



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)**

Wednesday 8 April 2009

Mercredi 8 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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

Wednesday 8 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 avril 2009

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Mr. Bradley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to continue debate on important legislation that, if passed by this assembly, would make Ontario safer for drivers and everyone who shares our province's roads.

I will be sharing this time with my parliamentary assistant for transportation, Linda Jeffrey, who will resume debate on this legislation. May I at this point in time pay tribute to Ms. Jeffrey for an outstanding job. Some of us get the title of minister, and what you find out if you're a member of this House, particularly if you've been a parliamentary assistant, is that parliamentary assistants provide the kind of support and hard work necessary to ensure that bills are passed. So never be fooled by titles as being of significance; rather, it's the people who are doing the tough slogging. Both in the House and in committee, Ms. Jeffrey has provided the kind of assistance that has been required. I am delighted that as a result of that, she has shown a great knowledge of the legislation, of the appropriate procedures in committee and the House, and I pay tribute to her for that.

In addition that, Michelle Baker, who is my legislative assistant, has been working extremely hard, both with the parliamentary assistant and with me, in providing the necessary information. So sometimes if we happen to occasionally look good, either in committee or House, or out in the scrums, it's because of the staff that we have in some cases, and in other cases it's the parliamentary assistant who is providing that.

I want to say first of all that I have appreciated the kind of interest that has been shown in this bill by all members of the House from the discussion of it coming

forward to its introduction to its second reading and then going through a committee of the Legislature. I've been impressed with the degree of interest. I think that's because matters of driving and safety on our roads happen to be of great interest to all people and all of our constituents.

I know that some of the government members and opposition members have worked hard again to try to ensure that the appropriate debate has taken place on this legislation and that suggestions have been offered. In some cases, those suggestions and recommendations will manifest themselves not within the legislation itself, but within the regulations that flow from the bill.

For those who may be watching at home at this time of day or on the replay of the Legislature, what does happen is a bill is first of all introduced. Normally, they receive unanimous consent to introduce them on first reading. On second reading there is an extensive debate on principle, looking at all aspects of the bill, and then we go to committee if the government and opposition agree it should go to committee.

Our government has, I think, made it a point always—I could be corrected—to go to committee, for two purposes: One is so that the public can have input, and second, so members in committee can discuss the bill in detail and offer suggestions as to what amendments might take place in the committee or later in the regulatory framework. When the committee has completed its work, it reports to the House and then third reading debate takes place.

A number of years ago, third reading didn't take place in this Legislature; it was passed on a nod. We have established a practice in recent years where, from time to time, there is third reading of a bill, and that is kind of the wrap-up of it. But I do want to point out that what happens after that is that the government develops regulations to go with the bill, and we have given an indication to all members of the committee and the House of the direction we're moving in for certain regulations. Subsequent to the passage of any bill, we still have an opportunity to consult on the regulatory framework, which are the details of the bill, if the House deems it appropriate to pass it. Then, of course, if the Lieutenant Governor deems appropriate, it is signed and proclaimed into law. With bills of this kind in particular, safety bills, what tends to happen is, initially there is an educational period for people—because this is new to some people; the changes will be new. We have to ensure that people know what those changes are, and there is an educational period of time. We do that with a number of bills.

Motor vehicle collisions, I think all of us realize, cost our province dearly. Almost every day in Ontario someone loses a loved one as a result of a collision on our roads: a friend or a parent, a son or a daughter. Many people have gone through this tragedy in their own personal lives. It is extremely sad because it's not something that's anticipated; it is often a shock, and of course the sadness lingers for some period of time.

Approximately two people are killed and 10 people are injured each and every day on our roads. I recognize that we're a large province. I think our population is around 13 million in the province of Ontario now. Geographically, you could put three, four or five countries in Europe into the province of Ontario. We have a lot of vehicles on our roads, we have pedestrians who from time to time are on our roads and we have bicycles that are on our various roads. Still, approximately two people being killed per day and 10 injured is, while if we compare to others a very good record, one that we wish would have zero people killed and zero people injured.

To make this situation even more unbearable, the majority of these tragedies—and I think all of us realize this—are actually preventable. In Ontario, about a quarter of all fatal collisions are unfortunately alcohol-related. Excessive speed and loss of control were key factors in almost half of all fatal collisions. In spite of extensive educational campaigns in the province, one third of drivers and passengers killed on our roads were not wearing their seat belts.

0910

To those of us in this House that may be a surprise, particularly those who have had road safety as one of their interests. My friend from Durham, who has been the critic and writes me lots of letters about matters related to transportation, is one, along with Mr. Klees, who was the transportation critic previously for the Conservatives and the minister, and Mr. Bisson, the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has a special interest in transportation—all of us recognize that in spite of these extensive education campaigns one third of these people were not wearing seat belts. It's hard to believe, but it is true. It's something we all have to remind ourselves of. The number of injuries and fatalities on our roads must not be overlooked.

I should share with you a little story at the present time that I thought was instructive of how this is a bit generational. The younger generation tends to be more inclined to put seat belts on. If you watch a young driver, a young driver automatically gets in and puts the seat belt on. Older drivers sometimes do not, and probably all of us have been guilty at one time or another; we're going down to the corner store or something of that nature and think, "Well, nothing can happen from here to the corner store."

I recall, and this was really nice to see, getting into a vehicle when I was almost late for a meeting and I had to park far away. I knew the people who lived in the house near the—it was a CAW hall in this case. So the woman of the house, the mother, said to me, "Why don't you hop

in the van and I'll take you over to the door of the building, because you're going to be late otherwise." So I got in the van thinking, "Well, I'm going a couple of blocks," so I did not put my seat belt on right away. The two children in the car immediately said to their mother, "Mommy, we can't go yet. The man doesn't have his seat belt on," and I thought, "Wow. This is really impactful." These young kids knew that you don't get in the car without putting a seat belt on. So there I was, getting a lesson from these two kids. Now, this is a few years back, before I was Minister of Transportation; it doesn't matter. I think what happens is that is more of an inclination of people who are older than people who are younger—and particularly young children.

It really gets to the heart of this act that is aimed largely at trying to make even better drivers of our young people who are drivers today. I complimented a previous government in the 1990s for introducing graduated licensing. That was the government where Premier Rae was the Premier and I'm trying to remember which of the ministers—I think Gilles Pouliot may have been the Minister of Transportation at that time when it was introduced.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What was introduced?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This was the graduated licensing. I think there were people apprehensive about it at that time; the usual arguments came up. It was a departure; remember? It was a departure. I think that's one of the best steps that was taken in road safety in the province of Ontario, because what it aimed at was making better drivers of younger drivers, and almost to a person, despite significant exceptions, younger people at least have a better technical knowledge of driving and probably better attitudes in many ways than their predecessors who got behind the wheels of cars, because people of my vintage did not have to take much of a driving test. It was about a 15-minute driving test and the toughest thing was parallel parking. These kids go through a lot of steps now—

Interjection: Thanks for coming out with all these new tests.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can say to members of the House that I know the young people of the day felt that the government of the day, of Mr. Rae, was imposing upon their rights and freedoms and so on, perhaps being mean to them, when indeed they were bringing about legislation that would help. So in the longer run, these people have often maintained those good habits.

I see my good friend Bill Murdoch coming into the House at the present time and want to note his presence and express concern that his Montreal Canadiens lost their last game and are just holding on to a playoff spot at this time. I did want to acknowledge Bill. I know that has nothing to do with this bill but it does with that Bill.

We introduced, then, the Road Safety Act. It's a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation that targets some of the most persistent and dangerous behaviours on our roads today. Changing driver behaviour is, as we all know, a tremendous challenge. Over the past five years,

this government has demonstrated its ability to rise to the challenge of making our roads safer again and again. We have taken steps that not only save lives and prevent injuries, but give our police services the tools they need to keep Ontarians safe: safe while they're behind the wheel of a car; safe while they are heading off to work, returning home or picking up a loved one.

Our government has a legacy of taking action to keep our roads safe. Four years ago, our government made the use of booster seats and child car seats mandatory to protect our very youngest and most vulnerable passengers. We made improvements to Ontario's graduated licensing system to better protect teens while driving at night. And our one person, one seat belt, requires every person in the vehicle to buckle up.

More recently, we significantly increased the penalties for drivers caught street racing, stunt driving or exceeding the speed limit by more than 50 kilometres per hour. These drivers clearly have no place on our roads. To date, police have taken more than 11,500 dangerous drivers off our roads under this law.

We've also changed Ontario's impaired driving laws, with tougher sanctions for drivers who repeatedly drink and drive in what we call the warn range, which is between .05 and .08 alcohol content in the blood. These latest measures come into effect on May 1 this year.

We've also proposed legislation that would make it illegal to use hand-held communications and entertainment devices while driving. With this action, we are tackling the increasing problem of driver distraction—drivers who talk, text message or dial when they should be focused on the task at hand, the task of driving. Our message to drivers is a simple but important one: eyes on the road, hands on the wheel.

My friend from Durham would agree with that and brought forward of his own volition legislation forward in this regard, along with some other members—I know my colleague from Oakville brought forward legislation in this regard—and was persistent. He will know that when he started out there were a lot of people who mocked it or said he was imposing on their rights. I give him full credit for being persistent in this regard. I think that many thought this would be an imposition a few years back; today it's fairly common to see jurisdictions doing it. He had done his research on other areas that had implemented such legislation, and I know he is supportive of it and I appreciate what he has done, along with my friend Mr. Flynn, from Oakville.

I look forward to continuing the discussion on this important piece of legislation. Our tough action has raised awareness of the consequences of dangerous and aggressive driving behaviour, especially among young people.

Today we are proposing to build on these successes with improvements to Ontario's graduated licensing system—changes that will better prepare young drivers for the reality of today's driving environment. First, we plan to give young and novice drivers more time to get the experience and skills they need for a lifetime of driving. This means extending the time it takes to get a full

licence from 24 months to 36 months. For those novice drivers who pass a ministry-approved beginner driver education course, we will provide a possible time discount of six months. Escalating sanctions mean a driver would face penalties that get tougher with each serious violation of our province's traffic laws.

As all members are aware, drinking and driving continues to be a major problem on our roads. Research shows that the peak ages for drinking and driving collisions are the ages of 19 to 21. This is why we are proposing that all drivers age 21 and under have a zero blood-alcohol concentration when they are behind the wheel of a car. Of course, with more than a quarter of all collisions involving alcohol, we know that drinking and driving is a much larger challenge. I might note at this point that I think I'm correct in saying that all states in the United States now have that rule: no drinking and driving; up to 21, no alcohol in the system.

0920

Police are asking for more effective tools to deal with drunk drivers and get them off our roads once and for all. Anyone caught driving drunk or driving without an ignition interlock when one is required could face the immediate roadside impoundment of their vehicle for seven days. The same would go for anyone who continues to drive while their licence is suspended. The ignition interlock is something where someone must breathe into the apparatus, the ignition interlock, before they can get behind the wheel of a car. If they have a certain alcohol content, they are not going to be able to drive that vehicle; the vehicle cannot be started.

Our government has taken the issue of road safety very seriously. We have acted decisively to keep drivers and passengers safe. We are giving our police services better tools to help keep us safe. We are providing new drivers with time to develop better skills that will give them the confidence they need to stay safe for many years to come. We're getting tougher with drivers who continue to drink and drive. We're taking the right steps to keep our young passengers safe. We have taken new approaches to overcome many of our road safety challenges. Our actions over the years demonstrate our purpose.

Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America, and are getting even safer. We invite you to join us in our quest to save even more lives. To do this, we must change our laws and educate drivers and passengers on the consequences of disobeying the rules of the road and the laws that keep all road users safe. Regardless of years of experience, all drivers in Ontario need to get the message: Safer roads are a shared responsibility. We cannot do it alone. By working together, we can prevent injuries and deaths, and reduce the number of collisions on our roads. Together, we can reach our goal of having the safest roads in the world.

I know that all members of this House, regardless of their political affiliation, regardless of how long they've been in the House, share that particular goal. I've had the opportunity to observe and be part of a number of gov-

ernments over the years. One of the things that has been consistent in each of those governments is a desire to improve safety on our roads. Sometimes the legislation and regulations brought forward have been controversial, sometimes they have not, but the goal has always been for each of the governments to improve safety on our highways and on our individual roads.

Again, I would like to thank all of those who made representations to the committee. But previous to that, we had a consultation with a number of groups particularly concerned with road safety. If I had the list, I would read them off to you. I don't have that list at the present time. Needless to say, they included enforcement people in the province—that is, Ontario Provincial Police and individual police services across the province of Ontario—and our various safety partners, as we call them—organizations dedicated and devoted to safety—and also some individuals.

Not all of the proposals that came forward as part of this legislation and regulatory framework will be found in the final legislation. That is, the legislation has been changed through amendments made both by the government and opposition in committee and commitments made as to the regulatory framework.

We had one portion of the regulatory framework which, I think, gathered a good deal of comment, particularly from those who represent rural areas and the northern part of the province of Ontario, much of which is rural, who indicated that—and this involved the number of passengers in a vehicle. At the present time, between 12 midnight and 5 a.m., there is a restriction on the number of young people who can be in the vehicle at that time.

There was a proposal that came forward from Rob and Jan Perry, parents who lost a son among five young people who were killed in a vehicle accident. There was no alcohol involved, but there were five young people in a vehicle. As a result, people in their part of the province—we talk about Meaford and Thornbury and places like that—were quite concerned. There were some resolutions that came in from local councils asking the province to take this action. The reaction in the Legislature to that part of the regulatory framework was largely negative. As a result, the government said that it would postpone looking at that aspect of it at this point in time, and I think the legislation began to move much more quickly. Certainly, the critics from the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party, to a person, were critical of that aspect of the bill.

I felt bad when Jan Perry appeared before the committee again. From her point of view, she was justifiably very disappointed that that aspect of the legislation was not found there. But I think what members of the committee understood, and the government as well, is that there are many aspects of this legislation which militate in favour of much more responsible driving by people of all ages, but in particular new and young drivers, and that that would go in the direction of trying to avoid those tragic accidents which have happened with a number of young people in the vehicle.

I listened. There were pretty strong attacks on that portion of the legislation, and I noted they came from all sides of the House. For those of us who represent largely urban areas, the driving experience is different from your area, for instance, Mr. Speaker. Much of Essex county is rural, and the imposition on young drivers in your part of the province may be different from that in downtown Toronto, as an example. Nevertheless, we must know that these accidents happen all over the province, and many of them happen in rural areas.

The bill that has emerged, while I can't call it a consensus of the House, does represent and include the views of all members of the House in one way or another. That's the best way to deal with legislation, in my view. Not all of the wisdom resides on the government side, and not all of the wisdom resides in the four walls of this Legislature, which is why we invite public input by people.

There are other aspects of the legislation as well. I'm not going to necessarily get into the details of those, because the parliamentary assistant, as we call them in this House, Linda Jeffrey, I'm sure has a very compelling speech to make to the Legislature at this time. So I will turn the floor over to her.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: It's a hard act to follow when you're following the Minister of Transportation, but I'll do my best.

I rise in the House today to conclude the discussion on legislation that, if passed, would make Ontario safer for drivers and everyone who shares our province's roads.

As Mr. Bradley has pointed out, our past legislation has been effective. Because of our government's actions, our province has earned a reputation for having some of the safest roads in North America. With even more people and vehicles on our roads than ever before, Ontario has held on to this impressive road safety record for over a decade. This is a record that we will fight to maintain, and we will fight to improve upon this record.

Every day in this province, two people are killed and 10 more are injured in collisions on our roads. The majority of these deaths and injuries are preventable, and that's why we, as a government, must do more to protect the people of Ontario. That is exactly what this government intends to do.

The Road Safety Act is a comprehensive piece of proposed legislation. It's a piece of legislation that would prevent injuries and deaths by combatting some of the most dangerous and persistent driver behaviours on our roads today. Our proposed measures would better protect our young and novice drivers by better preparing them for dealing with the realities of today's driving environment.

First, we plan to give young and novice drivers more time to get the experience and the skills they need for a lifetime of safe driving. How are we going to do that? We believe we're going to do that by extending the time it takes to get a full licence from 24 months to 36 months. For those novice drivers who pass a ministry-approved beginner driver education course, we will provide them

with a possible time discount of six months. Once in place, these changes will complement recent improvements to our beginner driver education program, changes that have raised educational standards for novice drivers enrolled in ministry-approved courses.

0930

Next, novice drivers who choose to ignore the rules of the road would face escalating sanctions for repeat violations of any of the conditions of the graduated licensing system. These escalating sanctions would also apply to any novice driver convicted of other offences under the Highway Traffic Act, where the driver receives four demerit points or court-ordered suspensions.

Escalating sanctions mean a driver would face penalties that get tougher with each serious violation of our province's traffic laws. For example, for a first violation, a young driver would face a 30-day driver's licence suspension. A second violation would result in a 90-day suspension. Upon their third conviction, the driver would return to the start of the graduated licensing program.

As all members in this House are aware, drinking and driving continues to be a major problem on our roads. Youth are particularly at risk. Research shows that the peak ages for drinking and driving collisions are 19, 20 and 21 years of age. That's why we are proposing that all drivers aged 21 years and under have a zero blood-alcohol concentration when they are behind the wheel.

If passed, Ontario would join several countries with similar restrictions in place, such as Australia and the United States. In fact, as the minister spoke about earlier, in the US this law has been cited as one of the single most important reasons for a drop in young driver collisions. But with more than a quarter of all collisions involving alcohol, we know that drinking and driving is a much larger challenge.

Police are asking for more effective tools to deal with drunk drivers and to get them off our roads. That's why we're proposing tough new measures that would mean anyone caught drinking and driving or driving without an ignition interlock device when one is required would face an immediate impoundment of their vehicle for seven days. The same would go for those who continue to drive while their licence is suspended.

To combat other dangerous driving behaviours, we have proposed provisions that would mean tougher, more appropriate fines and penalties for some of the most serious Highway Traffic Act offences. For example, the maximum fines for careless driving, not wearing a seat belt, failing to stop at a red light and failing to remain at the scene of a collision would double. Drivers who fail to stop for an emergency vehicle or follow too closely would also face stiffer fines and tougher sanctions. We believe that higher fines are more appropriate, given the risk to those who engage in those dangerous behaviours and the danger that they pose to other drivers.

We're doing more to protect our youngest and our most vulnerable passengers—our children. Under the Road Safety Act, the proposed measures would strengthen our requirements for the use of child safety seats in

motor vehicles. This also includes increased fines for caregivers who fail to ensure that their young passengers are safely secured in a seat belt or a child safety seat. Ontario students will also be better protected with updated safety standards for our school buses.

Our government has taken the issue of road safety very seriously. We're giving our police services better tools to help keep us safe. We're providing new drivers with the time they need to develop better skills that will give them the confidence and the abilities they need to stay safe for the many years to come. We're also getting tougher with drivers who continue to drink and drive. We're taking the right steps to keep our young passengers safe. We've taken new approaches to overcome many of our road safety challenges. Our actions over the years demonstrate our purpose. To save more lives on the road, we must change our laws and we must educate drivers and passengers on the consequences of disobeying the rules of the road and the laws that keep all road users safe.

This is something we can't do alone. In fact, we've received some very thoughtful comments and advice over the past months from those who attended the standing committee. I'd like to thank the many organizations and individuals who stepped forward to provide their suggestions, their comments and support on our proposed legislation and the many changes we are proposing to improve the safety of our roads.

Some of those individuals I'd like to thank this morning are Eleanor McMahon, Jan Perry and Tim Mulcahy, who overcame personal tragedy and unimaginable grief to stand up and fight for the changes they believe will make our roads safer for young drivers and others;

As well, I would like to thank:

—Anne Leonard and the members of the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, a critical partner in educating drivers and promoting road safety across the province;

—Andy Murie and the volunteers at MADD Canada, who seek out new and innovative ways to counter impaired driving on a daily basis;

—Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, for providing us with an invaluable youth perspective on both the graduated licensing system and the zero-blood-alcohol-concentration initiatives;

—the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, whose research on young drivers was instrumental in the development of the graduated licensing system proposals;

—the Driving School Association of Ontario, whose members include many of the province's most knowledgeable driver education experts;

—the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the OPP, as well as municipal police officers that serve on the front lines and perform the vital task of enforcing our road safety laws each and every day.

I would like to thank Brian Patterson from the Ontario Safety League, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Traffic Conference, the Student Life Education Company and the students from the Robert Bateman

High School. The individuals that came from the Robert Bateman High School, a group of three young students, were eloquent and thoughtful in their presentation. I and the minister were very impressed with the content and the depth of the work and research that they provided to the committee. They were very helpful.

