this stuff; we know it is. Otherwise, who is going to finance it? You're already in debt. You're going to be borrowing it from somebody. You could raise some new type of bond, transit bonds or something. Be inventive, innovative.

Consult with some of the riders as well, the rider groups. I can tell you that Transport 2000 is quite an eclectic group of individuals that I have spoken to over the years. They write a publication, and I'd encourage members to log on to their website and look at it. I was speaking with the current chair—Natalie is her name; I'll just leave it at that. She was saying that she thinks some of these groups have a lot to offer to the improvement of transit in Ontario, and there are others as well.

I would say Durham region should be considered. I think I said this the last time I was speaking. I'm trying to use all the time that I can here, but also make some points. We talked about the funding, and we talked about the transit tax credit.

Here's the second shoe to drop: Let's not think that the world begins and ends around Hazel McCallion.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. Mississauga has all the stuff they need. They've got more highways than Durham will ever have, they've got more transit than anybody ever needs, and they've got a great mayor. I'm not criticizing Hazel, but I would like her to support our voice for Durham. There's a ton of money here for Bill Fisch in York region. I get it; they've been working on transit. Durham region is a growing community. It's about 600,000 people now. It's bigger than most provinces, and it has basically been ignored.

I'm surprised that Wayne Arthurs isn't here; he normally is. I was talking to him earlier. He's a good member. He was the mayor of Pickering and a great friend; I consider him a friend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I just need to remind the member not to make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thanks for that helpful comment; that's good. But the member is a good friend of mine.

I would just say this: We know that there is basically only one road going into Durham. It's called the 401. They had been talking about the 407 into Durham further than it is. It goes into Brougham right now. We need that extended.

And with the 407, when they're digging up all those trees and plowing under all that greenbelt land that you greenbelted—which is exempt from the Green Belt Act, which is another conundrum—here's the issue: Get on with it. Build a transit link while you're doing it. Transit should be an integral part of the 407. I put that on the table for you. We need to have it, and we need to have it now.

Durham will be 800,000-plus. We have a new nuclear plant being built, I hope, and I hope it's Candu. I've asked the minister to give Canadian technology the nod. Come on, let's keep Canadian jobs and Canadian technology. The Candu plant for Darlington: Let's get on with it. We need to be smart and business-oriented. It's a technology that's proven safe and reliable, and it's already operating at the Darlington station, Pickering station and the Bruce station. OPG is going to be the operator. They're already familiar with it. There will be no problems with the transition. If you pick a new technology, you'll have a whole new world under your door.

But I would say that the key there is that with that new-build nuclear, it's probably about a \$10-billion project—and the expansion of the 407 will probably be another \$3 billion or \$4 billion—there's going to be a lot of growth. We have a very optimistic future in the riding of Durham, and the region of Durham for that matter.

We need the government to know that we are there and co-operative, and all levels of government, including myself, are willing to work with the government without throwing in roadblocks, or political excuses. I would say that this is a good way to start, with Metrolinx. As part of the Big Move plan, we did have what they call a bus rapid transit system proposed—not funded this time, not yet anyway—along Highway 2, which would basically go from Clarington, Bowmanville through to Durham region.

I've saved one point for the last couple of minutes I have. This is critical. Some of the members here aren't interested in transit, but the best way to integrate transit and the most important move—and I'm sharing this with the minister—is the smart card. This is the card that's used similarly in other jurisdictions. It's used in the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in California. It's used in London, England. It's called the Oyster card, and all it really is is a card that manages the accounting in the background: how much money goes to each transit system. If the rider gets on in Durham and gets off in Halton, the card will determine which transit system they used for what portion of the trip, and that portion of the money would be transferred through electronic funds. That's critical. Just think of the operational savings with the smart card. When I get on the GO train, there's only a random check of whether or not you have a ticket. That's how that works.

Interjection: The honour system.

Mr. John O'Toole: An honour system. When you get on the TTC, there are attendants everywhere. I read the \$100,000 list; some of the ticket takers are making \$100,000. They must be working a lot of overtime—a lot of overtime, all the time.

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With a smart card, I would say it would be like the 407. You don't see any of these toll booths on the 407; it's all electronic. That's how this should be run; it should all be electronic. I think that has been the holdup. I think the TTC have a log across the tracks. They're saying, "No, we're the biggest part of the transit system. Here's the technology we're going to use." They want a prototype technology. Why don't we just copy a proven technology that's used in Chicago, London or in California? Grab it, pay for the patent rights and use it. This whole idea of proprietary software doesn't integrate well with various financial institutions. They'll spend millions developing that card. When it's already working, let's use what already works.

Just think for a moment; we're talking, what? The potential user package on this is around 2.5 million people out of 13 million. California has 30-some million people. Get with the game. Use the technology that they use on BART, the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, which is totally technology. In fact, in the trains, there are no drivers. It's all automated—a totally automated system—and they're controlled through central control. That's the future. If you look at this bill—we're very disappointed that they've used a guillotine motion, time-allocated and

stymied debate on such an important technical investment on behalf of the people of Ontario. I just can't believe it, that they're ramming this through like they're stuffing a cannon and they're going to blow up somebody with the cannon. It seems patently unfair that I've been given such a minimal amount of time to make my remarks.

The member from Pickering is now here. I'm happy to acknowledge that, and the reason I say that is that I had introduced him to one of the constituents who wanted to speak to him, and I said, "The man you should speak to is the member from Pickering–Scarborough East—he's the person to speak to." Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would request unanimous consent from everyone here that the independent member, namely myself, have a chance, just for two minutes, to speak on the motion we're talking about right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to speak for two minutes to this motion. Agreed? Agreed—rather, it's not. Consent does not exist.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would respectfully ask this House for unanimous consent to give the independent Conservative member 10 minutes of the 40 minutes' time allowed the New Democratic Party caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Welland is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to allow the independent member to use 10 minutes of the time allocated to the New Democrats. Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I was not trying to be greedy or anything like that. I've been here for a while, since 1990, and all parties have used this tactic to get things through the House, and it's unfortunate that we do that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Not all members have supported it.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: That's right. I want to thank the member from Welland for giving me a little extra time.

I just wanted to get my point across to the governing party right now that this doesn't work very well. It didn't always work when we were in government; it didn't always work when the NDP was in government. I know you'll get your bill through, but unfortunately, it causes problems within the House. Sometimes you do want to get along with everybody in here. When you put bills through with a motion like what's on the floor right now, that the next time we speak on that bill it's going to be rammed through, it doesn't go over very good. All of us didn't get a chance to talk about it.

If you look at the motion that's on the floor right now, it says that when the bill comes forward, the time will be allotted to the recognized parties of the House. Well, from time to time, I may not be the only independent in this House, and that doesn't allow other independents or myself, when this bill comes through, to be able to say

anything in third reading if we vote on this bill. Now, I want to tell the governing party right now that I've been quite pleased, since I've become an independent, that they have worked quite well with me. They let me know what's going on in the House all the time. Now we're at a point, though, where I can't support the motion that's on the floor because in that motion it says that when that bill comes back for third reading, I will not have a chance to speak on it.

I may have something to say about it; I may not. It's a transit bill for down here in the city, and I think the people who represent the city of Toronto should have all kinds of time to speak on it. It doesn't matter what party you're from; you should have that chance because the bill directly affects you, and it does affect us all to the point where there's going to be a lot of money spent.

I think that with a bill like that, there should be more time. When you ram it through the House, all you do is cause problems. You make the people on this side of the House, and maybe even some of your own members, disappointed, because they don't get a chance to speak on this bill.

It's not only the bill that we're talking about now, the transit bill; there are all kinds of other bills where this happens. I'm not totally blaming the government of the day for doing this, because we've all done that. The Conservatives did it and the NDP did it, and it never makes for a good House here when you do things like that, because sometimes it would be nice if we did work together. When you do things like this, it certainly upsets a lot of people.

I understand that sometimes you have to do this because you say, "Look, we have to get this bill through," but if you let everybody have their say and then vote on something, they feel a lot better. Even though you may not win that vote, at least you had a chance to say something. But when you do it this way, you certainly curtail the chances of everybody in this House having a chance to say something.

That's why everybody got elected. They got elected to come to this place and say the words that they think the people in their ridings want them to bring here, and in doing this, that won't happen. I know that a lot of times you don't have to deal with independent parties or independent people, but in this case you do have an independent here. From time to time, there could be more than one, and they should have a chance to speak to whatever bill.