I would like to thank:

—the Motor Vehicle Crash Prevention Committee of Grey-Bruce, which provided a rural perspective on the need for improvements to the graduated licensing system;

—Doug Switzer from the Ontario Trucking Association and Karen Renkema from the Ontario Road Builders' Association, who were both very helpful in explaining the challenges that impoundment of a commercial vehicle has on industry and its clients;

—the Toronto Cyclists Union and all the individuals who spoke passionately about electric bicycles;

—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, for their comments regarding the amendments to the graduated licensing regulation; and

—all the stakeholders and people across Ontario who took the time, before our committee or in written form, to give their ideas and their consideration on this bill.

It's vital that we communicate with our stakeholders. We did; we consulted with them. So my sincere thanks to all the groups and to the members of all three parties for their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment to road safety. Every contribution was greatly appreciated and each one received careful consideration. Our proposed Road Safety Act is a name befitting its goal. By working together we can prevent injuries and death, and reduce number of collisions on our roads. Together, we hope to reach our goal of having the safest roads in the world, and we can keep Ontario's roads safe and protect the lives of our loved ones. I would encourage all members of this House to support this legislation and I thank them for their time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: A pleasure to listen to the minister and parliamentary assistant this morning on—basically I think we're only dealing with Bill 126, the Road Safety Act. But he did make some brief mention of Bill 118, which is the technology part of the—I'm not sure if that bill is on the table here; they were both discussed in the same committee, which was kind of unusual. They're both ministry bills, but one is dealing with the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit use of devices and display screens and hand-held communication.

0940

I certainly agree with most of the comments the minister and the parliamentary assistant said. First, the parliamentary assistant did work hard. She sort of did the minister's bidding, the hard work, if you will, the confrontation that's there in not voting for our amendments and things like that, leading the pack against reasonable requests on the part of the opposition. At the end of the day, we do agree with the goal. The ultimate goal is to have the safest roads in Ontario.

In fact, Ontario is known to be a leader. If you look to the history, you know that Ontario was the first jurisdiction to bring in the graduated licence in April 1994, and other provinces followed the lead. So whenever you're ahead of the curve, like Ontario often is, you've got to look to the wise advice of the stakeholders and the ministry staff, who are the guardians of the policy, if you will, and you'd better have good reason to change the policies or play around with them.

In the case of the technology piece, Bill 118, I think we're also learning from other jurisdictions that have moved forward with some of the legislation on that. I think there were some additional improvements to the current state of all these gadgets in front of the driver. So it's important to stay ahead of that as well, as we start to have more and more distractions both in the car and on the road.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to stand in this place and speak on behalf of constituents. In this case, I just want to pay homage to the 100,000 young people who started a Facebook group and really showed this province and the Minister of Transportation what grassroots organizing, real democracy and a real democratic voice look like. These are students. We often, in this place, decry the fact that our young people are not more involved in the political process. Here was one of those glaring examples of how untrue that is.

Here was a group, using the technology at their disposal, who organized, who spoke loudly with one voice and who actually changed the mind of a cabinet minister on the fly. This is amazing. It's happened very few times since I've been in this House that this has come to pass, and this is one of those times. I just want to say to all those Facebook users, all those young people, that you should be extremely proud of what you accomplished. Please don't stop there.

In an era where this place is becoming, it seems, increasingly irrelevant to the lives of Ontarians, here is a case where you made a difference. So make more of a difference. Keep your voice coming. Keep organizing. Don't stop where perhaps your own self-interest stops, but keep going and keep pushing for all of those things that make for a better Ontario. Use the technology at your disposal. Talking about technology—the member for Durham mentioned it—Facebook, this incredible technology that's now available to everyone, is virtually free and young people use it. So it's a great organizing tool. They've proven it with the results of the changes to this bill, and they've proved their own efficacy in terms of the democratic process in terms of changing a cabinet minister's mind. So kudos to the 100,000.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly enjoyed the remarks this morning by the Minister of Transportation and the parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton–Springdale.

I'll just get a quick plug in for the Montreal Canadiens. The coach and general manager is Bob Gainey from Peterborough—his mother still lives on Mark Street—so we know that they're going to make the playoffs.

But getting back to Bill 126, last Friday, I had the opportunity to be at the grade 10 class at St. Peter's high school in Peterborough. Linda Gendron is a teacher and Kathy Ross is the principal. One of the issues they raised on that particular day was the whole aspect relating to Bill 126 and the changes that were brought in. It's interesting to note that about half the students at St. Peter's high school would be from the rural part of Peterborough riding. They came together in common cause to make what I consider very reasonable arguments to the Minister of Transportation of the province of Ontario, to the parliamentary assistant and, indeed, to all members of this House. So you can always tell when a piece of government legislation has hit the right spot: when all parties, including our friend the independent member, come together in unison to improve a piece of legislation.

To really highlight that point, usually when a bill is particularly contentious, hearings are staged across the province of Ontario to make sure that we get input from a whole variety of sources. It's interesting that public hearings were originally scheduled in Niagara Falls, Goderich, Sudbury and Kingston, and they were all cancelled due to lack of presenters. What that means to me is that this House got it right, the Minister of Transportation got it right and the parliamentary assistant got it right. Indeed, all members in this House had an opportunity to provide input to this bill and get it exactly where we want to improve road safety for all of us in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to use the time available to make a couple of comments with regard to Bill 126. I think that when you look at something like this, you should always be looking at lessons learned. While the minister rightly talked about the record of Ontario in terms of road safety, this bill builds on the initiatives that people have taken over the last 10 years in making the roads safer. I look back, as a former parliamentary assistant in transportation, to the initiatives with regard to roadside suspensions, the 90-day impoundment of a vehicle and the ignition interlock: all things designed to make the roads safer, particularly in the constant battle we have with impaired drivers.

I think this bill sort of stands in that tradition, but it also demonstrates the lack of understanding on the part of the government in hasty decisions on things such as the number of young people in a car. I think that one of the other speakers referred to the fact that young people were able to find a voice, come together and recognize how important it is. I thought back, as the parent of a young person at the time, when our daughter was in university. She practically had a route to pick up all the people who would be going back to Kingston with her. It's important

to look carefully before you make those legislative changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate all the members who have offered their comments.

In regard to the input on it, the parliamentary assistant mentioned a number of organizations, groups and individuals who had input. I think that's exceedingly important, because it improves the bill.

I say to the member for York Simcoe that I guess my take on it is that until the legislation is completely passed in the Legislature, it is not law, and therefore governments can propose legislation that may be changed as a result of debate and input. I think we've seen some of that in this case, and I think it's positive about the parliamentary system in which we live at the present time that members of all parties in the House have that influence.

I encourage young people as well to become involved in a number of issues, as the member for Parkdale-High Park said, not only those that directly impact the privileges of young people but a number of different issues. I think that can be helpful, and we are delighted to see that kind of input. I note that with one provision removed, which would have been regulatory and not in the bill itself, there was general support for the legislation after that.

I know that the member for Peterborough understands the importance of education, of young people being educated in these matters and knowing what the laws are and what the consequences are. Very often when you talk to young people, one of the things they complain about is what they consider to be discrimination by insurance companies against them. Insurance companies, and I think others, will tell them that the reason is that the record among people of a certain age is not as good as it is when they get older. Nevertheless, throughout our lifetime we can all improve our driving habits. This provides a basis for doing so, and I look forward to further input from members of the Legislature in this debate and beyond.

0950

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess I'm going to sort of stick very close to the script. I first want to respect the work that our critic, Frank Klees, had done on this bill, along with the minister. Frank Klees, as you know, is running for the leadership of the party at the moment and, as such, had to relinquish his privilege or duty to be the critic for transportation. He had full carriage of this and most of the amendments. Now, I'm not unfamiliar with it; anyone in the Legislature would have a certain amount of comfort with the discussion that was held during the debate and would know full well that there were controversial sections, especially under the graduated licence portion. That was probably where most of the controversy arose.

I'm going to give a bit of context, only because I'm new to it—I have done a bit of looking into it. I'm just

going to read here the notes that were provided to me. This is the background of the genesis of this bill. It's important to recognize—often you try to find something positive from tragedies, and that's what I think this bill is about.

In July of I believe 2008, but it could have been 2007, “three young Toronto men were killed when, after an afternoon of drinking at a lakeside club, their speeding sports car crashed through a guardrail into a river in Muskoka. A female friend, who kicked free of the submerged car, was the only survivor.

“Soon afterward, the father of the 20-year-old driver began a campaign—full-page newspaper ads ... in large type to the Premier entitled, ‘Dear Mr. McGuinty, My Son is Dead’—for tougher restrictions on young drivers.

“There was a meeting between the two men”—I gather that's the Premier and Mr. Mulcahy—“in September. There was a personal phone call from the Premier last week to inform the father the legislation introduced yesterday” by Minister Bradley “was coming.” This was published in the *Toronto Star* on November 19, 2008.

“At least 115,000 people have joined a Facebook group lobbying against the proposed new driving laws in Ontario that target teens and inexperienced drivers.

“Tim Mulcahy's personal website, www.timmulcahy.net/, boasts in a November 13, 2008, posting that the ‘law change’ lobby group he organized after his son's death had collected 6,400 names on their law change petition.

“Legions of upset young drivers took to the web to voice their displeasure as Facebook groups popped up after first reading. The largest group, created by Hamilton resident Jordan Sterling on November 18, has more than 115,000 names and is spreading across the social networking site like wildfire,” reported the *Niagara Falls Review* on November 22, 2008.

“At the November 17 announcement the CEO of MADD Canada remarked that Ontario Ministry of Transportation officials had been in discussions with the organization for months about changes to graduated licences.” In fact, as I said earlier, graduated licences started in 1994, and I guess there's always a review of the licensing, driver's ed—all these things. Even the auditor has commented on these things—but I continue from this article.

“Young Drivers of Canada president Peter Christianson was called upon by the Ministry of Transportation in 2008 as part of a stakeholder group asked to lend their industry experience and comment on the parameters of graduated licensing. With over 40 years in the driver training industry, Peter Christianson was present at a number of these meetings set to evaluate where changes could be made to make Ontario a safer place to drive.”

Basically, that's a bit of the background. Our initial response to this was that really, we were unable to support the bill as it was initially drafted unless appropriate amendments could be made with regard to the number of passengers allowed in the vehicle—I think that's been marginally addressed here, but it has not been changed—

the speeding provisions and replacing the reference to age with reference to the experience level of drivers. I think that's important too, because new drivers, whether they're new Canadians who are just getting a licence—it's always wrong to suppose that all new drivers are young people. Many new drivers are people who just haven't had a licence, so it would be wrong to characterize. All young drivers are not bad drivers. That's important to clarify.

I'd like to put on a message here that I live in a riding, Durham, where about 70% of the area is rural. It has no transit, yet there are many diverse communities, farms, small villages and hamlets, and many of the young people go to high school or participate in 4-H and other organizations for entertainment, as well as positive youth engagement groups, whether it's Cubs, Scouts, Guides, Pathfinders or whatever. All these young people are very concerned about how they will get around with the restriction on the number of persons.

I can see the restrictions on drivers on the 400 series highways, and I also agree full-heartedly with zero blood alcohol for young drivers—and I mean new drivers. I think that's very important, because as we operate things in a lot faster mode these days, all of your attention and faculties should be at your disposal to deal with the conditions on the roads, as well as the other drivers on the roads.

I think the bill and the whole genesis of it is—nothing is perfect, as the minister said in his remarks. This bill goes a long way to at least recognizing that we need to work together to make the roads safer and have appropriate laws.

In the interest of using as much time as possible, I will go into—I had to laugh yesterday. I stood to speak on a bill and it turned out I had already spoken on the bill, so I couldn't stand again. They ordered me that I couldn't speak.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Haven't you spoken on this before?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the third reading on the bill, so it is a different time. The minister is in good spirits today, which is good, too.

I'll go to the part that's a little bit cynical, but it must be said. If I look at the bill, there's a whole section here on increased fines. I think it is part of the duty of the opposition to point out that these are challenging economic times. We have great consternation about the job losses in the province, the imposition of the new HST, and the health tax. I see in here there's another section on increased fines. The fines in this section that I'm referring to are for not complying with the act or regulations respecting seat belts under section 106; they have increased from \$60 to \$500. My advice to avoid this \$500 fine is to buckle up. The evidence is there, and this is another way of getting the hammer out to get you to pay attention, to get you to wear the seat belt. Under section 214, the fine has increased from \$200 to \$1,000. My advice to avoid the problem is to buckle up.

The fine for careless driving, in section 130 of the Highway Traffic Act, has increased from \$200 to \$1,000

to \$400 to \$2,000. We're starting to get into serious change here. Careless driving can be very prohibitive. Young people should be aware. It's not just the sort of humorous comments I'm making, but young people and careless driving—you are going to end up affecting the rest of your life, because your insurance will go up. Not only do you lose demerit points, your insurance goes up, and I suspect the ability to drive and get around to work and from work might be very much seriously impacted. Your insurance could be almost unaffordable; it could be as much as \$500 a month or something. It could be a lot. I would say that this fine here is one more thing.

The fine for not stopping at a red light is kind of interesting. Under sections 144 and 146 it has increased—currently it's \$150 to \$500—to up to \$1,000. We're talking serious change here. My advice to you to avoid these is to stop at all the red lights or stop signs; that's what they're there for. The fine for not complying with section 200, remaining or returning to the scene of an accident, has increased from \$200 to \$1,000 to \$400 to \$2,000. So those are some other measures here to make people compliant with the Highway Traffic Act.

1000

The speed racing in many of the portions of the bill, I have to say—it's good to be listening here, because Mr. Klees, when he was the Minister of Transportation, had some pretty good ideas, and probably a lot of them came from the stakeholder groups and probably a lot of them came from the ministry people. It's also good to see that the current minister does give credit, whether it's on the street racing issue or other issues, to moving forward. Doing the right thing is good policy. It's good politics, it's good policy, and they aren't unique to any one party. But when someone takes the time to listen to someone else, which I could improve on a bit myself, it would probably improve your overall performance in serving the people of Ontario.

So at the end of the day, this bill here is an important step forward, I guess. Nothing's perfect, and I would recommend that our caucus would probably be in support of it. That being said, I guess there are a couple of things that I wanted to put on the record that were brought to my attention in the past weekend.

I was at an event where the Lieutenant Governor was there and a lot of the local councillors were there. One of the younger councillors and his wife came up to me. They had written to me on this issue because they have young children and they live in Leaskdale, which is north of Uxbridge. They were concerned that their young son would be going to college and not be able to drive the car. I said, "Well, there are restrictions, but I think almost everyone else is putting up with it too. Is there someone else there going to school with"—can we accommodate the young people? That's the important point that I'm trying to make here. I think reasonableness is an important factor.

Young drivers after midnight is another point. It's likely that they are out for social reasons, but if it's work, there's another issue there that I think is important. I

don't want, as a parent—we had five children. We used to live in the country. When they were out working in their various jobs to pay for their university or whatever, and before in high school, we would often have to go and pick them up until they were driving. Then it was even more—we were up waiting to see that they got home safely. So there's always a concern by parents, as there should be.

The other part, this whole idea of drinking and driving: There's great pressure—we've dealt with smoking in cars. We've dealt with the government's role there. But drinking is something where we should resign ourselves to saying that we shouldn't drink and drive, period. That's the best measure there. When the minister said in his remarks that 25% of all accidents are alcohol-related, that's a wake-up call to say we shouldn't depend on the measurement of alcohol. It just affects some people worse than others, and some people think they can get away with it. How about zero? Zero's a good place. You won't get in any trouble there.

I think—the other part—it's important to address the fact that we would not want to characterize all young people as irresponsible. That's important, to get that message out there. We've got to treat them fairly and treat them positively and then also have consequences for those who break the rules. I think the bill goes a long way to achieving a reasonable balance.

With that, I'll probably relinquish my time in case anyone else wants to say anything. I see Mr. Yakabuski's here, and if anybody—on Bill 126, a lot has been said. It's time to move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was a bit surprised. I was expecting the member to go on, because I know that he has a lot to say on this legislation. But I want to say up front that the member has shown a great interest in this particular legislation. As we know, transportation has always been one of the passions that he brings to this Legislature. So like my good friend Mr. Bradley, I want to congratulate him for the work that he's done and also to say that, yes, the legislation is an improvement on what was already put in place back, I guess, in 1993, when the first graduated driver's licence system was brought to Ontario. The minister was right when he made the comment that it was Gilles Pouliot who was the minister at the time.

I know there is some concern out there on the part of younger people, who in 1993, like now, didn't particularly like the idea of having to go through added steps in order to get a driver's licence because, fortunately or unfortunately, most people see a driver's licence as a right and not necessarily a responsibility. It's almost a rite of passage at the age of 16. Mr. Bradley was right: When we went through the process, it wasn't as rigid as it is now. He was making the comments that what was the toughest thing at the time was the 15-minute test. I thought what was tougher was coming up with the 25 bucks to do the actual test itself. But that was back in, I guess, the very early 1970s when I went through that the first time—or the only time, I guess.

So, yes, this is an improvement, and it brings us in the right direction. I think it deals with some of the concerns that are out there in regard to making sure we do everything humanly possible to prepare young people for safer driving. I know that the parents who did come before our committee, when the requirement was taken away in regard to what they had been advocating for, are still upset with the government over that. I hear their concerns.

As a parent, I can't even pretend to understand what these parents are going through. Losing a child has to be something that, God forbid, any of us ever have to go through. If somebody has, I don't know how you deal with that, and I'd probably be doing what they're doing.

Clearly, there was the fairly large evidence of people who came before us who wanted those amendments to the legislation. That's why the government moved that, and that's why we supported those amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for giving me an opportunity to respond to the member from Durham.

A lot has been debated in this chamber as to the impact of this legislation on young drivers. There is one aspect I wanted to highlight which is extremely positive, which I don't think has been spoken about at all, which is the regulation of power-assisted bicycles or e-bikes, which is also part and parcel of this legislation, by amending the Highway Traffic Act.

As we know, there is a pilot project going on in Ontario that ends in October which allows for e-bikes on regular streets with a bicycle helmet, proper reflectors etc., to encourage, of course, more energy-efficient ways of transportation.

I know that this particular pilot project has been very successful in Ottawa. A constituent of mine, Charles Jonas, has been very active in marketing these e-bikes in the community. Actually, his office is located in the building where my community office is located.

I'm happy to see that e-bikes or power-assisted bicycles are now defined under the definition "bicycle" through Bill 126, and that regulations will be made to make the pilot permanent in defining the parameters around the use of e-bicycles.

This goes hand in hand with the government's approach on electric motor vehicles as well, to encourage people to get away from cars which use gas and to use more energy-efficient or more environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

I'm very excited to see this aspect relating to e-bikes in this legislation, and I wholeheartedly support the approach of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'm not sure where everybody stands on this piece of legislation in this place today, but I'm against it. I think it was an overreaction on the part of a government to a terrible tragedy. Nothing we can do in this Legislature or anywhere else is going to turn back that clock.

I think some of the things that they have done have unfairly targeted young, responsible drivers. I know that most young people don't go out and vote, so the government feels they're probably okay in taking those measures. But this was the wrong approach, by making it harder and more difficult for our responsible young people to enjoy the same benefits as adults when it comes to driving privileges.

The graduated licence system has worked very, very well over the last number of years that it's been in place. But putting in additional restrictions simply on the basis of age—what about the qualifications of a driver?

When we talk about impaired driving—something that every person in this Legislature would like to see eliminated—the reality is that the people most likely to be driving impaired are people more like me, more my age, who grew up in a time when impaired driving was not quite so frowned upon. The young people today are so inundated with good information and good learning about the evils and the wrongness of impaired driving and dangerous driving, yet we, in this legislation, are targeting them because the government decided they were going to overreact to a terrible tragedy. That's not the way good laws are made, and I will vote against this one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much for the comments. My comment on the member for Durham and his astute observations today, and his inclination to support the legislation: I'm delighted to hear that.

He mentioned something that I think is important for all of us to know, and that is that when you talk about input from various people in the province, the staff at the Ministry of Transportation does so much hard work in terms of helping to develop legislation, doing the consultation and so on. I join with him and all members of the Legislature in thanking them for the work that they do on legislation of this kind. I know from his comments that he may not have exactly the same viewpoint—that's what the Legislature is all about—of my friend from Barry's Bay.

What you will find in this legislation, as the member who spoke knows, is that many aspects of the legislation affect people of all ages. Yes, there are some parts of the bill that bring us in compliance with the 50 states in the United States, for instance, which now have zero-blood-alcohol content to the age of 21; all 50 states in the United States and some other jurisdictions around the world. It does bring us into compliance with that, and it's trying to develop those habits at an early age. I mentioned in my initial remarks that the statistics we have show that the worst age for drinking and driving is, in fact, 19 to 21, which is most unfortunate. The member was correct when he was commenting on the member for Durham's speech, in saying that all of us, of all ages, have to be sure that we are in compliance with the laws of the province.