What happens if you come back here now and try to put closure on the budget for third reading? That would really cause some problems, because I don't think everybody has had a chance to speak on that, and who knows what's going to happen after third reading?

Then you have amendments. That's what this place is supposed to be about: to bring a bill forward, debate it and then send it back for third reading for amendments. Do you not think that everybody should have a chance to speak to those amendments? They may feel there's something there that has changed, and they may approve of it, but they may not.

I'm speaking on the motion that's actually before the House right now, and it would be nice to see you throw those kinds of things out and not do it. I know that sometimes you have to, but if you want to try to get along—you have two and a half more years in this House with the same government—maybe you could change things like that.

I appreciate the time I've had to speak on this. Those are just a few words I wanted to bring to the House.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to stand and speak in this House, always. It's interesting today, though, in particular because the member who just spoke, spoke as an independent and didn't take his full time. It was an incredible act of generosity by our own House leader, the member from Welland, so we owe him a thank-you.

In terms of the closure motion that's before us, there's only one thing to say: that this flies in the face of democratic process. We all know that. And what's even worse is that the government won't speak to it, won't defend it. This is outrageous behaviour on behalf of a majority government. A majority government that can do anything it wants, and does, is now trying to do that much more with its clout, and that is to stifle debate and refuse to justify stifling debate. I can't imagine anything that's less democratic than that kind of move, particularly when, of course, back in the days of Mike Harris, they were so vehemently opposed to any closure motions. Now that the table is turned and they're sitting in the seat of power—I guess we should be students of history in that regard—they do what they complained about the Harris government doing. In fact, they do a number of things they complained about the Harris government doing. That's one of the fallacies, for those at home watching this, that the province of Ontario operates under; that there's a qualitative difference between the McGuinty Liberal government and the Mike Harris government. Increasingly, the McGuinty Liberal government is showing itself to be a Conservative government. Now, with this move of closure, of course it is.

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What is it attempting to close debate on? Bill 163. Let me tell you how this bill looks to my community, first and foremost, and then I'll draw broader conclusions. How would it feel, government members, if you were to wake up in the morning to piledriving? It's an unbelievable noise. If you ever stood next to one, you'd need earphones. Imagine living next to it and that piledriving happening all day long. That is what's happening in parts of my neighbourhood right now, around Hook Avenue. I know that the Toronto Star and CBC Radio have picked up on this. It has driven businesses literally out of our riding. It has literally affected the health of seniors and residents in the riding who are home all day. That's what's happening right now.

The question is, why isn't GO doing something about this? I had a meeting with the executive of GO. They came to my office at Queen's Park. Here are the answers

they gave: First of all, they said they couldn't do anything about it and, secondly, they said they shouldn't do anything about it—couldn't. I said, "Why can't you? Isn't there technology available that quietly accomplishes the same task, or at least more quietly?" They said, "Well, yes, there is." They admitted there was; we know there is. So the question is, why don't they use it? "The company didn't come forward with a proposal." Never a discussion about how maybe they should have gone looking for a proposal, proactively seeking out an alternative to this horror that the residents are living through. They said they couldn't do it. The bottom line is, when the truth is told, that it costs more. They didn't want to spend the money.

Then the question was, aren't there noise laws against this? One would think with piledriving next to your house, surely there's some regulation or legislation that can be brought to bear upon the situation. No, because it's federal lands. Very interesting—CN, federal lands. So one has to complain to the Canadian Transportation Agency to see if they will investigate. Now, that takes months. Meanwhile, of course, you see what's going to happen. As the piles are driven, as the mission is accomplished, this moves down the rails into another riding, into another community. By the time this is investigated by the CTA, they've moved on to another community and the original complainants are left with businesses that have been affected, with homes that have been affected etc.

I called a community meeting and got GO there. GO did not want to meet with the community. They would only meet with hand-picked members. This is an example of what it looks like when you have an agency that is not responsive to its public. We've lived through that in Parkdale–High Park; we know what that looks like. Quite frankly, it's going to get worse, because what's going to happen with the government's program is that we're going to have diesel rail cars running through there about every 15 minutes. When I asked Mr. Bradley, the transportation minister, why not electric, he said—guess what?—it costs more. The rights of all of those individuals who live around the railroad track are not as important to this government and to this transportation minister as that bottom line.

It's kind of an interesting bottom line, isn't it? This is when I come back to the fact that this is a Conservative government we've got here. Meanwhile, \$4.5 billion—an astronomical amount of money—is going to corporate tax giveaways. What this government is essentially saying to those people on Hook Avenue and other areas of my riding is that they don't have enough money to really guarantee those residents' safety, that community or the environment around them, because diesel is polluting—it's not green, it's polluting—but they do have enough money to give to corporations like SNC-Lavalin, which, by the way, will be a partner in one of the first publicly-privately owned rail lines because, really, this is about privatization, folks. Bill 163 is about privatization. So SNC-Lavalin is going to be one of the partners that's

going to partner with the government in building one of those rail lines, the air-rail link. Isn't that interesting? That's coming down the pipe. That's why they want to rush through this bill, rush through a new form of governance that, like the OMB, like the new Human Rights Tribunal and like MPAC, is not accessible to the public, is not transparent, does not have on its board elected officials, but has bureaucrats. And who are these bureaucrats? These bureaucrats are those hand-picked by the McGuinty Liberal government. If there ever was a Conservative trick, that's it. You hand-pick your friends and the big donors and you give them cushy jobs on the boards of these bureaucracies that are then in charge of spending tens of billions of dollars of public money.

The poor people on Hook Avenue, whose walls are shaking, whose fathers are having heart problems, whose mothers are suffering from migraines, wait in line. Meanwhile, you're giving \$4.5 billion away in corporate write-offs to companies just like the ones that are pile-driving next to homes. That's what this is about.

We've seen it before, anybody who's been before the Ontario Municipal Board: We have lots of Davids fighting against that Goliath across Ontario and across my riding, some of them successful, some not so successful. They go up against a board where their adversary has lawyers and city planners and endless amounts of money, and they, meanwhile, have to take a day off work just to appear there. They don't have the resources for lawyers, they don't have the resources for city planners on their payroll, and they have to defend themselves. To whom? Not to elected folks, again, not to anybody who is really responsive to their needs; no, to a bureaucrat who is hand-picked, hand-selected by the government in power. That's the OMB.

MPAC is the same. MPAC is basically a semi-private corporation. It comes in, assesses and tells you what your house is worth. It doesn't matter that the real estate market has dropped; it doesn't matter, the fact that your house is not worth what it was a year ago. You'll still pay taxes based on what it was a year ago.

I want to repeat that this is not about transit. That's the smokescreen. That's the photo-op cover, that this is about getting transit built faster. We are in favour of transit. The folks in my riding are in favour of transit. We want more transit, not less transit. We want more transit. That's what we want. This is not about that. This is about the governance, merging Metrolinx and GO together, kicking off the elected representatives. That's what this is about. Just wait as they start rolling out from this new governance body all the publicly-privately owned partnerships that are going to be responsible for transit. They did it in Vancouver under the Campbell government. It's not working there—speak to any activist about transit—and now they're doing it here.

It's sad. People who live in my community worked very hard to refurbish Sorauen Park and to refurbish a little community field house there, the Wabash field house, are now concerned that the children, the 16 teams of little kids who play soccer there, are going to be

playing soccer next to a railroad track where diesel trains are going to be running by up to every 15 minutes. Why not electric? Why not clean? Why not green? No. It's cheaper this way. It doesn't cost as much. Why? Because we need money to shovel out the door to large corporations to the tune of \$4.5 billion, to the corporations, might I say, that need it least. After all, you don't pay taxes if you're not profitable, so tax breaks don't help companies that aren't profitable, and that's a whole lot of companies in Ontario right now. Most small business I know is not profitable right now. They don't pay taxes because they don't make profits. They only pay taxes on what they take out of the business.

These tax cuts are going to go to those corporations that need them least. We all know who they are: the banks, the insurance companies etc., the large corporations that aren't suffering like the ma-and-pa stores at the corner, that aren't suffering like some other industries that desperately need government money and that aren't, by the way, getting it.

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It was interesting the way this played out too, because the one day that they announced Bill 163, this new bureaucratic organization that they're going to create away from public scrutiny, that's going to meet behind closed doors, the very next day they give \$9 billion to the city for transit for the TTC. As journalist Jeff Grey said, "\$9 billion is a nice way of saying you're sorry." No kidding.