But I thought the member for Durham summed up very well his observations. It really demonstrates that this is a bill of the Legislature, not simply of the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a healthy discussion this morning. I want to thank the member from Timmins—James Bay in his role as the NDP critic—he does a great and thoughtful job—as well as the younger member from Ottawa Centre, and partly my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who has expressed a concern that certainly is there; he's expressed that. And for the Minister of Transportation to so diligently attend here today, that's very good.

Again, at the end of the day this bill will pass, and at the end of the day our remarks have been made by Mr. Klees in his role as critic. Certainly, I've tried to respect his views on the bill, both during the committee hearings for the day I was there as well as the comments this morning. So with that, thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning on this bill. I look forward to moving forward.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman: I hope that all members might join with me in welcoming a group from George Brown College, led by Jim Cooper. This group is the For You program. We welcome them to the Ontario Legislature today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the MPP from Algoma—Manitoulin and page Michael Niven, we'd like to welcome, in the east public gallery, his mother, Heather, his cousin Chris Ramsey and his cousin Richard Hyem to the Legislature today.

On behalf of the Minister of Health Promotion and page Megan Wood, in the east members' gallery, Susan Wood, her mother. Welcome today.

On behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and page Mark Ang, his father, Winston Ang, and Jacqueline Ang, his stepmother, in the east members' gallery. Welcome today.

As well, we'd like, on behalf of the member from Welland, to welcome Julius Behul, the editor-in-chief of The Canadian Slovak newspaper, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce a big contingent from SEIU Local 1, who are in the west gallery with us today. They're easy to identify with their brand new shirts.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. It has to do with your budget, your seeming lack

of appreciation of the struggles that many Ontarians are facing today, especially those on a fixed income. You should know that retirement investments that many seniors and others depend on to put food on their tables, to pay their bills, have lost significant value over the past 12 months. This recession is hurting many people, many families, but especially those on fixed incomes. In this province, seniors account for close to 15% of the population, a vital role in all of our communities. Premier, given the state of the economy, the challenges families are facing, why would you bring in a budget that imposes an even heavier tax burden on seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, seniors this year and next year will benefit from very substantial reductions in their personal taxes and in their property taxes. I'll remind the member opposite that we've extended the property tax credit for seniors and raised it. That will come into effect this year, some \$600.

It's those kinds of initiatives that we believe are the appropriate initiatives to help our seniors, as we're working to help all Ontarians through these challenging times. Like so many Ontarians, we're confident that these measures are the right measures for the times, will see Ontario through these difficult circumstances, help our seniors through these difficult circumstances, and when we get through this—and we will get through this—Ontario will be bigger, better and stronger.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's very telling that the Premier declined to respond to the question. I've said it before and I'll say it again: The Premier is living in a very comfortable, taxpayer-subsidized bubble and clearly doesn't appreciate the impact his tax grab is having on Ontario's families who are struggling, especially seniors.

Wernham Wealth Management, in London, Ontario, has done an analysis of the impact your budget will have on seniors across Ontario. They've concluded, "We have calculated that the impact on this Liberal budget will be more costly for Ontario seniors than anyone has reported." Minister, it's not just the opposition saying your budget is a tax grab. Now we have a respected investment counselling firm saying it.

Minister, I ask you—I asked the Premier earlier; he refused to answer—why in the midst of a recession would you impose an even heavier tax burden on Ontario's seniors?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have to categorically disagree with the findings of that report. It's absolutely—I categorically disagree.

Let me remind the member of some other initiatives we undertook. We are creating 4,500 new affordable housing units for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities. The other thing we did is that we are increasing the unlocking permission of Ontario life income funds, LIFs, from 25% to 50%, and we are the only government, sir, that is removing the fees for that over the next two years.

There is always more to do, there are always challenges in the economy. But this government and this

Premier have put the interests of all Ontarians first by bringing forward a budget that will create jobs in the short term and move us to the growth we need in the long term that will make this province a better place for all Ontarians to live.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We'll get a copy of the report for the minister so he can appreciate the real impact.

In the analysis, Wernham used the example of a typical retired couple receiving an after-tax income of \$41,400 a year. They looked at a limited number of items they would use on a daily basis, items that with your new 8% tax will cost more without the couple getting more, and compared it to the tax relief you have continually boasted about. Their conclusion: The net increased tax hit on this couple will be at least \$1,561 a year.

Again, minister, can you understand the increased hardship you're imposing on limited- or fixed-income seniors with a significant tax increase in the midst of a recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, the leader has not talked about the property tax credit, which he has voted against. They've not talked about the personal income taxes, which that member and his party just yesterday voted against. He has not talked about the unlocking provision, which that member and his party voted against. He has not talked about the seniors' housing—let me tell you what Donna Rubin, the CEO of the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, says: "Capacity in the health, housing and community sectors is a very serious challenge and we have high praise for steps such as these to strengthen the overall system and expand the range and availability of services. These initiatives will go a long way to ensuring that seniors receive the right support, in the right place, at the right time." That member and his party cut those services; that member and his party voted against every one of these initiatives in the budget. This Premier and his government have the interests of all Ontarians, particularly seniors, at heart, and that's why—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier, responding to apparently the leader of his own party, because he signs deals behind the backs of his own caucus: Premier, Ontarians have rightly continued to voice their very legitimate concerns about this Premier and his Minister of Finance, who continue to break promises and raise taxes. In the latest irony, Energy Star appliances are on the list of new items to be taxed when the Premier's new "tax on everything I can" plan takes effect. I want to illustrate the irony for the folks across the aisle. The Liberals want people to buy products to save energy, but now the Premier says he plans to tax them. Premier, how

can you not see that your new taxes on Ontarians are actually flying in the face of previous pledges?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true that we have to make some changes with respect to taxes. Unlike my honourable colleague, who believes that the world has not changed, who believes that we need do nothing differently—notwithstanding the fact that Ontario is being beaten up by this global economic meltdown and we're losing far too many jobs, he would have us do nothing. We believe that we have to do something. We've talked to business in particular; they've told us the single most important thing that we can do to strengthen our business sector so that we can create more jobs and generate more wealth to support good schools and good health care, strong supports for our vulnerable and better protect our environment is to move ahead with a single sales tax. They have done it in 130 other countries; they've done it in four provinces. I'm not saying it is an easy thing to do. My friend would have us hang on to the past; we're not going back there. We're building a better, brighter, more promising future for the people of Ontario. We're asking them to support us as we do this.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't know about you, Speaker, but I didn't hear an answer to my specific question. The irony of what they're doing here—it's just a lot of hot air, as usual, from this Premier.

We know the Minister of Finance was stepping out on the Premier into someone else's kitchen, cooking up the latest massive tax grab behind the backs of his own caucus. We also know this was happening at the same time the Premier was supposedly reassuring his concerned caucus members that he wouldn't be crazy enough to launch another tax grab missile on them.

Premier, you're now adding massive taxes to energy-efficient products. You're also planning to increase the cost of electricity by as much as \$840 per consumer, forcing a mandatory \$300 cost for a home energy audit. Obviously, you haven't consulted with your caucus, but have you even consulted with Minister Smitherman, Minister Gerretsen and Minister Duncan? Because your ministers are showing inconsistencies all over your policies. Have you even talked to them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a difficult time for the people of Ontario, but I just don't think it helps to pander in fear. I think people are looking for reasons to be hopeful; they're looking for reasons to know that we understand where a bright future is, and we're prepared to take the measures necessary today to guarantee that bright future for all of us.

You know, my honourable colleague talked a moment ago about seniors and the consequences of some of these changes on them. Of course, he ignored the tax reductions and the property tax credit and those kinds of things. But one of the things that I've heard when I've talked to grandparents, for example—they said to me, "What can we do together to ensure there are more jobs available for my grandchildren?" That's what they're talking about.

We are prepared to do what is necessary, and we will move ahead with these tax reforms in a way that provides the maximum possible protections to all our families, including our seniors.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: He didn't talk about the debt he shouldered our grandchildren with.

I want to quote the Minister of Finance when he was in opposition: "Did your government consult any of your 'backbenchers'? You should be ashamed. This document's the ruin of Ontario." He said that in 1995. Despite his dire words, this province came a long way until this Premier took the reigns of Ontario's treasury, putting Ontario into a have-not status and record deficits.

Premier, both the member from Peterborough and the member from Guelph-Wellington have been speaking from both sides of their mouths on this newest scheme for taxing Ontarians on—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

They've been contradictory—hopefully that will be parliamentary—on this scheme to tax Ontarians on gasoline, haircuts and funerals. Clearly, Premier, you didn't consult with them. Were they forced by you and your finance minister to swallow their pride and approve of your massive tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's good to know that my honourable colleague has become an ombudsman for people in my caucus. But I want to thank my caucus for the wisdom that they injected into this budget and for the decisions that we've agreed to take as a government.

I believe that Ontarians know that this is a difficult period for us. In fact, it's the most difficult economic crisis we've had to cope with in some 80 years. You know, just as the world has changed, we too have to make some changes, and we're making a change that I'm not pretending is easy to make. We're going to reform our tax system, but we're going to do it in a way that provides maximum protection for our families.

The overwhelming majority of Ontarians are going to get a tax cut. We're increasing the Ontario child benefit, we're increasing the minimum wage, we're building new affordable housing, and we're making pretty dramatic new increases in funding for health care, education and post-secondary education. We are building the future. We're going to have better jobs for more—

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

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government says that its 25% domestic content rule is good enough in purchasing transit vehicles in Ontario. Dominic has worked at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant for 22 years, first as an assembler and now as a machinist. He knows that the 25% domestic vehicle content rule will not ensure that transit vehicles

are, in fact, made in Ontario by Ontario workers. New Democrats want a 50% Ontario transit vehicle content rule. Tell me, why are the McGuinty Liberals letting down workers like Dominic and thousands of others?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. That the member who opposed the subway in Toronto as a public transit project that would have created a lot of jobs, not only constructionwise but otherwise, would ask this question is rather interesting in itself. I can tell him that some good fellow New Democrats who sit on Toronto city council believe that the 25% content rule is reasonable. They, as with the provincial government, have done extensive consultation with a variety of people out there to determine what policy would be best, including with those who are users and those who are making products. You also know, of course, that 82% of the work done in the province of Ontario on our greater Toronto projects will in fact be by Ontario people.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the McGuinty Liberals try to confuse the issue. The 82% takes into account construction. We're not talking about construction here. We're talking about the manufacture of transit vehicles.

I want to remind members of the McGuinty Liberals that just a week ago, President Obama sent his Vice-President to a bus plant in St. Cloud, Minnesota. He was there to recognize all of the jobs that are created and sustained because of the Buy America policy—the Buy America policy that provides that the bus shells may be made in Winnipeg, but the finished product has to be made in the United States, which means thousands of jobs for machinists, for welders, for instrument mechanics and for air conditioning mechanics. If that is the content rule in the United States—at least 50% American content—why can't Ontario do the same thing?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, I can tell the member that those workers who reside and work in Thunder Bay make an excellent-quality product. I have every confidence that they will be able to compete for the contracts that are put forward.

I could say in one area—I could play a game with you. For instance, there's one particular product—I think the double-decker train cars are made in Thunder Bay. It's the only place they are made. So I could say, well, that should be 95% Canadian content in that, and it would look good. Others are not. There are no products that are made in Canada in specific areas. So overall we look at it and we say that we are in very good shape. I'm very confident that we will see the people in Thunder Bay do very well in these contracts with the 25% rule that the city of Toronto and province of Ontario have.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't know what products the McGuinty government is referring to. Are they saying buses aren't made in Canada? Streetcars aren't made in Canada? Subway cars aren't made in Canada? GO train cars aren't made in Canada? They're all made in Canada, and what we are asking for is a domestic content rule. That's what Dominic wants to see.

But it goes beyond transit gear. We know, for example, that Quebec has a 60% content rule on all new green energy projects, which means that wind turbines are being manufactured in Quebec and solar electricity components are being manufactured in Quebec. Why will the McGuinty government not agree to a 60% domestic content rule when it comes to green energy projects and the products that will have to be used in green energy projects?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very, very happy to have this question again from the honourable member and to remind him that the legislation which is presently before committee, Bill 150, actually has the capacity that allows us to establish those. We've been clear in saying that we want to do that.

I was in Hamilton yesterday. I know that's a community where there is a tremendous interest in making sure that, as we go forward and bring more renewable energy projects to life, as we have more wind turbines, they stand aloft on towers that were actually constructed from steel here in the province of Ontario. We have the same motivation. That's why, working with the sector, we'll be able to move forward and to improve the domestic content in renewable energy projects as we move forward to more installation here in the province of Ontario. That's why I encourage the support of the honourable member and his party for Bill 150.

1050

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier suggested that new homes under \$400,000 will receive an exemption from his government's HST. That simply is not correct and the Premier knows it. In fact, families buying new homes under \$400,000 will be hit with a 2% tax. That's \$7,000 more on a \$350,000 new home. Why won't the Premier admit that he's slapping a 2% tax on moderately priced new homes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: With the new homeowner credit, it will be a complete break-even for persons buying homes under \$400,000.

As the Premier said in his previous answer, we have taken some steps that we realize are challenging, but they are the right steps. The reason we are cutting personal taxes is to help Ontarians move through these challenging times and have more disposable income available to them to buy homes, to buy cars, to buy the kinds of goods and services that will help get this economy moving again. It is about creating those long-term jobs, providing more jobs for our people to ensure that this economy gets back to a level of growth that will support those vital public services—public health care and public education—and yes, have the ability to help the most vulnerable in our society. That's what this budget's about, that's what it's going to deliver and that's why

we're confident that we have a bright future once we get through these very challenging times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Because he knows only full well that in order for those houses to cost the same amount, there has to be a price reduction by the builders themselves.

It's expensive to own a home in Ontario, especially in the GTA and Ottawa. The recession has devastated people's savings and has them worried about their own jobs. When people are already less able to afford a new home, what does this Premier do? He slaps a tax on new home purchases. Why is the Premier hiking taxes on new homes? Because you are.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member knows full well that that 2% has always been there. He knows that full well, and he also knows that that \$400,000 covers 75% of new home sales in Ontario. He also knows this does not apply to resale homes, which are the vast majority. He also knows that when you move that sliding scale up to \$500,000, an even bigger proportion of new homes is covered here and across Ontario.

We are taking these challenging moves to ensure that Ontario gets back to a level of growth that will allow us to make investments in public health care and public education. Unlike his party, which has advocated and continues, apparently, to advocate an increase in the provincial sales tax, we have taken a broad approach that lowers taxes for 93% of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The Minister of Finance continues to make things up. The McGuinty government's new tax on new homes is bad news for a sector that supports 360,000 direct jobs in the GTA alone. Last month, Ontario lost 28,000 construction jobs.

When families consider buying a new home, they're going to see a \$7,000 tax on a \$350,000 home, and a \$40,000 tax on a \$500,000 home. How is hiking taxes on new homes going to help Ontario families and our construction sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Those numbers are absolutely incorrect and don't take into account the new home sales tax credit.

You know, I don't make those things up. Here's the letter signed by Howard Hampton. He's sitting right over there.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: What does it say?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It says—and let me read this to you: "The federal government has given the McGuinty government a revenue-neutral" approach plus "\$2 billion in revenue through to Ontario.... If Mr. McGuinty takes action now and follows his own advice, the PST can fill the 1% tax room vacated by the GST."

They called very clearly, and very recently, since the last election, to raise the provincial sales tax. You were very wrong about that. I hope the member opposite won't continue to vote against the low-income tax cuts, and I

hope he won't vote against the \$5.2 billion in our poverty agenda to help the most vulnerable in Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Premier. In addition to seniors, your tax grab is going to hit another group of Ontarians who can't afford it—some of the over 300,000 people who have lost their jobs in the McQuinty Ontario. The newspapers they need for want ads will be up 8%. The Internet service they need to look for a job online will increase 8%. Seminars and conferences on new careers—same thing. Even the stamps to mail their applications will be going up 8%. Premier, do you think it's fair to hit these people who are already struggling with these increased taxes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the member opposite wants to ignore a number of facts. He wants to ignore the fact that we have an 18% cut in small business taxes, which is designed specifically to hire more people. He wants to avoid talking about the corporate tax cut which, the day before the budget, he supported and now, the day after, he's voting against. We're taking the general commercial rate from 14% to 10% and the manufacturing and processing rate from 12% to 10%. By the way, that's manufacturers, farmers and processors. And he's ignoring the \$10.6-billion personal tax cut.

This budget package, as has been indicated by a range of organizations and newspapers—the Toronto Star, the National Post and the Globe and Mail have all talked about the benefit of this budget in creating jobs today, more than 300,000 in infrastructure jobs—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would point out that the 300,000 the Minister of Finance wants to talk about, in fact, are 300,000 people who have lost their jobs who will not benefit from one of those items that the minister across the aisle would talk about.

The people of Ontario are struggling to find jobs so they can make their mortgage payments and put food on their table. Under Premier McGuinty's tax grab, if they are lucky enough to actually get a job interview, they're going to be hit with even more taxes: 8% more for a haircut and dry cleaning and—get ready—8% more for gas to get there, 8% more for a taxi or a train if they need to go there.

Premier, will you admit that this is the wrong time and that your tax grab is penalizing the very people who need your help the most in this recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our package is a tax cut; 93% of Ontarians will pay lower taxes. In the first four years, the government of Ontario will seek 2.6 billion fewer dollars. The \$4.3 billion from the federal government has enabled us to move on these broad tax measures.

I would remind the member opposite that, as you stand up today and criticize us, there's a new hospital being built in your riding. Mr. Hudak, the fellow who sits right

in front of you, said we shouldn't be spending that kind of money on infrastructure. We disagree with that. We've put together a tax package that will create jobs, assist this economy through the challenging times and, unlike the member and his party, we want to build new hospitals, we want to build new schools and make those investments in infrastructure and jobs that are essential to get this province through difficult times.

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Premier. Parents are concerned about the Ministry of Education school finder website. The website institutionalizes school shopping in Ontario, a practice that is very prevalent in the United States. It encourages school discrimination based on ethnicity and income, and it's absolutely appalling.

Minister Wynne said she wants to adjust the website based on parental concerns, but the Premier says there is nothing wrong with posting information on family income and immigration. Who, exactly, is in charge of the education file for this government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The answer is that the Premier and I agree completely that the information that's on the website is important. We have had very positive feedback from parents who want this information, particularly from newcomer parents who are looking for information about local schools.

The reality is the website is staying up. The information is staying on the website. We have removed the comparison engine to have a broader conversation with stakeholders, parents, members of the community. We will have that conversation, and we will continue to provide the information that community members and parents are looking for.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The government should not be in the business of promoting school-shopping, and that's what this website does. New Democrats find the collection and distribution of data related to income, immigration levels and special education students at schools reprehensible. Yesterday, Minister Wynne seemed to be listening and seemed prepared to make changes, but the Premier doesn't agree with the minister and he sees nothing wrong with leaving the website as is. We get no positive feedback from this; I don't know where you are getting your information, Minister.

Will you change the online information or will you maintain this detestable website as it is?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite obviously doesn't trust parents with information. We do trust parents with information. The fact is that there is information available on the C.D. Howe Institute website and on the Fraser Institute website. Those are organiz-

ations that rank schools. They rank schools; that's not what we're doing.

The member opposite has been a school trustee. He knows full well that people make decisions based on rumour, based on innuendo. What we're trying to do is provide accurate, reliable information for people who are looking for it. That's what we will continue to do because we actually trust the ability of people in the public, of parents, to make decisions and to use the information in a responsible way.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, yesterday you introduced Bill 167, the proposed Toxics Reduction Act.

The environmental benefits of this initiative are clear. Toxic substances are used in nearly all industrial and production activities and are found in the products that we use. I know that residents in my community have strong concerns about the presence of toxins in their everyday lives. They worry about toxins and carcinogens present in our environment and the impacts that they may have on our health, the health of our families and our environment. Ontarians have indicated that reducing toxins should be a government priority, and in fact over 90% of Ontarians put toxic substances on par with climate change as a key environmental issue.

Beyond the clear environmental and health benefits, we all know that the way ahead for our province lies in the development of the green economy. In Ontario, this requires business and industry to develop new practices in the context of environmental priorities. How does toxin reduction planning support our transformation to the green economy? How would our government support business and industry in making this—

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all compliment and congratulate this member for taking a leadership role on this issue. He's been very concerned about this ever since he's gotten here.

Our toxics reduction strategy will position our industries to compete and succeed in the emerging green economy. Through the proper planning, industries will find solutions to reduce toxics, the green chemistry solutions that we're all looking for.

From the experience of other jurisdictions, they have found that it increases their competitive advantage, and they will find new business opportunities through the commercialization of research, promoting new technologies and exploring safer alternatives. In addition to that, we will invest \$24 million to help Ontario industries comply with the new rules and regulations, transform their processes, find green chemistry alternatives and reduce the use of toxics in their operations. That's to the benefit not only of business but of all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. Yesterday in this House, you spoke of this strategy resulting in real reductions in toxics use.

However, I understand that implementing these plans is a voluntary process. I heard concerns that making implementation voluntary would mean that businesses wouldn't actually reduce their toxics use. Our goal should be to ensure that there is a reduction in the use of toxins to protect the health of our communities and the environment and that our businesses are leading the way with green chemistry solutions that will be the future of the new green economy.

How can we be assured that these plans will be substantive? What evidence do you have to show that toxics reduction planning will lead to implementation and real reduction in toxics use?

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is a major issue. The experience in other jurisdictions such as Massachusetts and New Jersey has clearly shown that mandatory planning and voluntary implementation result in real reductions in toxics use. As businesses develop plans, they will identify cost savings and see opportunities to implement the new technologies. It is also consistent with the advice that we received from our own expert panel as well as the position taken by Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence Canada.

Mandatory reporting and planning requirements, combined with the voluntary implementation of toxics reduction plans, is a proven approach in other jurisdictions. We feel that it is the right way to go in Ontario as well, to make sure that less toxics are used in manufacturing processes, which is better for all of us.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Why is the Minister of Health forcing the local health integration networks to integrate with the Ontario Liberal Party?

Hon. David Caplan: That's a nonsense question. In fact, on our local health integration networks, we have individuals who have agreed to serve—members of local communities—to make important health care decisions affecting local communities.

I can assure you that members of the legislative Standing Committee on Government Agencies have the opportunity to call members forward who are seeking appointment to these boards, to question their qualifications. In fact, we have developed a skills-based matrix to outline the various skills of a well-rounded board.

The member's assertion and the premise of his question are simply nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday, the Waterloo Wellington LHIN announced hospital funding on letterhead also featuring the four liberal MPPs of our area, yet the opposition MPPs were deliberately excluded, even though some of the hospitals to receive the funding are in our

ridings. For example, the Groves Memorial Community Hospital is located in my riding, yet the member for Perth–Wellington announced the funding on a joint press release with the LHIN.

This means the government is politicizing our LHIN, making it a partisan arm of the Ontario Liberal Party to try to give the local Liberal MPPs a boost. It shows profound disrespect to the voters of Kitchener–Waterloo, Cambridge and Wellington–Halton Hills, who elected Conservative MPPs.

I'm concerned that people are going to start thinking that the LHIN acronym actually stands for Liberal Hacks In the News. Why is the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask that you withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I withdraw. Why is the minister forcing our LHIN to become partisan and prop up the local Liberal MPPs?

Hon. David Caplan: I did tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. If something was done inadvertently, I'm sure that the member—we will raise these issues with the leadership, with the chair and the CEO at the local health integration network in Waterloo Wellington.

I can tell you that I know from personal experience that the chair and CEO have brought the member and other members of all political parties into their confidence as they move forward on issues related to investment and issues related to work that is going on in the LHIN. I know this for a fact. I know the member has participated in these briefings and in these meetings. I know that the chair has shared much of this information related to the operation of the LHIN with all members of the Legislature, per the instructions that this government has set out.

I know that it was a different way of operating under a previous government, but this government believes in accountability and transparency and allowing all members to participate fully in the operation—

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

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Minister of Health has repeatedly stated that this government is committed to providing quality home care and improving working conditions for the people who provide it.

Can he explain why a personal support worker will earn \$84 after working a 10-hour day? And more importantly, can he explain how the government plans to provide quality home care when the people who provide it are often left struggling below the poverty line?

Hon. David Caplan: I would have hoped that the member would have taken the opportunity to welcome and thank personal support workers for coming here to Queen's Park today. I can tell you how much I appreciate the work that they do, the lives that they change, the communities that they support and the care that they

provide. These are individuals who do tremendous work. That's why we have made an incredible investment in home care and in personal support workers.

I can tell you that one of the first things I had the opportunity to do was to increase—over 870 new and additional positions of personal support workers in the province of Ontario. That's why our recent budget reaffirmed our commitment to add over 2,000 additional personal support workers to provide home care services in the province of Ontario.

1110

I know that all members of the Legislature would want to know, for example, some of the actions that we have taken, like a \$30-million stabilization fund to help to boost the wages—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister has argued that his government's system of cut-throat bidding for home care contracts will actually improve quality in the system. I find that hard to swallow. Instead, it is chasing out the professionals who go to the homes every day and provide the care. Why has the minister ignored his promise to set basic employment standards in the home care sector that will ensure that home care workers will be at least paid for the hours they spend travelling on the job every day?

Hon. David Caplan: I fundamentally disagree with the member opposite. Having feedback from clients about the quality of care they receive is important for us because whenever you can measure, you can improve. Having feedback from the workers about the kind of work that they do and the kind of care that they support is important because if you can measure it, you can improve it.

Since our government came to office, home care funding has increased by over \$573 million since 2003-04—investments opposed by the member opposite and her colleagues. That represents a 50% increase in funding for home care and for the supports to clients, where we now have over 200,000 additional Ontarians today receiving home care services better than they had before.

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: The member opposite says that's shameful; I think that that's a truly remarkable—

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

DIAMOND INDUSTRY

Mr. David Ramsay: I have a question today for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines regarding our diamond industry. I know that all members are aware that a couple of weeks ago, our diamond industry created quite a bit of excitement here in the Ontario Legislature as we witnessed history as we had placed two of the De Beers Victor mine diamonds into the Legislature's mace. With the reintroduction of the mace so well received across this province, it's a good example of the great relationship our government has with the De Beers Victor mine up in Timmins–James Bay.

Minister, I understand that at the prospectors and developers' convention and conference held in March, you participated in other diamond announcement. I ask you if you would tell the members of the House about that.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: My thanks to my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, one of the great advocates for mining, certainly in his riding and across the north. Indeed, he's right. This past month has been a great one for the diamond industry in Canada and specifically for the De Beers Victor mine in northern Ontario.

I'm happy to report that in early March, our government joined other stakeholders in establishing Canada's first diamond bourse here in Toronto. With the establishment of the bourse, Ontario has now joined the global stage as one of a few select countries that feature all of the elements of the diamond industry, from mining activities all the way to the retailing sector. This bourse, or diamond-creating centre, represents a very significant step in value-added activities across the province and throughout Canada. It will benefit North American retailers, wholesalers and buyers, who will be able to purchase or sell diamonds here rather than overseas.

With the establishment of the bourse and with other diamond announcements, I am confident that Canada and Ontario will become one of the world's—

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

Mr. David Ramsay: Thank you, Minister, for talking about Canada's first diamond bourse here in Ontario. This is great news for our province, as it will enhance Canada's position in the global diamond trade. Most importantly, it will add to our nation's reputation for the ethical production of the finest diamonds in the world.

Since the De Beers Victor mine opened last January, I know that our government has been working with De Beers and with representatives from the diamond sector to identify, develop and promote value-added diamond opportunities in this province. I understand that last summer you announced that our government had reached an agreement with De Beers Canada that would see 10% of the Victor mine's diamonds to be made available for value-added activities here in Ontario.

Minister, could you please inform the House about a very recent announcement that was made concerning De Beers value-added activities?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am certainly pleased to report that this past Monday, Minister Bartolucci and I had the honour of announcing that Crossworks Manufacturing Ltd. will be opening Ontario's first diamond cutting and polishing facility in the greater Sudbury area, creating over 50 jobs, which is tremendous news. This is fantastic news as Ontarians can look forward to purchasing diamonds that have been mined and now cut and polished in Ontario in the very near future. This facility, which is part of the agreement between our government and De Beers, will open later this year and it will cut and polish an estimated \$100 million of rough stones over the next two years—again, great news.

With this announcement, our government is not only following through on its commitment to create a value-added opportunity for mining diamonds in the province, but we're also placing greater Sudbury, already a great centre for mining excellence in the province, on the global diamond map, creating new employment opportunities in the process.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Ontario's nuclear industry employs over 30,000 women and men. Most of these jobs are dependant upon the success of one company headquartered in Mississauga. Over 100 other businesses supply this company with parts and services, and they are spread throughout the province of Ontario. Recently, you said that it was a crappy decision on the part of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to purchase 22 Mercedes-Benz for a prize giveaway and you realized that was not supporting a domestic industry that provided thousands and thousands of jobs.

Do you think that buying French nuclear reactors at a cost of \$26 billion of Ontario's money—sending that overseas and killing an Ontario industry during a recession—would amount to a crappy decision as well, Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that there's quite a bit in the honourable member's question that might live up to his regularized use of that word. The point is that when go to purchase two new nuclear reactors, we do see the stakes as somewhat different than when we're purchasing some automobiles. I think that at hand here is the sheer necessity of making sure that associated with the purchase of any nuclear—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: We think it's very important, as we seek to acquire two new nuclear power plants in the province of Ontario—two new reactors—that we do so with a view towards their long-term reliability, to the costs associated with them and to the economic impacts that will accrue to the province of Ontario. That's exactly what our process is leaning toward. I don't know why the honourable member —

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, the Premier compared nuclear reactors to bottles of wine. I'm sure that you have had time to review the report by McKinsey and Co. commissioned by your own government. It is very clear on three points, the most important being that the only difference between the three technologies and that of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. was that their bid had a greater economic benefit to the province. Again, given the thousands of high-tech jobs at stake and the billions in Ontario GDP that will be gone because of a loss of export sales, are you going to stand up and support Ontario or send \$26 billion to France and the United

States, thereby sending 30,000 jobs, 100 companies and a vital Canadian industry down your crapper?

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a crappy decision. I withdraw.

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

Hon. George Smitherman: There is nothing that the honourable member presents as fact in the form of his question that I wish to corroborate. It is mischief-making, it is misinformed and it is irresponsible. We have a very fair process ongoing by which three companies were given the opportunity to tell us why we should build their product here, why we should take advantage of it. Those include reliability and price, and they most certainly give opportunity, with 20% of the rating focused on the economic opportunities associated with it. Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. certainly has an opportunity to make a strong case as to the economic impacts associated with their technology, but there is more to the purchase than that. We will continue to review this most important purchase on the basis of a wide variety of things, including price and reliability.

ATTAWAPISKAT FIRST NATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. You will know that the Department of Indian Affairs recently demolished the J.R. Nakogee school in Attawapiskat. In doing so, they've exposed what is a large diesel spill that has been there for some time, not only underneath the J.R. Nakogee school, but in the surrounding areas. Now what you have is a school that has been demolished, you have the ground that has been exposed and you have diesel fumes that are emanating throughout the community, into the school and into community homes. The community has asked you to send in inspectors from the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour in order to assess the situation because they have no confidence in the federal government's ability to do so.

These are Ontario citizens. Are you prepared to take your responsibility as Premier and protect the health and safety of these citizens?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services can speak to this.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. Obviously, as he knows, Emergency Management Ontario is monitoring the situation and will provide advice and assistance to both the community and INAC as required. He also points out a very important point, that point being that the federal government has jurisdiction with regard to that.

It's my understanding that recent testing completed by Health Canada indicates that there are no significant risks

to the health and safety of the residents. But let me reinforce that Emergency Management Ontario is monitoring the situation and, certainly, if called upon through INAC, will be more than happy to go in there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Here's the problem: Those health officials at the federal department, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, are the same officials who said it was okay to bathe your children in Kashechewan in E. coli. So they have no confidence when it comes to those officials. That's why the chief and council, the local education authority and Mushkegowuk council are asking you to do what you did in the case of Kashechewan, and that is to use provincial ministry officials to go in and do the inspection to make sure that these people are in a situation that doesn't deteriorate their health conditions. If it was good enough for this assembly to take the diamonds of Attawapiskat and put them on the mace here in this Legislature, why is it not good enough for us to ensure the safety of these citizens?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce that the government of Ontario is doing their job. We will continue to do our job. Emergency Management Ontario will continue to ensure that they have a presence there. We will offer the help that the community and the federal government want if they ask for it.

The community knows that we have said that if the community would like the province to provide expertise to help verify the situation in the community, they can request our assistance through the federal government, through INAC, and we will assess the request and respond as expeditiously as possible. But let me reinforce that Emergency Management Ontario, our Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and his ministry—

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

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. GO service to the city of Peterborough has long been an issue in my riding, and I constantly hear from constituents on this matter. They're asking, "When will it arrive?" I've been asking the same thing and have met with the Minister of Transportation a number of times about GO to Peterborough.

Many of my constituents travel outside of Peterborough to work, commuting to Oshawa, Whitby-Ajax and even as far as Toronto. There are students attending Trent University and Fleming College who moved here from all over the GTA and return to their families on weekends, for the summer and throughout the holidays. I've heard from these individuals about the concerns of congestion on our roads and how this government can help ease the gridlock they see.

I was pleased to hear that this government listened to the constituents of Peterborough, and our efforts were recognized. On Friday, April 3, I was able to announce the GO service bus to Peterborough. I'm hoping the

Minister of Transportation can share with this House the exact details and what this initiative will mean to the good residents of Peterborough.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to thank the member for his question. He has been a tireless advocate on this specific issue. I have indeed met with him on a number of occasions, and I'm pleased he was able to deliver for his community.

Peterborough area commuters will benefit from GO bus service as the province expands the GO Transit service area to bring additional and better transit service to more individuals. The new GO bus will travel to and from the current GO station in Oshawa, allowing those who work in Oshawa to leave their cars at home, and, for those who work beyond Oshawa, to easily connect with the Lakeshore East GO rail service.

GO is currently developing an implementation option—several options, in fact—for bus service to Peterborough, and plans to introduce bus service by the fall of 2009. GO Transit is also engaging in an environmental assessment to extend rail service from Oshawa to Bowmanville. This will bring the bus-rail connection even closer to Highway 115, making it more convenient for those communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: First the hospital, and now GO bus. Ontario's transit planning and implementation efforts are really coming together, and this government seems to be working hard to include Peterborough in these plans.

Peterborough is not the only area to benefit from the GO Transit announcement last week. While GO bus service to Peterborough is a provincial initiative, I understand that it was announced on Friday that GO Transit riders across the GTA and surrounding areas will benefit from an additional \$213 million in service improvements as part of the \$500-million investment between the government of Ontario and the government of Canada. The projects will reduce wait times for commuters and get more cars off the road.

These announcements show how Ontario is working to build a regional transit network with more transit projects to create jobs, stimulate the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.

I was hoping the Minister of Transportation would shed some more light for this House on more—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Friday's announcement built upon the \$250 million in federal and provincial funding previously announced by the Premier and Prime Minister for GO Transit expansion, parking facilities across the greater Toronto area and the Hamilton Junction rail-to-rail grade separation project, bringing the total commitment to \$500 million. In addition to maintenance activities across the system, GO will refurbish locomotives, purchase new two-level passenger rail coaches, install snowmelt systems and build bicycle shelters. This announcement means Burlington GO station will see a new pedestrian bridge, Streetsville will see bus storage expansion,

Exhibition station will see pedestrian tunnel extension, and Richmond Hill Centre bus terminal will see a third platform and two new shelters. We will continue to make public transit a priority for everyone—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yesterday, the Premier was given an opportunity to be accountable to the hard-working taxpayers in the province of Ontario by calling in the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the Smart Systems for Health Agency, an agency which, of course, was quietly abolished after spending \$647 million of taxpayer money. Well, yesterday, the Premier said no to accountability to taxpayers. Today, he has an opportunity to say yes. Will the Premier support our party's opposition day motion and our accountability amendment to the budget to be debated this afternoon and say, "Yes, I am accountable to the taxpayers of this province"?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: Of course all members are accountable, not only to this Legislature but to Ontarians.

I know that the member would want to tell the full story. The Auditor General, along with his counterparts right across the country, is undertaking a thorough audit of eHealth, following up on the investments of Canada Health Infoway. I know that the member knows this, but she somehow tries to weave a tale where these things are not happening, including the cost-effectiveness and the approach to procurement. I'm looking forward to learning about this audit and incorporating it into our plans and processes.

In fact, it was my predecessor who undertook an operational review. It did not take an auditor or an opposition member or anybody else but his own initiative—an operational review of the Smart Systems for Health Agency. What they found, as the member did disclose yesterday, is that that agency was set up with an incorrect roadmap by the previous—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very disappointed that the Premier chose not to answer the question regarding whether or not he is prepared to be accountable, transparent and honest with the taxpayers in the province of Ontario, because we do know that this government has received warnings from the Auditor General about slush fund abuse and year-end spending sprees. In fact, its knuckles were rapped just before the 2007 election and a minister was forced to resign when the AG revealed that this government gave the Ontario Cricket Association a million dollars when they asked for \$150,000 and gave a host of other groups thousands and thousands of dollars, again, without anybody submitting applications, and with no criteria or any transparency.

So I ask you again, Premier: Have you learned your lesson or will you continue to deceive the people in this province—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: The member opposite simply doesn't get it. Ontario cannot afford not to proceed. Electronic health will reduce hospital stays. It will avoid duplication and unnecessary testing, resulting in more appropriate drug utilization and other efficiencies.

This member really needs to do her homework. We have a huge challenge ahead of us, and we will ensure that the dollars are spent wisely. But make no doubt, anyone here, that we need to invest in change, including projects, people, and engaging contractors, vendors, partners and employees.

Listen, we're competing with our American neighbours. President Obama plans to spend \$50 billion over the next five years to get electronic health records for every American. That massive investment dwarfs what we're doing in Ontario, but I can assure members of this House that Ontario has the opportunity to beat the United States to that finish line—

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

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week, we celebrated community living in this Legislature. A whole bunch of flowery speeches were made, but they were much ado about nothing. If this government was really honest about providing barrier-free community living, why are people living on ODSP subjected to regulations that are tantamount to human rights infringements?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very proud to stand here as the Minister of Community and Social Services with all the good investment that we have done in developmental disabilities. Last week we celebrated the closure of our institutions, and again this week we continue that celebration, because it was the right thing to do.

With regard to those on ODSP—most of those with developmental disabilities are receiving ODSP. We have been increasing ODSP since we were elected by 11%. I'm very proud of that.

We continue to review these programs to improve them. This government will continue to review every program in my ministry to make sure that we improve—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: In today's Toronto Star, Carol Goar has blown the whistle on this government's substandard treatment of our disabled community. They are forced to live in poverty and under a system that instils fear. Loans are considered to be income. Their measly stipend gets reduced if they have to borrow money. When recipients are summonsed to local ODSP offices, those with limited mobility must choose between transportation costs and a healthy meal. This government even

dictates how often they can move. If you are disabled in Ontario, you'd better hope your eyesight doesn't become worse or that you don't need a cane, because the minister won't pay. And the lucky ones who work part-time have their wages clawed back by this very same government.

My question: Why does this government choose to treat our disabled Ontarians with such disrespect?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I regret to say to the member of the opposite party that I don't think he's right. This government has always stood behind those with physical and psychological disabilities. We were very proud in 2005 to adopt the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and we are working on developing standards. The standards will be in place within the next months.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those who were involved in developing the standards. We're the first ones in Canada, and I'm very proud of it. So those with physical disabilities will be able to work, if it's possible for them. They will be able to enjoy all the activities—

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

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

The House recessed from 1134 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just a few years ago, this government established the Ministry of Health Promotion. On the website, under "Ontario's Action Plan for Healthy Eating and Active Living," we read: "An epidemic of overweight and obesity is threatening Ontario's health. I am alarmed to report that, in 2003, almost one out of every two adults in Ontario was overweight or obese." As well, the ministry goes on to state: "Many young people do not have the opportunity to be physically active.... More people do not have enough income to make healthy food choices."

Well, the McGuinty budget just made it harder for Ontarians to battle the bulge. The McGuinty sales tax will be charged on gym memberships. With all the other expenses this 13% McGuinty sales tax is creating, a gym membership may be the first thing that people would drop from their household budgets. Fitness equipment and bicycles will also be taxed at 13%, and Ontarians will have less money in their pockets to afford healthy and nutritional food options. Energy bars and energy drinks will cost more. People will reach for that can of pop or that chocolate bar.

This 13% McGuinty sales tax is a lose-lose situation, not only for those who want to drop a few pounds but also for the state of Ontario's health. According to the report the Minister of Health Promotion commissioned,

this government should be doing its utmost to provide incentives rather than taking them away.

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY

Mr. Paul Miller: All of us in this Legislature have been deeply saddened by the news this week of the devastating earthquake that hit the Abruzzo region of central Italy. The earthquake has killed hundreds, injured thousands and has destroyed countless homes, schools and businesses. Thousands of people are now living in tents and face uncertain futures as rescue efforts continue.