But, again, are we pleased about that? Absolutely. There was a day when Ontario, the province of Ontario, paid for 50% of transit costs. That day has come and gone. That's what New Democrats would want to see again, a day when the province steps in and pays 50% of transit costs and makes it a priority so that people can take transit.

The member from Durham was talking about the commute from Durham and the expense of that. I remember living in Richmond Hill and the expense of that commute. And at a certain point, people just say, "I might as well drive. It's no more expensive to drive." That is not what we want in the province of Ontario.

What we want is a transit system that is affordable, that is accessible and that people have a say about and a stake in, and they don't have a stake in it and they don't get to say anything about it if the governance body is meeting behind closed doors. And they certainly don't get a say in it if their elected representatives on this side of the House don't get to speak to it, because that's what we're elected to do.

Then—again, adding insult to injury here—the government refuses to even back up their own piece of legislation by speaking to it themselves and justifying it. We don't hear in this House why this closure motion has been brought forward. So, again, the question really here is democracy, accessibility, transparency. We're going to pay for it with the bill itself in terms of the transparency, the accessibility to Metrolinx-GO or whatever this new agency will be called; we're going to pay for it in not

being able to speak to the closure motion or to speak to that bill from the desks in the opposition; and ultimately it diminishes the House itself, it diminishes the Legislative process itself when a majority government acts like an oligarchy and not like a democracy.

I'm going to leave some time to my friend to speak, as he will, and he has lots to say about the perspective from his place in Hamilton. But suffice to say, from my community's perspective there are a few key demands.

The key demands are these: Whatever happens with Bill 163—and clearly the government's going to force this, ram this through without debate—what needs to happen for them is that they need to be included. They and all members of our constituencies across Ontario need to be included in the discussions and transit plans for their own communities. They need to be included in that.

The process needs to be transparent. The process needs to be green; no diesel trains, please. Pile-driving has to be done with sensitivity to those living near the piledriving sites. Again, this comes back to that accessibility and transparency and community involvement. That has to happen. It can't be done on the cheap, it can't be done willy-nilly, it can't be done behind closed doors, and it can't be done the way that this is happening here, which is to say with the power of money and authority basically running roughshod over democratic rights and transparency.

So with that, here's hoping. My groups are coming to depute before the committee on April 28 and 29. Hopefully, the government will listen to what they're saying. I mean, it's actually quite staggering that here we are, and this is how behemoth this beast of government is, that we can't turn it around a little bit just to stop the piledriving next to a community. It stopped for the CBC; it stopped when the CBC reporter went out to interview the inhabitants because, of course, GO and the company that's doing the piledriving didn't want the sound broadcast. They stopped for the CBC. They stopped for the demonstration we had there and then they started right up again—very cynically, right after the cameras left, right after the reporters left, back to piledriving. That's what the people are living with.

I present the petitions about transparency at Metrolinx-GO, whatever this new agency is going to be called. I present petitions saying, "Please, no diesel trains. Please, consultation with the community." I get back and they get back from the Minister of Transportation: "Don't worry. Don't worry. They'll have consultation." Then, of course, we have a structure that really does not facilitate consultation at all, that in fact precludes consultation from the public.

Another day that piledriving is going to be happening to the residents of Hook Avenue. I know my colleague will want to speak to this. The rail cars, hopefully—we don't know where they're going to be produced at this point. They are going to be travelling along that rail line but they will be, of course, burning diesel, polluting the neighbourhoods they go through, and not electric, which is where the rest of the world is going.

Again another closure motion, another stifling of debate, and this time a slight twist, the twist being that at this point there's not even a justification for the closure motion. With that, I'll conclude, and I look forward to the deputations.

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

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise in the House today to speak in favour of the time allocation motion on Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006.

This legislation, if it were passed, would merge GO Transit and Metrolinx to build transit faster and ease congestion as well as creating jobs. We believe that a single transit agency is needed now to implement the regional transportation plan quickly and efficiently.

The regional transportation plan, which was appropriately named The Big Move, is a solid plan. It was shaped by municipal leaders in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area who understand first-hand the need for transportation in our community and the challenges facing this region. Ontario is ready to fit the pieces of the regional transportation plan together to build better public transit faster.

Our government has introduced legislation that would, if passed, merge GO Transit and Metrolinx through the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area Transit Implementation Act, 2009. We want to create an organization with the necessary expertise to implement an integrated transit network for the most populated region in Ontario. Our government is ready to take the regional transportation plan and implement it.

Metrolinx has demonstrated its planning expertise with the development of the regional transportation plan. GO Transit has a strong track record of building large-scale transit projects and running transit operations and services. By bringing these two organizations together, we'll get the shovels in the ground faster on many new and wanted transportation projects across the province, transit projects that would generate thousands of construction jobs over the coming years and a stronger economy.

The economic, social and environmental benefits of moving more quickly on transit projects will be substantial. With more people on transit and fewer cars on the road, we'll reduce greenhouse gas emissions that are widely known to harm our environment.

The McGuinty government has made transit one of our top priorities, and we've made record-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.

Our transit agenda is ambitious, but with a new Metrolinx we can build stronger sustainable communities with a renewed transit infrastructure that will promote a higher quality of life for everyone. By creating a single regional transportation body that is properly equipped, we are putting the right tools in place for taking the

regional transportation plan off the drawing board and into service. There are tools that would allow the new Metrolinx to build the necessary infrastructure, deliver better service to customers through new transit projects and pay for the asset over the long term.

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Our proposed legislation will, if passed, provide Metrolinx the important permissions it needs to help the environment in Ontario. In fact, the proposed GO Transit expansion in Georgetown would provide those important environmental benefits in my community of Brampton. For every 10 cars the GO service provides, it takes 1,500 people off our roads. The Metrolinx regional transportation plan estimates that over 30,000 people will use GO services in the Georgetown corridor by 2031 during the a.m. peak hour alone. That's 25,000 cars off the road. The air-rail link ridership is forecast at 1.35 million passengers on start-up, growing to over three million by 2025. That's 1.1 million cars off the road in the first year alone.

Rail transit uses less fuel and generates fewer greenhouse gas emissions than automobiles or buses. Moving several million passengers from automobiles to trains will result in a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to the province's reduction targets.

Now is the time for Ontario to build on this momentum and to build a regional 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): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First, I'd like to address the problem of the lack of participation from the government side in discussing this bill. This time allocation motion is extremely inappropriate on something as important to the people of Ontario as transportation. This is a major thing that's going to happen to our province in the next few years, and it requires a lot of input from the public at public meetings. Two or three days is not enough to get their perspective, especially from my community in Hamilton.

There are two or three projects slated for Hamilton. That falls far short of what we really need in the city. It's a start, I guess. But I was hoping to see, in the initial plan, something from James Street to the airport. That seems to have been put a little bit on the back burner.

In reference to some of the things that are going on in Toronto, I'm very displeased with the fact that they say they don't want any elected officials involved. What are people here for? The people elect these people. They feel that these people are going to represent them. These people are supposed to have a handle on the issues. Will the public get all the knowledge they require from a few public meetings, or would they get more feedback from the people who represent them in their community? I

think they would get more from the people who represent them. That's why they elect people to come to this House.

First, it's not clear that Metrolinx and its current board of directors are considered dysfunctional. By most accounts, the board was actually functioning well. It had developed a good balance between urban and suburban perspectives. It had worked out good links with municipalities. It also had some clout because when elected officials stood up, people listened because it was clear that they had a constituency backing them up.

Some might say that the board didn't approve projects fast enough; that it, in fact, slowed down projects. But what it did, I think, is ask questions about projects where questions needed to be asked. The board of Metrolinx had developed solid expertise and was starting to deal with substantive issues of revenue tools and specific priorities of the plan.

It should be remembered that the regional plan is by no means set in stone or worked out in detail. Key decisions still need to be made, particularly as it becomes clear that not all the priority projects will likely be funded as expected.

Will a new board with a significant number of inexperienced members be able to make these difficult decisions? I'm not sure. Will more time be lost bringing new board members up to speed? Yes, I believe it will. Is it really beneficial to rid the board of all elected officials? No, I don't think so. What is the rationale for doing this?