The shocking news of this earthquake has had an especially profound effect on the Hamilton area, which is home to the largest Italian community from the Abruzzo region. Many residents trace their roots back to that region. The community is mobilizing a relief effort and will be fundraising. Over the coming weeks, donations will be needed to support those in temporary shelters and to help rebuild many homes and structures. Fundraising plans are currently in development, and I will keep this Legislature updated on specific details as they unfold. I will post a link on my website, paulmillermp.ca, to information on ways to help out.

I encourage all my colleagues here and anyone listening to give what you can. This is a very serious situation. The people in my community are also devastated by it and have lost relatives in this earthquake. We hope that Ontario, like it always does, responds well to the situation.

HERB GRAY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: As the MPP for Carleton University, it is my distinct honour to congratulate the Right Honourable Herb Gray on being installed as the 10th chancellor of Carleton University. Former chancellors at Carleton have included Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn and astronaut Marc Garneau, to name a few.

Mr. Gray has a long and highly distinguished career of service to Canada, beginning when he was first elected to the House of Commons by the people of Windsor West in 1962. He was re-elected 12 times and served over that period as Minister of Industry, Minister of Trade, Minister of Commerce, Minister of Revenue, Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, president of the Treasury Board and Solicitor General. In 1997, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien named him Deputy Prime Minister, a post he held until his retirement in 2003. Upon his retirement, he was granted the title "Right Honourable" in recognition of his long and record-setting contribution to public life, and he is one of only a handful of Canadians to ever receive such an honour.

At the installation ceremony, Mr. Gray promised to help maintain and strengthen Carleton as a place of light, of liberty and of learning for all of its present and future students and faculty.

Through the president of Carleton University, Roseann O'Reilly Runte, the chair of the board of governors, Jacques Shore, and CUSA President Brittany Smyth, I congratulate the students, faculty and administration of Carleton University for choosing a Canadian icon to be the new chancellor.

GREEN ENERGY LEGISLATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: A constituent in my riding of Dufferin-Caledon has been denied the opportunity to speak before the standing committee for Bill 150, the Green Energy Act.

Barbara Ashbee is a resident of Amaranth and is today living with the side effects of having wind turbines surround her home. In fact, the closest turbine is measured just 450 metres from her house. Yet my constituent has been refused an opportunity to share her experiences during public hearings on Bill 150.

This is just what I was afraid was going to happen. I've spoken to this in this chamber on numerous occasions to voice my concerns and those of my constituents about the Green Energy Act. This act removes all oversight from municipalities. Now this government is not even going to listen to the concerns of someone who has first-hand experience. It's important to the legislative process that people like Barbara Ashbee, who live every day with the side effects of wind turbines, be allowed to speak and share their experiences.

Myself and members of the Progressive Conservative Party have been calling for public input from interest groups and communities that have wind farms. I had hoped that we could all work together to create legislation that meets the needs of communities across our province. It looks as though the government is once again leaving out the most important interest group when proposing new legislation: the people.

MARKHAM DISTRICT VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I recently attended an event hosted by the Markham District Veterans Association to celebrate its recent award by the Ontario Trillium Foundation in the amount of \$41,000, to be used to support repairs and renovations which will enhance the safety and comfort of its members at its community facility in Markham. I was pleased to meet with Paul Kearns, who is the association's current president, and Trevor Cleland, the immediate past president, along with my good friend and colleague Minister Michael Chan, to celebrate the well-deserved grant.

For the past 60 years, the Markham District Veterans Association, located at 7 Washington Street, near Main Street Markham, has been central to our community. The association exists to commemorate the friendships, associations and memories of the veterans of the armed forces of Canada, Her Majesty's armed forces, allied services and reserve forces.

In addition, the association helps with worthy community projects, a highlight of which is the annual town of Markham Remembrance Day ceremonies. The association hosts veteran and community events, including weekly billiard and euchre competitions, as well as a monthly dance and other social events.

I have the honour of being an associate member of the association, and I want to thank the government of Ontario and the Ontario Trillium Foundation for recognizing the ongoing work of the Markham District Veterans Association, whose facility will continue to be an important gathering place for residents of Oak Ridges–Markham for many years to come.

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the representatives of the ALS Society of Ontario for meeting with MPPs at Queen's Park on Tuesday, April 7. I know that members appreciate the society's efforts in raising awareness and keeping each of us informed.

ALS is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease; 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians have ALS, and close to half of that number are in Ontario. This is a fatal, rapidly progressing neuromuscular disease.

The ALS Society of Ontario is committed to providing the necessary support, services and equipment to people with ALS, as well as research towards a cure. The reasonable requests that were addressed to me were the diagnosis of patients as being palliative for their care, provided under the CCAC, as well as changes to the assistive devices program.

In my riding of Durham, the Walk for ALS takes place on June 27 at the Port Perry Fairgrounds. Heather Moore is the chair of the Port Perry walk. It's one of 23 taking place across the province.

I would urge members to support the ALS Society in their local campaigns and in their advocacy and awareness initiatives at Queen's Park. I personally thank Maureen Sheahan, the president and CEO, and Tim and Beth Robertson. Tim has ALS, and his wife, Beth, is a supportive, caring person. I thank them for providing us with the information, and I do support their cause.

TIBETAN CANADIANS

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Tashi Delek, Speaker. I rise today to recognize an important community in my riding. The Tibetan community has enriched the lives of all residents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore with their rich culture and heritage.

1510

This past Saturday, my family and I had the privilege of attending the Tibetan community's thanksgiving celebration at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre. This celebration marks the 50 years of exile of the Tibetan people and was an opportunity to thank the government and people in Canada and India.

During this event that was attended by members of all political parties with representation from different levels

of government, the Tibetan community expressed their gratitude to the leaders and citizens who have provided invaluable support and assistance. But in reality, it is us who should be saying thank you to the Tibetan community. Canada is a nation founded on the principle of multiculturalism, and right here in Ontario, we understand the importance of helping new immigrants maintain their culture while becoming active members in Canadian society.

The Tibetan community in Etobicoke–Lakeshore have this Canadian value at heart and have undertaken the development of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre. The facility provides a vast array of cultural and recreational services, and I am very pleased that an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant helped to make this facility become more accessible.

It is often said that Canada's greatest strength is its diversity. In Etobicoke–Lakeshore we are stronger, thanks to the efforts of the Tibetan community.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The province of Ontario has set an example for the rest of the country to follow. We witnessed last week the closure of the final three institutions for people who have intellectual disabilities. We celebrated this success amongst our constituents at Community Living London. Our government was recognized for taking the initiative and moving forward towards more effective methods of living. Minister Bentley, Minister Matthews and I were there to show our commitment to make Ontario an inclusive society for every citizen.

The move to close these institutions has been a long time in the making. It's important to say that the first institution was built 160 years ago. Ontarians have been working hard to find an alternative to it for over 60 years. Many families began to understand that community-based living would be the best method to encourage healthy development.

Over 12,000 people are served by community living homes across the province of Ontario, and they are proving to be the better alternative. I would like to offer my congratulations to the families who initiated this project, and a special acclaim to those who ensured that every centre would be closed here in Ontario.

Thank you to all the people who work across the province to support people with intellectual disabilities. A great thanks especially to Michelle Palmer, the director of Community Living London, for the great job she's doing on behalf of our people in the city of London.

RURAL SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to inform the House that on Monday, April 6, the annual Premier's summit on agri-food was held. It was a wonderful occasion, and today, I'm very pleased to inform the House of another positive development for rural Ontario: the return of the popular rural summer jobs program.

The program provides a \$2-per-hour wage reimbursement to eligible employers that create summer jobs for students between the ages of 14 and 24, and up to age 29 if the student has a disability. Last year, 106 businesses in Huron–Bruce participated in the program. That was the highest uptake of the program in the province of Ontario. This year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is committed to providing up to \$3 million to help rural employers create student employment opportunities. Applications from employers can be submitted until April 17, and employers can benefit from the program for up to 16 weeks.

The global economic downturn has had a severe effect on student summer jobs, and the rural summer jobs service program will go a long way in helping our students meet their financial needs, certainly, those who are going on for post-secondary education. This is more good news for the riding of Huron–Bruce.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 139, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in relation to temporary help agencies and certain other matters / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire et certaines autres questions.

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.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to talk about the Ministry of Education's equity and inclusive education strategy called Realizing the Promise of Diversity. I'm very pleased to do this because I believe that this strategy will make a huge difference to students, to parents, to teachers, to administrators, to support staff and to school communities all over Ontario.

As I do this, I want to acknowledge a few people who have been absolutely critical to the development of this strategy, and those are, first of all, Dr. Avis Glaze and Dr. Karen Mock, who led the group. There were many, many people from different backgrounds who were part of putting this strategy together. Within the Ministry of Education, I want to acknowledge the work of Ruth Flynn, who worked so hard to put this strategy together.

As a member of the community who 20 years ago was working on one of my first education initiatives at the Toronto Board of Education at that time, education against homophobia, it is a real privilege to be able to introduce this strategy today.

All students deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. That's why our government has taken steps over the past five years to raise student achievement. We have made significant investments and introduced many initiatives in the publicly funded education system to help more students succeed.

I'm proud of the progress that we've made to date. More elementary students are succeeding on province-wide reading, writing and math tests, and more high school students are graduating. But there is more work to be done.

Nous voulons éliminer tous les obstacles à la réussite des élèves, notamment la discrimination, la faible confiance en soi et le manque de respect.

Research tells us, and so do our hearts, that students who feel welcome and accepted in their schools are more likely to excel academically. Unfortunately, some students still face homophobia, racism, sexism and all the other types of "isms" that are symbols of intolerance in our schools. So we are taking action.

Earlier this week, we launched our equity and inclusive education strategy. We envision an inclusive education system in Ontario in which all students, parents and other members of the school community are welcomed and respected.

We're not talking about tolerance. We're talking about going way beyond tolerance. We want every student to be supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning. Our strategy will help us move closer to achieving that vision.

We are giving our school boards and schools the support they need to better address barriers related to discrimination. I'm confident that this will have a direct impact on student achievement. Highlights of the strategy include the following initiatives:

—The ministry will release guidelines to assist boards in the development, implementation and monitoring of equity and inclusive education policies.

—The ministry will include equity and inclusive education principles in all curriculum and assessment policy documents, learning resources and leadership initiatives.

—The ministry will develop new courses in gender studies and equity to be available for schools to offer in September 2011.

—School boards will establish or update equity and inclusive education policies and actively engage students,

staff, parents and their broader communities in this activity.

—Schools will develop improvement plans that are aligned with Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy.

These actions build on the great work already under way in schools and boards and through community groups to embrace diversity across our province. I want to thank them for providing valuable feedback during the consultation process as we build this province-wide strategy. We will now move forward together towards meeting the needs of our diverse student population.

I'm certain this strategy will go a long way in helping students build the focus, determination and self-esteem they need to succeed in the classroom. I've been told by teachers, support staff and students that just by getting that permission, getting that support from the ministry as a first step, they will be able to develop programs and initiatives that they have been wanting to do in their schools, and to support ones that are already in place. This will also have a long-term positive impact on our province.

1520

L'une des plus grandes forces de l'Ontario, c'est la diversité. Il y a plus de 200 langues parlées comme langue maternelle dans notre province. Les gens qui s'identifient comme gens de couleur représentent un quart de la population de l'Ontario.

Learning to welcome, accept and respect people's differences and to work together to find common ground will not be forgotten after graduation. These are lessons that will last a lifetime.

We are helping today's students develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable and caring citizens who can contribute to both a strong economy and a cohesive society. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed. Every Ontarian deserves to live in a strong community and have a bright future. Our equity and inclusive education strategy will help to realize the promise of diversity. Our strategy will help Ontario prosper.

I want to just close by paraphrasing the Honourable Jean Augustine, who attended our launch yesterday. She is, as you know, Ontario's Fairness Commissioner, but she is a long-time fighter for equity in this province. I am paraphrasing, and she said along these lines, of this strategy: "Today, we aren't where we should be, we aren't where we ought to be, we aren't where we're going to be, but today, we aren't where we were."

Thank you very much.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to stand down the opposition's response, as Mrs. Witmer is not here just at the moment—she is on her way—and allow the NDP to proceed.

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

The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I welcome the statement. Issues of diversity, equity and inclusivity are of a particular priority for New Democrats. When a government

puts together a strategy for equity and inclusive education, we say, "Okay, good. God bless." We hope it will do whatever good the minister says it will do, because when I look at all of the things that happen in our society and in our school system, I worry.

Will this strategy deal with some of the issues? I don't know. Discrimination has existed against gays, lesbians and bisexuals for a long, long time. Is it getting better? I think it is. Will we eliminate discrimination against them? I don't know. But whatever strategy we can propose that helps is a good one.

Racism is a particular plague and it continues to hurt us all of the time. I'm going to make mention of some issues that persist today and that are worrisome.

Sexism is still an issue, of course, and other issues.

But when I look at some of the people who are not getting the attention they deserve, like special education, which we were dealing with in committee today, and I look at how many young people languish, either in the regular classroom without the support, or because they are not getting the Identification, Placement and Review Committee support that they desperately need, or they are not getting the ongoing support that allows people, parents and others, to monitor whether or not some of those individual plans that should be done are indeed helping those kids, I just say to myself, "I just don't know." So I worry for special-education kids.

I worry about the English-as-a-second-language program and students who desperately need English as a second language and are not getting it. That's an issue of diversity; it's an issue of equity. How many schools have so many immigrant kids who don't have a Latin background to be able to understand our language and therefore languish in classrooms without ESL support? How many of those students are not getting ESL support? In the north end there are complete schools without any support. The government says, of course, they're getting ESL, but in many boards and in many schools there is no ESL.

I think about children's mental health services that are woefully uncoordinated and wholly inadequate.

I think of racial inequities that are on the rise in a faltering economy. Members of racialized communities are bracing for the worst. The United Way of Greater Toronto reports that racialized communities are two to three times more likely to be poor. The urban-suburban schools report from People for Education reminds us that children from racialized communities still experience high dropout rates. The Roots of Youth Violence report found that "racism is becoming a more serious and entrenched problem because Ontario is not dealing with it."

It's shameful that the School Community Safety Advisory Panel report, which Julian Falconer was part of, is not reflected at all in this strategy today. Yet that report has a depth and breadth of research and recommendations that are invaluable, and a number of strong recommendations on equity education. That panel proposed that the Ministry of Education create a specific

portfolio, entitled the provincial safety and equity officer, to be the repository for receiving reports concerning serious issues of youth safety in our schools and equity concerns. There's no reference to the anti-racist secretariat to be able to deal with issues in a comprehensive way across the province.

Today, when I asked the Minister of Education about the issue of the school finder website that the government has put up, which institutionalizes school shopping in Ontario, a practice that is all over the US, and encourages discrimination based on ethnicity and income, which is detestable and appalling, I found that the minister and the Premier think it's okay and that parents really want it, whereas I point out that it's highly discriminatory.

I say these things, and the minister has a strategy today that deals with issues of equity and discrimination. Okay. I hope that parts of this will work some day, and as we go, maybe she'll report on a regular basis how this is working, so that maybe I'll have something positive to say. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to stand, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, to respond to the government's equity and inclusive education strategy. There has never been a time when education was more important to the future of our province than it is today. It's obvious that we need to prepare our students by teaching them and providing them with the knowledge and skills they're going to need to be successful in the 21st century. We need to ensure that all of Ontario's children, no matter what their background or what advantages they have or which challenges they face or where they come from or where they live—it's just very important to ensure that they all have the same educational opportunities.

As a former secondary school teacher, board chair and Minister of Education, I think I understand first-hand some of the challenges that our students and teachers face today. These challenges are highlighted by the government's equity and inclusive education strategy. Ontario's public education system has many strengths, but we all know there are significant areas where we can improve. The equity and inclusive education strategy describes some areas where improvements can certainly be made.

I would encourage the government to seriously and vigorously tackle the achievement gaps too often found with recent immigrants, children from low-income families, aboriginal students, boys and students with special needs. I believe these gaps can be bridged. I believe our province can build on its strengths with all our educational partners. Our caucus is ready to help foster an education system that has the flexibility to meet the individual needs and that is focused on achieving the best outcomes for all students, including those who are new to our province or who may be marginalized.

I know that all of us in this House want the same thing; that is, the best we can possibly provide for every student in our classrooms. All of us, whether we're stu-

dents, parents or teachers, need to be confident that our schools provide a safe, secure and respectful environment for students and teachers to learn, work and play. Teachers cannot teach and students cannot learn if they are in fear for their safety or feel oppressed.

1530

As a former teacher and as a parent, I take very seriously the safety of everyone in the school community. That's why in 2000 our government introduced the Safe Schools Act, which included the Ontario schools code of conduct. Through this legislation we aimed to create a safer school environment throughout the province to ensure that no student was bullied, threatened or intimidated. The code states that all members of the school community should be treated with respect and dignity, and I certainly urge the government to continue to take steps in partnership to make Ontario schools even safer learning and teaching environments. We need to understand that some of our students will always need assistance to help them succeed and achieve their potential. Key to student success is the need for early identification of students who are at risk and the development of appropriate support programs.

That's why, in 2002, our government funded several initiatives to help students improve their skills, including the language grant for funding English as a second language for students who were recent immigrants. We also provided help to Canadian-born students who did not have adequate knowledge of English, usually because English was not spoken at home. We also introduced the student-focused funding model because we were concerned about the social needs of students in this province.

Our government made progress in creating an educational system that was more equitable and responsive to student needs and more accountable to parents. I'm confident that school boards and schools will continue to develop programs for all of the students in our province who are at risk as they have always done. Through Ontario's education partners, this province can rise—and I know it will—to the challenge of realizing the promise of diversity. It will take time, hard work, focus and determination, but it can be done and I want to indicate to you that I am prepared to help, as are my colleagues.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition was gathered at the Orangeville home show this past weekend.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in 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” families.

I support this petition and I’m pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Sarah.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has undertaken to spend \$32.5 billion on infrastructure such as mass transportation over the next two years; and

“Whereas this spending is intended to sustain and create jobs and pump much-needed financial capital into the Ontario economy; and

“Whereas it is important that goods and services used to facilitate this infrastructure initiative be made in Ontario; and

“Whereas the opposition parties believe that this made-in-Ontario approach should only apply to 50% of the goods and services used to upgrade Ontario’s infrastructure; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has worked diligently to ensure that 82% of all monies committed to infrastructure projects across Ontario go to Ontario-based companies,

“We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for supporting Ontario-based industries during these challenging economic times.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature myself.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge which reads:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government’s cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

“Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

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

“(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

“(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital.”

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

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition here in regard to the Clarkson airshed and the power plant proposed for the area. It 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 study found that emissions of acrolein and acrylonitrile exceeded provincial limits; 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 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 Mark.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to see you in the chair this afternoon.

I have a number of petitions from my constituents in the riding of Durham. Jim Park is in technical and regulatory affairs—and OOIDA, which is the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, a number of whom were here in the Legislature yesterday, trying to educate members. The petition they presented to me reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to present this to page Carmen on her third-last day. You’ve got two more days?

I’m pleased to sign this.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craiton: It’s always a pleasure to introduce this petition into the House. I want to thank Mr. Alexander for bringing it to my attention to be introduced. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton”—good member.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1540

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Petitions? The member for Guelph. No, the member for Cambridge. There we go.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: It’s with great pleasure, excruciating pleasure, I see you in the chair today, Mr. Speaker.

I have petitions signed by good citizens of Cambridge which read:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: That all public schools and libraries in Ontario be required to install Internet filtering software on computers to avoid screening of sites with inappropriate, explicit sexual content.”

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I’m sure the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will want to listen to this petition very carefully. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

“Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure and all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

“Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities in creating a green energy sector via the Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

“Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut for the tax rate in Ontario’s lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

“Whereas Ontario’s future, represented by our children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

“We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects

all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people.”

I, of course, agree with this and affix my signature to it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O’Toole: Again, I want to thank the independent truckers: Laura O’Neill, Joanne Ritchie, Scott Mooney, Jim Park, Jack Logan and a number of people who had an education reception last night on the important issue which is the subject of the petition they presented to me, and I guaranteed them I would read it on their behalf. It reads as follows:

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

“Whereas the speed of 105 kilometres per hour creates a dangerous situation on our 400-series highways with consideration to the average speed of traffic flow being 120 kilometres per hour,” which is well over the speed limit, too;

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to Emily, one of the pages, on her second-last day of being here.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to stand and introduce a second petition today. The petition 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 re-location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with Burk’s Falls health centre:

“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 give this to page Daphnée.

LUPUS

Mr. Kim Craiton: I’m pleased to read in my third petition of the day, and it reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I want to thank the Lupus Foundation located in my riding for providing me with this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for petitions has expired.