This leads to my second concern. Will the new board be accountable and transparent in a bureaucratic sense? There are fears that future meetings will not be open. There's a real danger that having unelected board members and potentially closed meetings will do away with the transparency that now exists. For example, under Bill 163, capital plans will no longer have to be made public. Given that the capital plans are perhaps the single most important element of a new transit initiative, why is this requirement to make these plans public being removed? Already Metrolinx did not have the greatest record in consulting on capital projects. Apparently, staff sometimes claimed to have consulted with municipalities when they didn't. This new requirement will only make such consultation less likely.

There are dangerous examples in Canada already of regional transit authorities which have undergone transformations into closed, self-serving and unresponsive entities. I'm thinking here of TransLink in BC. TransLink underwent a transformation under the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Act, which was introduced by the Liberal government in 2007. As Bill 163 proposes to do in Ontario, the BC act replaced a democratically elected TransLink board with a group of hand-picked individuals. Soon afterwards, the board decided that it would no longer be necessary to have its meetings open to the public. Can you imagine that? A board not being allowed to have public consultation, but they're spending public dollars. It doesn't add up for me. Instead, meetings were assigned a small amount of time

to allow feedback from pre-registered speakers, with the bulk of the proceedings taking place in camera. Soon after, the TransLink board members gave themselves a 500% pay raise—500%—just weeks after Vancouver transit riders were hit with the highest fares in the country. Is this the kind of reform we want in Ontario? I don't think so.

Third, it is unclear whether a new regional super-agency that is without municipal and regional representation will take into account the local needs. Many of the transit systems that Metrolinx oversees are, of course, regional, but Metrolinx will also oversee local transit systems, such as subway extensions and new LRT lines.

Local priorities are different from regional needs. For example, a local priority might be to have numerous stops on the LRT line with medium-density development along the line. In contrast, a regional priority might be to have only a few stops in a high-density development at those nodes. How will Metrolinx, as a regional body, take into account and represent these local needs?

Fourth, it is unclear that merging Metrolinx and GO Transit will do anything to address the primary blockage to implementing the transportation plan with adequate funding. The Metrolinx regional transportation plan is slated to cost \$55 billion, but there's no clear indication of where that money will come from. The Metrolinx board was going to wait five years before it discussed financing options. According to this bill, it will be at least another four years before we even have a proposed investment model.

The McGuinty government announced \$11.6 billion for Move Ontario, but this money is still not out the door. The government has announced a ream of new projects, but they assume that Ottawa will kick in billions of dollars for them, something that hasn't yet happened. Federal money comes with strings attached, as we all know, and doesn't necessarily address priority needs, as the recent federal funding for expansion of parking spaces at the GO station showed.

If there have been problems in getting capital funds to build transit projects, there has also been utter silence on how the operation of the systems will be paid for. Groups were hoping for some clarity in the 2009 budget. They didn't seem to get it. Instead, money was announced for highways, \$3.2 billion over two years; and transit, \$3.7 billion. But it is unclear how much, if any, of this money is going to be directed through Metrolinx as part of the \$11.5 billion that has been committed.

1730

Fifth, the whole issue of owning assets raises grave concerns for me. The bill appears to create a big super-structure, a model like there is in Vancouver, where one superboard oversees and owns a variety of sub-entities. We could see Metrolinx overseeing one body that owns subway lines, one that owns light rail, and so on, all as part of a parent company. Worse, we could see a move towards private enterprise with this superbody. There appears to be a real danger that the bill will move us into

the dangerous direction of private-public partnerships. Once again: private partnerships—scary thought.

Are we looking at the selling off of the Spadina subway line, for instance? Would that be your next move, to sell off the Spadina line? Is this privatization exercise a disguise? Again, let's move forward on public transit, but let's not mess with our privatized bodies, like the TTC, that operate well. P3s are simply not a good model. Previous examples, such as the Brampton hospital and Highway 407, have not worked out.

The provincial government can borrow at the lowest interest rates available, so why add a private sector partner when costly financing is not to the public's benefit? The private sector is already involved in consulting, supplies and construction. It should be limited to these additional services, not core services. We have already seen the legacy of private sector consultants with Metrolinx, which had been locked into an arguably overpriced contract for Presto smart-fare cards with consulting giant Accenture.