OPPOSITION DAY

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I move the following opposition day motion:

Whereas the budget introduced on March 26, 2009, would give the McGuinty government the authority to spend an extraordinary and unprecedented amount of taxpayer money;

Whereas since 2005, the Auditor General has been highly critical of the McGuinty government's lack of accountability, controls and transparency with respect to transfers of taxpayer money, particularly at the end of the fiscal year;

That the Legislative Assembly call on the McGuinty government to amend Bill 162 to provide that the McGuinty government table reports in this House no later than five sitting days before the end of each of the sitting periods of the 2009-10 fiscal year:

(a) to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates;

(b) to detail the actual implementation of the budget;

(c) to itemize the actual effects of the budget with respect to the minimizing of existing job losses, the creation of new private sector jobs, the provision of economic stimulus in a manner fair to all regions of Ontario, the assurance that the government's deficit is not a burden to future generations; and

(d) to disclose the name of the project to which the infrastructure funding is being provided, the nature of the project and what it is intended to achieve in fighting the recession, its location, including the provincial electoral district in which it is located, the amount of provincial funding involved, any other funding partners and the amounts of their contributions, the department and program under which the provincial funding is being provided; and

That each such report shall automatically and immediately be posted on an accessible and interactive government website, and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and to the Auditor General.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number two. Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: There's an old saying, "Once bitten, twice shy." Well, the taxpayers, businesses and families of Ontario have been bitten often and very deeply by the McGuinty government. They have had their trust betrayed, seen promises broken and been saddled with punishing taxation and enormous debts that will plague their descendants for generations to come.

Ontarians look to their government for strong leadership, fresh ideas and the empathy they need in difficult times. Instead, they've been offered only platitudes and more of the failed policies that have worsened the recession instead of easing it.

We all recall, just two years ago, the auditor's scathing criticism of the McGuinty government over slushgate,

where they shovelled millions of tax dollars out the door to their friends. The Auditor General described the McGuinty government's spending controls as among the worst he'd ever seen.

It's no wonder that all Ontarians are cynical. It's only natural that they do not trust this government to do what is needed. Ontarians need some reassurance that things will be different this time; that Mr. McGuinty and his crew will not be able to get away with more rhetoric and no responsibility for their failings. That's the intent of our motion today: to ensure that this government is held to account.

It is a sad situation—there's no doubt about it—when responsibility has to be imposed on a government instead of being assumed. However, we in the official opposition have to be realistic, given the Liberals' long and sordid history of mismanaging Ontario's economy.

Members across the floor are not anxious to review the evidence of their economic policy failures, I'm sure, but I'm going to proceed anyway. It's a long and unhappy list, and I'm concerned that my colleagues opposite may find themselves sunk in depression and consumed by guilt when they contemplate their own sorry record. However, I want to show the necessity for this motion, so I will proceed.

We can go all the way back to the start of the McGuinty era, when the Premier broke his word to Ontarians regarding taxes. Instead of no new taxes, as he promised, he brought in the largest tax hike in Ontario history. Since then, he has completed the triple crown for tax-and-spend politicians: the largest tax hike, the largest deficit and the largest debt ever seen in this province. Those accomplishments alone are enough to put this government in the hall of shame and enough to destroy public faith in their economic management. But that is not all. The litany of failure continues.

Dalton McGuinty has taken Ontario from first to last in economic growth. Dalton McGuinty has made Ontario into a have-not province for the first time in its proud history. Dalton McGuinty frittered away \$26 billion in extra revenue instead of preparing for the inevitable rainy day. And Dalton McGuinty has overseen an abysmal record of job creation: 129,000 full-time jobs lost since the last election and a quarter million manufacturing jobs killed since he first took office.

However, when it comes to hiring people on the public payroll, they're up 19%. They've hired as many public servants as all the other provinces in Canada put together. When it comes to creating jobs in the private sector, jobs that create wealth instead of just moving tax dollars around, Ontario is up only 1% in six years—just 1%—less than the rate of population growth.

Despite all the public hiring and the huge increase in six-figure salaries they're offering for public servants, overall employment in Ontario continues to fall. Our economy has lost more than 61,000 jobs since the last election.

My friends opposite should be hanging their heads in shame on the topic of job creation, the most important

measure of economic strength. Their policies have been disastrous on that score, but they've refused to change course. They continue to tell Ontarians that they can get us out of the hole they created if only they keep digging.

McGuinty's latest budget is the latest example. It fails to address the dire needs of Ontarians, and instead threatens to continue on the path of broken promises and failed ideas. I have a very limited time, so I cannot list all the ways this budget fails, but some of us have families to go home to, but this budget not only fails parents who are looking to put their children in full-day kindergarten, it not only fails patients looking for improved health care services, it also fails to provide Ontario families with the help they need in the face of the current economic crisis. This budget does not provide Ontarians with the plan they need and deserve, the fresh approach and practical ideas to get our economy going again. Instead, we have more of the same: more spending without accountability and more taxation without mercy.

In their rush to make up for the wasted years, years when they were flush with money but flushed that money away, in their panic to be seen to be acting, this government risks wasting yet more public money. The good intentions of infrastructure spending are being put at risk—limited time for due diligence, insufficient planning that could see projects run short of money and a lack of accountability for real benefits for taxpayers. While they are proud to be seen throwing taxpayer money at infrastructure, they're ashamed to be seen spending those same tax dollars in other ways: on inflated salaries, opulent office renovations, entertainment and travel expenses, and other slaps in the face to taxpayers.

It's frightening to note that under his plan, Mr. McGuinty will have tripled the deficit and doubled Ontario's debt. We all know that Bob Rae has become a Liberal, but we didn't realize the Ontario Liberals wanted to become Bob Rae. He must be very proud.

But even to achieve those horrendous numbers, the McGuinty plan calls for program spending to be held at 3.6% increases in the next three years and 2.6% increases for four years after that. The fact of the matter is that this government has increased spending by 8% every year, and now you want people to believe that you will somehow overcome your spending addiction and cut your habit by half, then by two thirds. Again, you can't blame Ontarians for being cynical. As the Premier himself has said, and I'm quoting Dr. Phil, "The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour." Taxpayers would be well advised to take this government's plan with a large block of salt.

Finally, this budget claims to confront the economic crisis, but the only thing it confronts is taxpayers' wallets. Dalton McGuinty's response to the global recession, to the cries for help from struggling Ontario families is to raise taxes yet again: tax hikes on everything from heating your home to driving your car, from using the Internet to going to the gym, from shoes for adults to audiobooks for the blind. This is the boot to the face instead of the helping hand that Ontarians needed.

Unfortunately, Mr. McGuinty and his friends hold a majority in this Legislature. The sad truth is that they can force this budget through, despite its major failings and despite anything that we in the opposition may say or do. So we have searched for a constructive way to limit the damage of this hollow plan, a way for Ontarians to have at least some assurance that this government will be held responsible. If the members opposite choose to reject our reasoning, to ignore all of the evidence of their botched policies and shameful record, that is no more than we expect from them. However, if you truly believe that your budget will somehow defy the laws of economics and actually work, then I invite you to put your votes where your mouths are: Support this motion, welcome the idea of accountability, prove that you have faith in your ideas, as discredited as they are, and that you are willing to be measured by their success. Or vote against this reasonable motion and tell Ontarians that you have as little faith in your economic plan as they do and that as an organization the Liberal Party of Ontario is bankrupt of ideas, bankrupt of integrity and bankrupting this great province.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: New Democrats support this motion and all measures that will increase fiscal and economic transparency in this legislative process. Indeed, the budget was extremely vague on many matters related to the stimulus package. This motion, if passed, would go some way towards reassuring this House that the matters outlined in the budget were in fact being implemented. That is of particular concern with the housing and infrastructure money, which, if not spent in the next 12 to 18 months, will be of little use in fighting the current recession. New Democrats support this motion and any measure that increases government accountability, particularly in times of economic crisis.

1600

I want to address something that was not in the motion that New Democrats believe would go a long way toward increasing fiscal accountability in this House. New Democrats strongly believe that the creation of an Ontario equivalent to the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer would be of extraordinary benefit to increasing accountability around here. The federal Parliamentary Budget Officer has been provided with a broad mandate to support Parliament and parliamentarians in holding the government to account for the good stewardship of public resources. The Federal Accountability Act specifically mandated the Parliamentary Budget Officer to provide independent analysis to the Senate and to the House of Commons regarding the state of the nation's finances, government estimates and trends in the national economy. Parliamentary and legislative committees are the principal bodies of government oversight and should benefit from additional independent and authoritative advice on financial and economic matters. As such, the enabling legislation also provides the PBO with a mandate to provide analytical support to any committee

during its consideration of the estimates, as well as provide advice to any member of Parliament regarding the financial costs of their proposals.

The mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Officer includes providing objective analysis to the Senate and House of Commons concerning the state of the nation's finances and trends in the national economy; undertaking economic and fiscal research for the Standing Committee on Finance, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts or the Senate Standing Committee on National Finance on the request of these committees; and estimating the financial cost of proposals currently or prospectively under consideration in either House when requested to do so by a member of the committee, the Senate, the House of Commons or a committee of both Houses. The act also requires that departments and agencies provide the officer with the necessary data to fulfill his or her mandate.

The reason this is important is that all democracies need to develop a process by which elected officials can approve the nation's budget and examine government spending plans. In Canada and in Ontario, Parliament and the Legislature vote on all appropriations requested by the government throughout its budget and estimates proposals. Parliamentarians generally approve the appropriations requested by the government. This is the central role of the estimates committee. Parliamentary and legislative committees do not, unfortunately, currently have the capacity to forecast the impact of budgets, to cost out new program proposals or to identify savings from the elimination of existing programs. All debate on government budgets and spending plans must rely on the data provided by the government. This information, particularly the forecasts, is provided by the Ministry of Finance. In other words, to properly assess the budgets, parliamentarians must have access to reliable data on the economy and on the effects of numerous government programs. In our opinion, this can best be done in Ontario by an independent legislative officer patterned after the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer.

I want to also address the few broad items related to the budget. New Democrats are profoundly disappointed in this budget. It's a budget that misses the mark in so many ways. For the hundreds of thousands of women and men who have lost their jobs and the many more who are a pink slip away, this budget has made their lives even harder. Ontarians were looking for a budget that delivered real hope, one that would address the short-term job crisis while laying the foundation of long-term economic prosperity. Instead of a bold vision in tough times, the women and men of this province got an 8% tax hike on basic purchases as part of the massive overhaul of the province's tax structure. That's simply not what Ontarians were looking for in this budget. They were looking for relief. Instead, they got a tax hike. Budgets are about priorities. It is clear that the McGuinty government's priorities are miles apart from those of worried families. For those and other reasons, I will outline why the New Democratic Party will be voting against this budget.

HST and corporate tax cuts: The first issue I want to speak to is the proposed harmonized tax. Let it be clear, there's nothing harmonious about this tax. The new tax hike will tack on 8% to more goods and services than previously expected—8% more for everyday purchases. Filling up a car or a van on the way to work, 8% more; paying the monthly electricity and home heating bills, 8% more; buying a cheap pair of shoes, 8% more; the newspapers and magazines you like to read, 8% more; having your hair cut, 8% more; paying the Internet bill, 8% more; buying prepared foods under \$4, like the morning coffee or a doughnut at the local Tim Hortons, 8% more; and for new homes over \$400,000, 2% more. That's \$7,000 on a home worth \$350,000. These tax increases are permanent. They will be felt immediately, long after the Dalton dollars are handed out.

With joblessness rising and people settling for lower pay, family incomes aren't rising. The tax hikes will have a real, measurable impact on families already under strained budgets. At the pump, this tax grab will add seven cents to an 85-cent-a-litre fill-up. But when gas prices jump to \$1.35, like they did not too long ago and will again, the tax will add 10 cents to a litre.

We're not talking about nickels and dimes here. The average household spends \$2,000 on gas and \$2,000 to heat the home and pay for electricity, an immediate \$320 out of the pockets of struggling families—\$320 out of their pockets. When all the extra costs of day-to-day purchases are factored in, we're talking about a lot more. It's a lot more for families to struggle with.

The McGuinty Liberals are claiming that companies will lower their prices as a result of significant cost savings. After all, between big corporate tax breaks and the end of sales tax on inputs, corporations are the big winners. So will gas suddenly get cheaper? Will oil and gas companies really pass on their savings in lower prices? I doubt it. What about home heating and electricity bills? I doubt it. Will Enbridge or Thunder Bay Hydro or Hydro Ottawa or Union Gas drop their rates to offset the 8% increase? That remains to be seen, but I doubt it. Will Tim Hortons bring down coffee and muffin prices? I don't think so. Will Ontario homebuilders take \$7,000 off the price of their homes? I don't think the builders will do that. I think they'll pass on the cost to the consumer.

Nobody in Ontario believes this. I don't know who the government thinks they're fooling, but nobody is going buy this. Politicians have tried to pitch them this theory before. They call it trickle-down economics—that's right—the old theory that says corporate tax cuts eventually create jobs. We know it doesn't work. Never has, never will. For a recent case study, we don't have to look much further than our friends down in the United States. Years of slashing corporate taxes have gone hand in hand with deregulation. The result is millions of families losing their jobs, savings and homes.

Thursday's budget couldn't have more clear about this government's commitment to trickle-down economics. They're giving \$4.5 billion in corporate income tax cuts

over the next three years. Frankly, that's obscene. It's obscene because corporation tax is a tax on corporate profits, and the companies that need help in this brutal recession are not the companies making profits right now. Secondly, this is the same budget that took \$2.3 billion out of the pockets of hard-pressed consumers. In other words, \$2.3 billion is being shovelled out the door to exactly the wrong companies at exactly the wrong time.

This government could have chosen the side of ordinary Ontarians by tabling a bold new jobs plan for Ontario. It didn't. In the midst of what is perhaps the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, Ontario should be very worried. There are struggling companies out there in real need. They are losing money, laying off workers, and cutting hours, wages and benefits. They won't benefit from corporate income tax cuts—you have to make it to cut it—and that's not going to help stem the worries and frustrations of the people who work for these companies.

1610

I wonder how Premier McGuinty came to support sales tax harmonization. Interesting. After all, it was only in November 2008 that the Premier and his finance minister rejected the HST recommendation made by the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. In fact, when the report came out, the Premier worried about the impact of the HST on families, not only from our treasury perspective but from the perspective of consumers. Some things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel, and other things like that which are really important to consumers would go up in cost. The Premier was very worried about that. Hmm. Funny how times change. Minister Duncan added that it wasn't the time to "tinker" with the province's tax regime. He's tinkering with it, all right. It's really going to be fun to watch this unfold.

Less than six months later, and deeper into this economic crisis, the government is proposing full-scale sales tax harmonization. That's like a 180, I guess; I don't know. The McGuinty government has gone from cautious to callous. Budget 2009 put big corporate tax giveaways ahead of a jobs strategy and basic workplace protections, to the point where most of the people where I used to work are not working any more, and now we're getting hammered with 8% more. When you're unemployed, collecting EI, boy, I don't know how much more devastating it can get. This government has struck, in our opinion, a backroom deal with the federal Conservative government, and in doing so, Premier McGuinty has taken a page right out of Stephen Harper's ideological playbook.

Jobs: This budget offered the government a chance to make a smart and sound investment to guarantee long-term job growth. Again, it missed the mark. New Democrats believe that the key to any smart, long-term strategy is investing strategically to secure Ontario's future industrial capacity. This government has chosen the easy way out by shovelling hard-earned taxpayers' money out the

door without ensuring that the long-term jobs of the future will be created right here in Ontario. New Democrats support infrastructure spending, but we want the companies to stay here to make the product and give our people work.

If this government were serious about positioning Ontario's economy for the future, they would have brought forward a buy-Ontario policy with real teeth in it. I'll give you an example. New Democrats are strong supporters of spending on public transit, but that spending should create real, long-term jobs right here in Ontario. We've called for a buy-Ontario requirement that 50% of the value of all transit vehicles purchased in Ontario be made in Ontario. Similar provisions exist in the US and Quebec. It's okay for them; it's okay in Quebec. Why isn't it okay in Ontario? This province can be a global leader in manufacturing cutting-edge transit vehicles. We have the skilled workforce, one of the best in the world. We have the people, the expertise. We have the transit. We have the trains and we have the boats to deliver a good product, and always did, until the erosion of our base industries, which is happening federally and provincially. We don't own anything anymore. Everybody else in the world owns Ontario and Canada. That's why we're in a fix. We have no control over our own destiny, over our own economics. We do not control our base industries. But if the subway cars and streetcars are manufactured in Thunder Bay, and buses in Mississauga, that will help put some people to work—and not 25%, but 100%. I saw buses delivered in Halifax harbour for the TTC, made in Korea—fully assembled, parts, everything, sitting on the Halifax dock. You wonder why our people are out of work? That might be one reason.

New Democrats are strong supporters of spending on roads, bridges and sewers, but where are we buying the steel? Is the steel being manufactured in Hamilton? They say it is. The steel mills are closed; they're closing. They are not producing steel for bridges and sewers and roads. Where are they buying the steel? Some steel that came into the States—there's a big uproar in the States right now—came from China, Brazil. The American Steelworkers are in an uproar. There's going to be a big protest next week.

They're talking about saving jobs in North America? You're importing all the base industry stuff from overseas. Why can we not compete? Because they can pay their people 50 cents an hour to make it, where a welder here might have to make \$20 an hour. It's all about profits. It's not about the people; it's all about profit. The steel that goes into these projects needs to be from Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie. That's where it has to come from, not offshore.

There was an opportunity in this budget to turn Ontario into a green energy technology leader. But nowhere in this budget is there a hard requirement—we're not asking for 100%; we want 60% of the content of new wind farms and solar projects to be manufactured in Ontario. In Ohio there was a parts plant, a huge one, that shut down. They transferred the plant, retrofitted the

plant, and guess what they make? They were months and years ahead of us: windmills, windmill structures. Quebec, another story, has just such a requirement, and as a result, they are Canada's leader in wind turbine production.

Here's an example of the human cost of not implementing an effective buy-Ontario program. Shannon is a 36-year-old mother of four as well as a stepmom of two other children. She lives in a small town in rural southwestern Ontario called Vittoria, on the north shore of Lake Erie. Shannon is a laid-off employee of US Steel Canada, where she earned a living for her family for the past 11 years. Like many Ontarians, Shannon is concerned about how she's going to provide for those children, one of which has special needs. "I am concerned about keeping a roof over my family's heads. I am concerned as to how I am going to keep my family intact both mentally and physically," said Shannon, in tears, in front of 1,500 people at the convention centre in Hamilton. "Sometimes I feel overwhelmed with all that is going on and cannot see how EI is going to cover my monthly expenditures." Shannon is looking to the government to institute a buy-Ontario program in infrastructure that would require that most, if not all, of the steel used in taxpayer-funded projects be made right here in Ontario. After all, we are paying the taxes; then the steel to keep the jobs should be Canadian to keep our people employed.

We're giving bailout money to international companies, and what do we get back? Layoffs, plant closures, parts plants closing all over the province. And what do they do? In a recession, you close your overseas operations, and that's exactly what's happening in Canada and has been for the last five years.

Years ago, we were in Ottawa lobbying for the steelworkers, warning the government, "Stop eroding our base industries. If you don't have control of your own economy, you don't have control of it. You're done." Well, here we are. In Shannon's view, this would help US Steel get her and other fellow laid-off steelworkers back to work. She would like some sense of security from the government that they won't let her family and all families in similar situations fall through the cracks.

Here's another good example: Dominic. Dominic has worked at the Thunder Bay Bombardier plant for 22 years as an assembly worker, a spot welder, an NC operator, a quality control inspector, and now as a machinist. Previously, he worked for seven years in the forest industry as a lumber scaler. Dominic feels that manufacturing, the key to Ontario's economy, is drying up at an alarming rate and fears that too many plants are being shut down at an expeditious rate. Once these industries shut down, it is very expensive to start them up again.

I can tell you from my experience, when you shut down a blast furnace, a critical part of the steel process, it takes months to get that thing running again. Meanwhile, people are on the street because it had to shut down because of no orders. Where are the orders going? Well, I got information the other day that US Steel—"No pro-

tectionism," they said. "Oh no, we're not going to punish the Canadians." Well, they just opened a blast furnace in Indiana that had been closed for five years. Why are they doing that? Because they're going to supply US buyers with American steel. Who's getting punished? Stelco, Algoma and Lake Erie Works. Can't people see this? It's right in front of them. I can't believe that both governments, federally and provincially, cannot see what's happening in our country, in our province. Until it knocks them on the head, they're not going to get it. We have no control over our own economy.

1620

Dominic feels that "Our ability to produce real goods would be gone, leaving us to the mercy of foreign"—well, isn't this interesting? Here's a guy, a layman on the floor, saying, "Our ability to produce real goods would be gone, leaving us to the mercy of foreign countries and corporations." Well, hello. Hello there. The guys on the floor get it, but the guys on this floor don't get it. "This is especially dangerous at a time of war or economic uncertainty," says Dominic. If Ontario had a real requirement that 50% of the value of transit vehicles were manufactured in Ontario, Dominic would feel a lot safer about his job, and a lot of people like Dominic.

Industrial assistance and accountability: Now I want to talk about another way in which this budget missed the mark. This budget could have demanded real accountability for taxpayer-funded assistance of ailing companies. There are close to \$3 billion allocated for distressed industries in this budget, but there is no indication that this government has learned the lessons of past industrial assistance programs and is willing to insist on real accountability.

We agree that the government has an important role to play in ensuring that our core manufacturing and resource sectors emerge from the present crisis in a healthy state—we all want that—but we also believe that companies must be held accountable for taxpayer monies that are being funnelled their way.

I can't emphasize enough the mismanagement of the Big Three in North America. That's why they're in the position they're in now—mismanagement. Hyundai, Toyota—all these other companies—Honda, yes, are feeling the pinch. I don't see too many layoffs at their plants. Why? Because they've got good management and they have contingency funds that they've set aside for times like this. But what do the Big Three do? They come back to the trough time and time again, and we keep shovelling out hundreds of millions of dollars to them with no accountability, no job protection and no good product to put out there. They should have been years ahead on these electric cars. They were way behind Toyota on that—bad management. This budget requires iron-clad job and investment guarantees. I don't see any of that in there—nothing. "Here's the money, fellas. You may want to squander a bit of it. There you go."

In order to ensure that these accountability measures are put in place, we need provisions for public and worker representation on management. We need the

people who make the product to sit on these boards—representation from the unions, representation from the government. These managers, these guys who are making hundreds of millions of dollars as CEOs, have to have some accountability, and they don't. That's what's going on in Canada, the United States and all over the world—CEOs running wild with public money.

Finally, we would require hard caps on executive compensation and companies receiving government aid. Some people complain about what professional athletes make—\$6 million to play hockey, \$12 million to play soccer, \$60 million, whatever—and you tell me that these executives are worth \$10 million, \$12 million? They make more than the President of the United States. They make way more than the Prime Minister of Canada. Who are these people? They set up their own budgets; they set up their own boards; they just milk, milk, milk, and we all sit back and watch it happen. “No regulations. Go ahead, fellas. Make as much as you want. It's a free market.” We require a cap on executives. We would like to see a cap in Canada of \$400,000 for executives. Gee, I wish I made \$400,000. I'd work for that company; no problem running it, if I could. It's just unbelievable.

Industrial strategy is next. I want to talk a little more about what could have been in the budget to create jobs. Since June 2004, almost 300,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs, and that doesn't include 18,000 direct jobs in the forest sector, which has decimated northern Ontario communities and resources. Every part of this province has been hit by job losses, from Chapleau to Windsor, from Kenora to Cornwall. Under the McGuinty Liberals, Ontario has lost more than 30% of its high-paying manufacturing jobs—\$13 billion in wages out of the Ontario economy. Unbelievable.

For the past five years, New Democrats have sounded the alarm. We've said it for years. Over the loss of manufacturing jobs, we've put forward constructive solutions, like a jobs commissioner. How would that work? A jobs commissioner overseeing companies, helping to decide whether this is good for Ontario, good for the province—input to these companies when they're making bad corporate decisions. And believe me, I've been in companies where they've made bad corporate decisions. They've squandered millions, even in the 1970s and 1980s, on bad investments. That should be overseen. There should be accountability, and there isn't.

These are good ideas, but once again they fall on deaf ears. We put bills forward, they get to committee, and the Liberals don't even read them. They don't even deal with it—Bill 6. Jeez, everyone is losing their compensation, they're losing their severance packages; I brought that forward in December 2007, and it's still sitting on the books. They never even read it. They don't even know about it. Unbelievable.

Mr. McGuinty has dithered during Ontario's manufacturing maelstrom, and bold action is needed if we are serious about sustaining good jobs and renewing our manufacturing sector. I want to be blunt. It's too darn easy to close down a plant in this province. Corporations

are being allowed to continue to pull up stakes far too easily.

I'll just give you a little example. I heard this week that US Steel, formerly Stelco, the proudest, strongest company, where my family put in 300 years' service, is now taking the raw materials, the iron ore and the coal off the ground, and boats are going back to the States. I heard some equipment may be going out of there. Where is it going? Hmm. They just opened a blast furnace in Indiana. I wonder if any of it's going there? Maybe. There's no protectionism going on. No, not a bit.

Dalton McGuinty says, “I don't want to have protectionism. I don't want to ruffle feathers. I don't want to upset the Americans. I don't want to upset anyone else.” They're sucking us dry, but we don't want to upset them. We don't want to stand up. “Do whatever you want, fellas. We'll take it on the chin. Canadians will take it on the chin again.”

In this budget, the government had an opportunity to reassure these Ontarians that a lifetime of blood, sweat and tears for a company would count for something. Now they're worried about their pension. They're worried about their pension plans—and they should be. You spend 35 years in a hole, working for a company making steel, just so maybe you'll get five or six years if you don't die of cancer in between. You might get six years at the end to maybe enjoy yourself and give your family some sense of security. Well, they're pulling that rug out, too. It's absolutely disgusting, while governments sit around and watch, doing nothing.

Anyway, this government had a chance to ensure that every last penny of back wages, vacation pay, severance pay and pensions would be paid out before companies run south to the border—Bill 6. They didn't even address it; didn't even want to look at it. Well, there's a lot of people who would like to see that bill now. But I looked in vain in the small print of this budget for any indication that the government would establish a wage protection fund that would protect wages. I didn't see it. There's nothing there, nothing for pensions, nothing to protect people. It's going to get worse. It's not going to get better.

I looked in vain for some sign that the government would make amendments to the Employment Standards Act that would force companies to sit down with workers and government to explore alternatives to a plant closure. These things simply are nowhere to be seen in this budget. Shame on the government for not protecting people's wages, their severances that they worked a lifetime for, and for not having accountability of these companies that are running south and running back to other countries and taking equipment out of Canada, taking the raw material out of Canada. What's going on? In closing, once again workers are left holding the bag. It's a sorry state of affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Minister of Research and Innovation.

1630

Hon. John Wilkinson: I seek unanimous consent to revert to motions in order to put forward a motion with-

out notice regarding Bill 147 and the order of business on the morning of Thursday, April 9, 2009.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The minister has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have consent?

Interjections: No.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on opposition day motion number 2, tabled by Mr. Runciman.

We are living through some very tough economic times at the moment. A lot of people across this province, across this country and globally are losing their jobs. Their livelihoods are being put in jeopardy. But this phenomenon is not just taking place in Ontario. It is bigger than Ontario. It is, in fact, bigger than Canada.

Sometimes when I hear the debate which takes place in this House about the economy, it almost gives the impression that somehow Ontario is unique in the kinds of things taking place in this province in terms of job losses and families being jeopardized. I think it sends a very erroneous message to Ontarians that we sort of live in a bubble in suffering these things. We know it's far from the truth. What is happening in Ontario is the consequence of what's happening in Canada and what's taking place more globally.

I had the opportunity to look at the most recent OECD economic outlook report, which was issued in March 2009. The OECD notes: "The world economy is in the midst of its deepest and most synchronized recession in our lifetimes, caused by a global financial crisis and deepened by a collapse in world trade. Tight financial conditions and low confidence are weighing on output and employment in OECD and non-OECD countries alike. In turn, shrinking activity and income is further undermining bank balance sheets, magnifying the downturn."

It goes on to say: "Bearing these uncertainties in mind, we anticipate that the ongoing contraction in economic activity will worsen this year, before a policy-induced recovery gradually builds momentum through 2010. In the United States, Japan, the euro area, as well as for the OECD economy at large, output will drop by between 4% and 7% this year and broadly stagnate next year. The major non-OECD economies are not spared from an abrupt slowdown in growth or an outright recession. World real GDP growth is projected to fall by 2¾ per cent this year and to recover by 1¼ per cent in 2010."

Similarly, the Group of Twenty, whose leaders met very recently in London to take stock of what's happening in the economy and come up with steps to rectify it, noted in a report in February of this year: "The global economy is in the midst of a deep downturn, as severe financial market stress persists notwithstanding continued policy efforts. World trade and industrial activity are falling sharply, while labour markets are weakening at a rapid pace, particularly in the United States. The advanced economies as a group are facing their sharpest

contraction in the post-war era, while activity is slowing abruptly in emerging economies."

Once again, this very clearly outlines that this economic downturn is a global phenomenon. Of course, we in Ontario, being part of the global economic order, are not immune to what is taking place. In fact, we have seen, pretty much across the country, significant deficits being incurred. This year, the federal government alone announced that they will be facing a \$1.1-billion deficit in 2008-09, which will rise to \$33.7 billion in the next fiscal year.

I can go through some other provinces. Newfoundland is estimating a deficit of \$750 million; New Brunswick, \$741 million; Quebec, \$3.9 billion. Alberta, which was the economy everybody looked towards in terms of growth, is forecasting a deficit of \$4.7 billion. And British Columbia has also gone from a \$50-million surplus to a \$495-million deficit.

So there's a phenomenon which is going on, and Ontario, along with other provinces and the federal government, has to work to combat it to make sure that we, when this global recession is over, come back in terms of our recovery stronger than before. We need to make sure that we put in our economy the competitive fundamentals which will help foster the growth of this province and, in turn, help our citizens, Ontarians and our families, to grow at the same time, because that is what lies at the heart. We want our economy to do better so that every one of us who lives in this economy also prospers. One is not exclusive of the other; they go hand in hand, very much so.

That is why countries around the world, including subnational governments like Ontario, have undertaken certain measures to stimulate the economy. One of the prescriptions which has been given by those who know these matters better than probably all of us combined here as legislators is that we need to inject a significant stimulus package. I was very interested to read, in terms of fiscal stimulus for the upcoming fiscal year, the amounts in G20 countries: the United States, \$787 billion; Argentina, \$30 billion; Britain, \$28 billion; France, \$33 billion; China, a \$585-billion stimulus package; Germany, \$102 billion; Japan is injecting \$123 billion. The list goes on and on, again demonstrating that this is a phenomenon not limited to Ontario. This is a phenomenon beyond Ontario.

One of the aspects of this motion speaks about quarterly reporting. I believe the opposition day motion asked for reporting five days before the end of each sitting. I don't understand why that type of reporting is required when we have, inherent in our system, measures of accountability already in place through the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, FTAA, which requires that Ontario economic accounts be released 45 days following Statistics Canada's release of the national income and expenditure accounts, which are released up to 60 days after the reference period.

Ontario Economic Accounts, for those who don't know, is a public document released four times a year

which provides an overall assessment of the current stage of the Ontario economy. It is posted on the Ministry of Finance website and can be found at www.fin.gov.on.ca. It's a public document which is, by law, required to be shared with this House, and of course that will continue to happen on a quarterly basis, giving ample opportunity for all members of this Legislature to put government to account, to make sure that they can review as to how government is investing in Ontario and how they are undertaking the expenditures.

On that note, I would urge the members of this Legislature to vote against this motion, as I strongly feel it's not required. We already have, through legislation, principles in place that require quarterly reporting by the government, giving ample opportunity to members of the opposition and governing members of this Legislature to hold government to account as to the expenditures.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: In addressing this opposition day motion, I wish to also stress the importance of ensuring, during these times of deficit spending, that taxpayers' tax dollars are not being misappropriated or frittered away. Without proper accounting measures, I fear that this budget could open up the spectre of the pork barrel.

I'm concerned about scenarios. Perhaps some Toronto MPPs may have fears about re-election. They lobby Mr. McGuinty. They're duly gifted billions of dollars for, for example, a high-speed rail line between Toronto and the airport. I do recall the pork-barrel proposal for a high-speed rail line from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. So the question: Would a Las Vegas rail line or a Toronto airport rail line get the steel mills open, could these projects be considered pork-barrelling, and how would that compare to the opposition proposal of a tax holiday for vehicle sales increase, which we have evidence would increase sales and increase steel production?

1640

Looking at our motion, we wish to have disclosed the name of the project, as far as any so-called stimulus spending, the nature of the project, the provincial electoral district in which it's located, the amount of provincial funding, other funding partners, the amount of their contribution, and the department and program in which the provincial funding is being provided. In other words, we need assurances, we need accountability.

I can tell you that US Steel workers in my riding need those assurances and that accountability as they stare down the barrel of the largest layoff of local steelmakers in history; 1,500 people are out of work. We wonder how they are going to be stimulated by this budget. Are there dollars to save jobs at the Hamilton and Lake Erie works? I don't see anything in the budget or in this deficit—so-called stimulus—funding.

So we have to be clear; we have to be transparent. We need this accounting; we need to know where all those taxpayers' dollars are being spent and what it will mean to those who are now looking for work. If we don't have that kind of accounting and those kinds of assurances, we

become subject to the same regrettable pork-barrelling scenarios we hear of so often south of the border. I think of the Bridge to Nowhere—I think that's in Alaska—the Big Dig in Boston, a \$4-billion-a-mile cost to put an interstate underground.

For those who may not be aware, "pork barrel" is a derogatory term referring to the appropriation of government spending for localized projects secured solely or primarily to bring money to that representative's area. The phrase originated, I understand, as a pre-Civil War practice of giving slaves a barrel of salt pork as a reward and requiring them to compete among themselves for the handout. Pork-barrel politics usually refers to spending intended to benefit the constituents of a politician in return for political support, perhaps for campaign contributions and, at minimum, for votes. So, typically, pork involves funding for government programs whose economic or other benefits are concentrated in a particular area but the costs are spread among all taxpayers. Would the \$9-billion GTA transit proposal fall into that category?

I have little doubt after this past budget day, when the McGuinty government's plan, entitled *Confronting the Challenge*, was introduced, that we'll long remember it as the day when political euphemism triggered economic disaster. There are no words available to express fully what I consider the irresponsibility of this directionless political spending. This government seems to be lost at its helm. I'm not sure who's at the tiller. While pork-barrelling in times of prosperity is foolish and negligent at best, to continue to pork-barrel in times of economic crisis, like we've seen over the past year, I find unforgivable.

I ask this government to do the right thing: Ensure that we don't fall into the pork-barrel trap, and ensure that accountability for taxpayers' dollars is there. I ask you to support this opposition motion.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to standing and speaking to this Liberal motion—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—no, no, it's a Liberal motion—first brought forward by the federal Liberal caucus in order to keep the federal government accountable for their expenditures. I'm sure we're going to get unanimous support for this particular opposition day motion, because being a good Liberal motion from the House of Commons, put forward by Mr. Ignatieff, I'm sure the provincial Liberals are going to follow suit with their federal counterpart in Ottawa. So I look forward to the vote a little bit later this afternoon and maybe to seeing one of the few times in this place that all the opposition parties along with the government are on side on an opposition day motion. I very much look forward to the support the provincial Liberals will give to what is essentially a federal Liberal motion to keep the provincial government accountable here.

So I want to say congratulations in advance to the Liberal caucus for seeing fit to support Mr. Ignatieff in

his bid to keep the federal government accountable by having regular reporting back of what's going on with the economy and the budget. We're going to be doing that here as well, and I want to congratulate the Conservative caucus for reminding the provincial Liberals of that wonderful Liberal motion that was put forward by Mr. Ignatieff. I'm looking forward to the provincial Liberals supporting what is essentially a federal Liberal motion that was brought first to the House. That's quite an interesting twist of politics, I want to say.

I think there's a fair amount to be said for the need for accountability, especially in this day and age, because what we're seeing is really unprecedented. We have never seen in the history of this country, even during the worst of the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, the type of intervention that we're now getting requested by the private sector to government. We're seeing the auto sector, we're seeing the steel sector, we're seeing every sector of the economy coming before government and saying, "We need you to help us out." God, you've got George Bush, former President of the United States out there trying to nationalize the American banking institution, bailing those guys out.

My point is there is a huge shift here in regard to the role that government is being asked to play, and that's really my point. We're being asked as governments, both federal and provincial, to intervene in what normally have been private sector activities, something that they've resisted for many years. If you listen to the captains of industry, God, eight, nine, 10 months ago, if there had been some kind of suggestion that the provincial or federal governments intercede into the affairs of the automotive sector or the financial sector, they would have been apoplectic; they would have been swinging by the chandeliers. But here they are coming before us and asking us, as provincial and federal governments, to help them—and rightly so.

I think we have a role to play. I think it's only fitting that we have some mechanism in order to have greater transparency to whatever deals are made between the provincial government and industry. I think the public wants that; I think the public wants to know. They say, "Yes, we're really worried about what's happening in the economy." We hear the captains of industry, those underpaid darlings of the corporate world who don't get paid very much in bonuses and don't get paid very much in large wages every year, coming to government and asking for yet more money in order to bail them out after they've done such a wonderful job of managing their own companies. We take a look at companies like AIG that have done such a wonderful job of running themselves into the ground, and now they're asking governments to bail them out.

So I think the public, rightfully so, is saying, "Listen, we would like to have a little bit of transparency here." We want to have an ability where if government is going to move in and help some of these large corporations that have driven themselves into debt and driven themselves into the ground and are asking for us to bail them out—

the public, the person who is at the end paying for this, the taxpayer, wants to have some sort of transparency in regard to whatever decisions are made so that we can measure, is the money that we're lending to industry, is the money that we're giving to industry in some cases, money well spent? And is there something more important that could be learned? I think this is really the point. The public is saying, "Okay, we don't like this but we understand it." But if we can measure what's going on as far as the assistance that we're providing the private sector in this time of need, is there something to be learned about what's worked and what hasn't worked when it come to those investments that we've made from the provincial government into those industries? Because I'm sure there are going to be some examples where we're going to be able to say, "Job well done. It is having a positive effect on the economy."

But there are some that are going to be a problem. Look at President Obama, how he apparently got caught offside when it came to some of the deals that were made with the banking sector, where they went into insurance companies and others and bailed them out, and it turns out that these guys were paying themselves out bonuses, huge bonuses, by way of the taxpayer for the great job they did running their companies into the ground. The President found out: "Oh God, we've got a bit of a problem here and maybe we need a bit more transparency." So President Obama has kind of figured out that he got himself into a mess by having the legislation drafted the way they did out of the House and out of the Senate earlier this winter and that they need to have better transparency. I guess if we're going to get into the business of assisting the private sector in the way they're asking us to do so, I think it really is incumbent upon this Legislature to pass such an opposition day motion that says there will be greater transparency.

I look forward to the support that the provincial Liberals will give to essentially what was a federal Liberal idea that was born of Mr. Ignatieff when he asked for this standard to be applied to the federal Conservative government of Mr. Harper. Again, I congratulate the government head, because I know they will all stand in support of this motion, and I'm really looking forward to their genuine interest in supporting what Mr. Ignatieff is doing at the federal level.

1650

The other thing I want to say in this short time that I've got—and this is really the problem about opposition days: You don't get a lot of chance to talk in some detail about this and about some of the ideas. What's clearly related to this motion but outside of what we need to do in regards to assisting industry is that we really need to think through, as this Legislature, and not just allow ministers and the Premier, and staff of ministers and Premiers, to make all these decisions without the Legislature being involved—we really need to think through, are we getting a good bang for our buck when we start to invest our public dollars into some of these businesses that are asking for money?

What kind of conditions do we want to set when it comes to, “Okay, we’re going to lend you money, or we’re going to grant you money”? What conditions does this Legislature want to set as far as what we expect in return? For example, will there be provisions to protect, as much as humanly possible, the jobs of hard-working people who are going to be affected by the downturn of this economy? If we’re going to lend money to these companies, what assurances do we get back that they’re not going to throw a bunch of people out of work? We’ve seen that happen already in a whole bunch of companies across Ontario and Canada and in the United States, where government has lent money. GM is a good example in Oshawa, and has made huge layoffs and affected thousands of people when it comes to their jobs. What kind of conditions are we going to make on decisions that are made by corporate Canada or, should I say, foreign companies that own companies here in Canada?

There’s really a growing sense that we’re losing control of our own economy by way of the multinationals that have moved in and have taken over many of what used to be the crown jewels of Canadian corporations. I come out of northern Ontario where companies like Noranda, Inco, Falconbridge and others were huge Canadian mining companies that were born in Canada, that grew in Canada, that became mining experts not only here in Canada but the world over. They have now been taken over by foreign companies by way of what’s happened with corporate takeovers. What’s happening is that we’re losing much of our own ability to make decisions about what’s going to happen in our communities when it comes to the methods of mining, how quickly we are going to mine out ore bodies, what kind of decisions are going to be made about sourcing materials and sourcing purchases so that we make sure that there’s a local spinoff for Ontario when it comes to the decisions made by those companies.

If we’re going to go out and start assisting these corporations, we need to know where you are going to be sourcing materials and supplies for your companies. Are you going to be doing that in Ontario? What assurances do we have that that can happen? To what degree are you going to make sure that decisions that are made about how you operate in Ontario are not going to negatively affect our environment, are not going to negatively affect the communities that you live in and, more importantly, the workers?