My sixth concern: It is not clear that the new agency will be any better than Metrolinx in shifting the emphasis away from highway expansion towards public transit. We know that highway extensions act like magnets for new sprawl, which only drives further expansions of those roads. We know that highway expansion removes significant vegetation, destroys wetlands and threatens ground-water recharge areas.

We know that we need to build communities that are sustainable, communities that have transit systems and that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not encourage them. That means that no highways should be proposed until a viable transit option is available to those communities, yet the regional transportation plan, even 25 years into the future, would still leave us so heavily reliant on highways that it won't significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The plan proposes new highway extensions north, east and west of the city to communities already fighting the problems of urban sprawl, and could threaten community health and safety. Metrolinx has outlined transportation corridors under study, all of which could be further new highway expansions. The major transportation corridors under consideration would connect the communities of Guelph and Bolton, bisecting the greenbelt and putting pressure to develop unprotected agricultural and natural areas adjacent to the highway expansions.

Last week's budget shows us that the McGuinty government itself is still more committed to highways than transit since it aims to increase highway spending even as spending on public transit is slated to decrease. MTO needs to shift its focus from highways and road building to transit, pedestrian and cycling infrastructures, as outlined in Places to Grow. It should put a moratorium on all 400-series highway expansions while the Ministry of Transportation updates its modelling to incorporate present-day realities, such as higher fuel prices, reduced demand for housing, distance from urban cores, and climate change impacts. It should shift money currently

budgeted for 400-series highways to supporting the implementation of the Metrolinx provincial transit strategy, and it should—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's pretty hard to hear myself, Speaker. There's a lot of noise over there. It should develop clear criteria for provincial infrastructure support to municipalities to ensure that the funding is based on the advanced Metrolinx transit plan.

Seventh and finally, we need to make sure that Metrolinx supports rather than undermines strong local plans for transit. In 2007, the TTC set a bold new vision for expansion with its new Transit City plan. The plan proposes building seven new light-rail rapid transit routes, namely, streetcar lines with dedicated lanes. In total, 120 kilometres of service will be added for the entire city. By 2021, the new lines would carry 170 million riders per year. The estimated cost of building the Transit City route is \$6 billion.

The province committed to significant funding through its Move Ontario 2020 plan, but now it is not clear how Toronto will pay for the operating of these new lines when it can barely afford to run the system it has today. Now Metrolinx is considering privatizing subway expansion inside and outside Toronto over light-rail options in the city, potentially threatening the funding promise for Transit City.

The Yonge and Bloor subway lines have been a huge success, but subways are not the right answer for every transit route. Subway lines are best suited for medium-distance trips in areas with exceptionally high ridership and density. The city and province ignored this principle when they built the Sheppard subway line. Most streetcar lines and bus routes carry more passengers than this subway does. More people would be riding transit in Toronto today if this subway had never been built. Why? At just under \$1 billion, the TTC could have bought 500 new streetcars and installed track on new routes. Instead, the streetcar service in high-ridership areas has declined, because of service cutbacks, by 30% on the Dundas Street route alone.

In 2005, the government subsidy to the Sheppard subway was approximately \$8 a rider, compared with a city-wide average subsidy of 40 cents per rider. The Sheppard subway is an example of politicians abandoning their plans and priorities when making decisions. It may not be an isolated mistake. The city and province are currently spending time and resources on other super-sized transit projects, like the proposed York University subway line. Metrolinx is on the verge of recommending more subway lines to the detriment of cost-effective light-rail transit options.

Building an effective regional local transit system is a complex matter; let's make sure that Bill 163 is going to help it along rather than stall it. I firmly believe that, sometimes, if people would listen to input in committees and also when people stand up in the House, they might get a lot more out of it.

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

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 115. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1738 to 1748.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Delaney, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	Sousa, Charles
Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza	Van Bommel, Maria

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Bailey, Robert	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	
Marchese, Rosario	Shurman, Peter	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 13.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE AT SCHOOL), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (SÉCURITÉ DE NOS ENFANTS À L'ÉCOLE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act/ Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Durham.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I've been advised by the table that the member for Durham has already had the opportunity to speak to second reading of Bill 157.

Further debate?

Ms. Wynne has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Education Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): So ordered.

Orders of the day? Once again, I recognize the government House leader.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1752.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
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Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
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Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
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Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
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Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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Maria Van Bommel
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