I think it’s important that you have some method of transparency in the decision-making process. I think the motion is an interesting one in that it takes from an idea that came out of the federal House of Commons, where the Liberals there have decided to have some sort of opportunity to take a look at the decisions of the government on a regular basis and that it be done by the House itself—not by ministers only and not just by the Premier, but by the elected officials, duly elected by the people of Ontario to make these decisions. I think that’s an interesting approach.

I look forward to the rest of the debate. I know that the Liberal members will be standing in unison speaking in

favour of this motion. I know they’ll be standing in favour of this motion when it comes to the vote, and I very much look forward to that probably very unique situation where we’re going to see an opposition motion supported by all three parties in this House. That would be a really unique start in this Legislature.

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I’m confident that I, at this moment, should seek unanimous consent to revert to motions in order to put forward a motion without notice regarding Bill 147 and the order of business on the morning of Thursday, April 9, 2009, to be considered.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Wilkinson has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have consent? We have consent.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want you to know we’re all delighted by that.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. John Wilkinson: I move that on Thursday, April 9, 2009, notwithstanding standing order 8(a), the House shall continue to meet past 10:15 a.m. for the purpose of conducting the following business commencing at that time:

(1) Introduction of visitors;

(2) Consideration of the following motion: that the order of the House dated March 5, 2009, referring Bill 147, An Act to proclaim Holodomor Memorial Day, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged and the bill ordered for third reading;

(3) Upon passage of the preceding motion, the order for third reading of Bill 147 shall immediately be called and the question put forthwith without debate or amendment; and

(4) Proceed directly to oral questions or recess to 10:30 a.m., as the case may be.

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

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY (CONTINUED)

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

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C’est un plaisir de pouvoir participer à ce débat.

I must say the purpose of the debate is to properly inform the people, the Ontarians. Yes, I say “properly inform.” So many people are misinformed at the present time; they are confused because they’re watching the debate. I wish everyone in this House would read this budget carefully. The opposition has the right to question, and I fully respect that, but we have to be honest with Ontarians.

I was listening to the PC motion, which we will not support—I'm saying we will not support it—but I was very surprised to hear that we got a new friend on our side. Why am I saying this? It's because the leader of the official opposition said that the projects that were put forward this past year and this year were given to friends. Well, I have to say, the member for Leeds–Grenville must be a great friend of the Liberals, because he's the one who got the largest amount of money, on February 13, for the Build Canada project. So he became a friend of the Liberals. I know he's got a super EA in the former mayor of Brockville, Steve Clark, and before that, he had a great friend of mine, Don Swayne, who has passed away, and I regret to see him gone, because he was a great man for the riding of Leeds–Grenville.

This budget is one of the best budgets that we have ever had here for many years, because I think every one of us should know that we are facing a recession—not only Ontario; it's a global recession. We have to be ready, and when we are in a recession, we have to plan for the future. This is exactly what the Premier has done for the province of Ontario. We have created programs, \$32.5 billion worth of infrastructure programs, for the province of Ontario. Why? Because during a recession, you take the benefit of that and you create jobs. This is why we are doing that.

When people are saying, “It's going to cost a fortune”—I was listening to the radio station in Ottawa a week ago last Friday and also a week ago this last Monday, and I couldn't believe the people calling in to the radio station. The same day, when I came here in the afternoon, the same questions were asked. But the people, I have to say, on the radio were misinformed—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Those are your constituents.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: No, they're not. They're not my constituents. They were misinformed. They were telling the people, “Yes, you will now be paying 8% on your prescriptions”—not true at all; “You're going to pay 8% when you rent or buy a wheelchair”—not true at all; “You are going to pay to get your house built”—not true at all up to \$400,000. So I think that was misleading.

A gentleman called and said, “I will now be paying \$858 of taxes in the next year.” A person called right back and he said, “This gentleman who said he's going to pay \$858 never said that he's going to get \$1,000 at the end of the year”—three instalments of \$333. He never said that. He's going to benefit about \$142 in the year. I think it's very good.

1700

Besides that, 93% of the Ontario population is going to be benefiting from this budget. Out of this, the people of Ontario will benefit from a tax reduction of 16.5% as of July 2010.

One thing: When we get the call from the real estate people—I guess every one of us must have got the e-mail. Please, please inform the people properly. Right now, the McGuinty government is helping out all those real estate people. Why? Because, right now, we have a program. We are creating jobs that will give them the

opportunity to continue selling homes, because when we're out of the recession, they will continue after, and they should be happy about that because we are creating jobs. That 8% on some of the services will not apply before July 1, 2010. People right now think they'll be paying that 8% immediately. That is not true.

Besides this, anybody who will qualify will get up to \$260 per head in the family. If you have three children, that's \$260 times three, plus the father and the mother; that's multiplied by five. They will get that. So, really, that is a benefit to them.

We could have turned around and done the same thing as the previous government did, especially in 1998. I remember that I was sitting on the other side, and a member came to me and said, “Jean-Marc, what are you doing?” I said, “I'm figuring out how much money my county of Prescott and Russell will lose from this downloading that they have done.” They didn't increase the tax; they reduced the tax, and then they cut services. They downloaded services like social housing. One hundred per cent of social housing was transferred to the municipalities—100%. The assessment that was done by the province: Downloaded this to the municipality, and in turn, they got MPAC to do it.

The McGuinty government will not cut services to the people of Ontario. We will continue giving them the proper services they deserve. We will not cut meat inspectors. We will not cut water inspectors. We will not cut teachers. We will not cut nurses.

Also, a very important point: I'll never forget that when they closed hospitals, they were saying they were going to close the Montfort Hospital. We had to fight like crazy to keep that open. Today, it's one of the best hospitals we have in Ottawa.

They downloaded a good percentage of costs to the municipality: downloaded public health, downloaded to my area the police services, which is costing us \$7.8 million right now.

Agriculture tax: In the past, the agriculture people were paying 100% to the municipality and then collecting 75% from the province. They cut all that down. Now it's every resident of a municipality who has to pay that 75%.

So I think we did pretty good. We said we would not cut services, and we are not cutting services; we are adding services for the people of Ontario.

I could go on and on. The provincial highway that was downloaded to the municipalities: In eastern Ontario, 40% of provincial roads were downloaded to municipalities—40% of the provincial roads.

The budget is very clear, also, that we will continue with the eastern Ontario development fund. Up to now, this year, with the program only running for eight months, we have distributed over \$7 million to different manufacturers to create jobs, to retain jobs or to retrain for the jobs.

Just last Friday, I was with my dear friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to give a good cheque, really, from EODF to a company called KI Pembroke,

which employs more than 200 people. I would like to make sure that the third party is aware of this: Whatever they manufacture there, with more than 200 employees, 80% of their product is exported to the States.

This budget responds to the needs of seniors, to the needs of people in the education sector, to the needs of people in the health sector. And don't forget OMAFRA, the agriculture sector: Everything is there for them. We are going to invest over \$1 million more this year to make rural summer jobs available and we will employ over 100,000 students who will be working on the farms in the rural sector.

I think I've covered my time. I thank you, everyone. And, again, we will not be able to support this motion.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on government accountability.

Our leader illustrated very well the lack of accountability and transparency in this government's management of its finances. He provided this House with a number of good suggestions as to how the government could make itself more accountable to the Legislature and ultimately to the people of Ontario.

If the government wanted to make itself more transparent and accountable to the voters, I have a few ideas about how it could do so.

The first one: Stop making repeated reannouncements of every policy you want to bring forward. I think the best example of this is the government's repeated announcement over the last few years of the 1,000 new police officers. The government announced this again and again for years. The latest is the government's transit plans, reannounced again and again.

Infrastructure plans are another great example. We constantly hear these announcements extending out years into the future, all because the government is more interested in the headline it will get than the actual results.

Number 2: Why won't this government tell us and the people of Ontario when it is actually spending money? We have no idea at which point in the year—July, September, or January—the money will actually be spent. The important thing here is that neither do the agencies. Often agencies will listen and hear in the budget of a particular budget year that there is money being allocated. Well, they have no timeline in terms of planning, because they will not know at that point when the money is actually going to flow. And so, very often there's a huge level of frustration for agencies and transfer agencies of the government.

Too often this government announces spending and then delays and delays before it gets around to spending the money. A good example of this is the dental care for low-income Ontarians. Community health centres came to Queen's Park on March 11 to tell you they are still waiting after a year. Here's an example of the point I just made, in the fact that that was an announcement in the 2007-08 budget. The press conference was held March 11, because obviously we were coming to the end of the

budget year and still no money had flowed. Farmers in my riding also tell me that too often funding is available at times in the seasons of the year when they are unable to use it. Again, they would be willing to participate, but because the funding doesn't flow in a timely way, and because it's difficult for people to find out with any kind of certainty when that funding is going to flow, people aren't able to take advantage of those programs. Clearly, this is poor financial planning by the government.

1710

The budget also lists multiple items on which the government is planning to spend money over a number of years without telling us how much will be spent in a particular year. Again, it's extremely difficult for transfer agencies who might hear that there's going to be \$5 million for something over three years. There's no way for them to plan until the government releases that money, and it isn't always an equal amount divided over a given period of time, so there's a great deal of mystery and guesswork on the part of those who are trying to plan what is their core business when they are dependent on these announcements that simply do not give clear direction. The infrastructure example in the budget is a good example.

Another question I have is, what does "shovel-ready" mean? How do you define this term? Or do you just choose who gets the money the same way you hand out money at the end of the fiscal year? Should we even be giving money just to those projects that are furthest ahead in the approval process? Does planning matter?

Here's another idea. The government claims that the Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs. This is just another number chosen with no analysis to support it. In fact, we have repeatedly asked the government for the analysis when these claims are made. Are these part-time jobs? Are these full-time jobs? Do you do any analysis of the economic impact of your announcements? How many jobs will the changes in the Green Energy Act cost? Is there a net number of new jobs? We do not know the answers to these questions, because there is no analysis. These are numbers that appear to have been pulled out of the air.

A final point on this: You claimed in the budget that you wanted to reduce the regulatory burden by 25%. Is this 25% of the total number of regulations? Is it 25% of the total wordage of regulations? Is it 25% across all ministries? Will reducing the number or length of regulations translate into a 25% reduction in time time businesses must spend satisfying government bureaucrats, or is it a 25% reduction in the cost of production? We do not know, because again you have done no analysis. You have just created a number out of thin air.

Last week in this House, I quoted the auditor's reports and his repeated criticism of the government's end-of-year spending sprees. Billions of dollars go out the door at the end of the year with no plan and no accountability. This is indicative of the government's lack of planning. They are very good at making announcements and at gesture politics. I understand the desire to promote

themselves through public relations, but there is no substitute for a sound system of financial planning and budgeting.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am privileged and honoured to stand up and speak about this motion. Of course, I'm not going to support it. My colleagues spoke many different times before me and spoke about why we're not, as a government, supporting the motion.

It was interesting to hear my colleague from Timmins-James Bay talking about the fact that in difficult times all the parties should work together. I like this idea. I like this approach. I wish the opposition party would work with the government in this difficult time to find a solution, to find a way to get out of this mess which we are facing not just in the province of Ontario, but in Canada and in the world.

Basically, I listened to the opposition leader speak on why he's going to bring this motion against the government and against the budget, but I don't understand when he starts talking about what they did when they were in power. He himself was a part of the government that ran a deficit in good times; when we had a good economy; when we had productivity at the highest level; when they cut the support for nurses, teachers, hospitals; when they cut social assistance by 25%. They cut all the possible ways in order to get revenue, and their own deficit was almost \$5.2 billion.

It's important for all of us in difficult times to find a solution, to take leadership in many different areas. I know the people of Ontario are waiting for us to see how we can solve the problems: how we can support our auto industry, how we can support our infrastructure, how we can maintain the schools we have, how we can maintain our universities and colleges, how we can deal with the nurses, how we can deal with the shortage of doctors, how we can deal with health care, how we can deal with many different elements in our society, how we can deal with the poor people who live among us who are looking forward to seeing us supporting them and giving them the support they need. So this budget came at a difficult time. It came to speak about all of these elements which I mentioned before.

It's important for all of us in difficult times to keep investing in our community, and I believe that our finance minister, Premier Dalton McGuinty and our government decided to go this route, to invest and reinvest in the community, especially to stimulate the economy; to invest more than \$32 billion in our infrastructure; to invest in research innovations. Because we know exactly that the future is not going to be about traditional jobs, it's going to be about special jobs. It's going to be about technical jobs. Therefore, we continue in our direction in order to have a prosperous and brighter future for all the people who live in Ontario.

I was listening to my colleague Jean-Marc Lalonde speaking about why we chose that route, why the opposition is doing what they do, why they are playing

politics instead of coming together as a government, as a opposition with the third party, and working together to find a solution to this economic downfall in the province of Ontario. The people of this province are looking at us and waiting for us to work together. They have no time to have partisan divisions. They want to see how we're going to create jobs. They want to see the elected officials in this place working together in order to maintain our infrastructure, to create jobs for our people, to support the single mothers, to support orphaned people, to support our seniors who worked very hard to construct this province of Ontario.

I cannot say enough about my feelings about the opposition party because they have come in at a difficult time to play politics, to gain some votes here or there, but they haven't learned from the past. They do the same things. What happened to them? They lost the election. Not only that one time; they lost it twice, because they weren't straightforward with the people of Ontario. I think the most important thing is to come openly and talk about our economic situation, to talk about our position in this province and to talk about transparency.

I was shocked, because our government reports to the people of Ontario almost three times a year about our financial status in the province, and I heard the members opposite speaking about announcement after announcement. Yes, we're going to keep announcing our supports in education, health care, nursing, policing, safety and all of the elements which we need badly in the province of Ontario. I know this announcement has been announced once and has also been followed by financial support to make sure all these elements, all of these pillars in our community, are supported, because we're looking forward to getting through this difficult time, to a brighter future in the province of Ontario.

1720

I got the chance to go with the Minister of Research and Innovation to the University of Western Ontario to see how this institution is working hard to develop a method, a way to lead us and the next generation to a brighter future, a technological future, a scientific future.

All of these elements are important to us because the only way we can compete nationally and internationally is by investing in the future, by investing in our universities and colleges and research and innovation. This is the only way we can create some kind of way, some kind of method that's going to create a direction to take us from this level to another level, a brighter level we can depend on and that can take us to a solid and brighter future.

I have a lot to speak about, but I know many of my colleagues are anxious to speak against the motion brought by the opposition tonight. They are angry and upset because they want to see the government, the opposition and the third party working together to save our province, to save our country.

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

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to speak to this motion. A wise person once said, "If you don't know

where you're going, you won't know when you get there." Unfortunately, this budget is not a plan to meet the economic challenges of this province, and without a plan, we won't know when we get there and we may end up in a place that we don't want to be.

A constituent of mine said it so much better than I could, I guess. This is a letter from Sandy Falkiner of Cambridge, Ontario, to the Honourable George Smitherman, with copies to various other people, other ministers, municipal and regional councillors. It's dated April 3, 2003:

"After reading the article in today's Record, 'Smitherman Hints Cambridge May Have to Choose Between Hospital Expansion and New Theatre,' I felt compelled to write to you and ask the simple question, 'Why do we have to choose?'

"As a lifelong Cambridge resident, a long-time community activist and volunteer, and a long-time Liberal supporter at both the provincial and federal levels, I believe that I am fairly politically and socially aware of some of the needs and concerns of our community.

"The hospital expansion in Cambridge was promised many, many years ago. The members of our community and wider region raised millions of dollars to ensure that the future health and well-being of our citizens would be well looked after in the years to come.

"The Drayton theatre project has also been long in the making and, in my opinion, speaks well for the forward-thinking and creativity of our municipal, business and community leaders and is a grassroots economic stimulus project that will help provide employment, financial stability and access to the arts for not only our community but also for our neighbouring cities and townships.

"To have you suggest that our community must now 'choose' between these two projects is, quite frankly, insulting and, in my opinion, backs our community into a corner for which the only answer is, of course, to support the hospital. To do otherwise would be political and socioeconomic suicide, as you well know. I understand and am familiar with these kinds of tactics because I vote against the use of them every time I place an X beside a Liberal candidate at election time.

"The people of Cambridge earned the right to their hospital expansion years ago, and it is a promise that must be delivered on without any strings attached or underhanded, manipulative innuendos. As a Liberal supporter, I can only hope that you misspoke accidentally or were misunderstood and that you will immediately rectify the situation.

"As a Cambridge resident, I can only hope that you will ensure the future of Cambridge Memorial Hospital and, in addition, allow for an unbiased, no-strings-attached look at the Drayton project as a separate issue. To do otherwise is not in keeping with the integrity and the mandate of the Liberal Party of Ontario.

"I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of this letter to the ministers of other portfolios, as well as my local municipal and regional leaders in the hopes of in-

viting engaging and meaningful consultation and solutions regarding this matter.

"Sincerely."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to get a few words on the record this afternoon about this opposition motion. I find it rather interesting, the content of this motion talking about transparency in government.

I remember those days very, very well back in 1998, as a city councillor in Peterborough, when the Who Does What review was announced. There was a big meeting of AMO in Ottawa. They brought in the Premier: a big speech that day. I remember being at the back of the room, and I started doing the calculation. We were told—and, Mr. Speaker, you'd understand this very well; you're a former mayor of Essex, Ontario—that this exercise of Who Does What would be revenue-neutral. Well, that was the biggest story ever told in the history of province of Ontario. There were some of my fellow councillors from Peterborough at the back of the room, and we started to do a quick calculation: "There is no way in heaven that that exercise could be revenue-neutral."

We were told, oh, this was going to be very transparent. As my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell indicated, 40% of the roads were downloaded in the province of Ontario. David Crombie, who commissioned a study when they were in government, certainly indicated to them that social housing should remain with the province of Ontario. In fact, income-redistribution measures were to stay with the province of Ontario. Many of us renamed the Who Does What exercise as the Who Got Done In committee. It was municipalities that got done in here in the province of Ontario.

Last October 31, under the direction of Minister Watson and the finance minister of the province of Ontario, we put into effect a framework over the next number of years to take a lot of those responsibilities back where they belong, to the province of Ontario and off the back of the local property taxpayer.

Indeed, I heard the member from Cambridge talk about his hospital. It's quite conceivable that the \$32 billion in investment over the next two years will certainly help the good citizens of Cambridge. I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to be in that fine community, and the residents there are certainly looking forward to that hospital.

We heard the member from Oxford today. That was a really interesting question during question period, and then he talked about his new hospital that's being built with the infrastructure dollars that we're investing in the province of Ontario. You can't have it both ways.

We have one of the candidates for the leadership, from Ajax-Whitby, who said in her opening remarks, "I recognize that this is a worldwide recession"—not a McGuinty recession, not a recession in the province of Ontario, but a worldwide recession that needs to be challenged.

This budget is going to do that, and I'm going to be proud to support it and vote against this motion today.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to remind members, just as we often—the previous speaker may be a little off track. He was talking about the municipal service review, in which they didn't upload anything. In fact, the biggest question, AMO's question, is, why didn't they upload social housing? It's a \$300-million deficit a year, and it's half federal money. I guess the member is not aware of the past.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He's confused.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. In fairness, I'm being charitable: "Forgive them, Lord; they know not what they do," kind of thing, it being Easter weekend.

I would only say this: Our leader, Bob Runciman, has moved with all compassion and concern on behalf of the people of Ontario. What he has done here is, he's pointed out some mechanisms of accountability, which is fair. It's really what Mr. Ignatieff has done in Ottawa, and most of the leaders, with Barack Obama, are calling on accountability mechanisms.

"Transparency": This is a very familiar Liberal word. It doesn't really mean anything except that you can see through it; it's transparent. Well, you can't see through this; it's smoke and mirrors.

However, the deal here is this: He's asking for regular auditable reports. What could be simpler? It's in public accounts already. It's like keeping your promise, which will be a new trend for the Liberals, because what he says here, if you promise to do this—right in the motion here it says to name the project and then to show the progress of the project. It seems fair to me. They're spending millions and billions of dollars, mostly borrowed—30-some billion dollars. We know they have a deficit, so it's all borrowed money. It's going to be shown as sort of like a big mortgage, and this troubles me, really.

1730

But if I go back to the purpose of this opposition day motion, we're saying that we want to follow the advice of the Auditor General, Mr. McCarter. He has said in the 2005 and subsequent reports that he has trouble with certain ministries. I know that the last time they had Lottogate, the scandal where Mike Colle had to resign. It wasn't Mike's fault; it was the government run awry, run amok, really, that started spending money like there was no tomorrow.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, people are mentioning the million dollars for the cricket club when they'd only asked for \$100,000. What's in a million? Really.

They say in here: "That the Legislative Assembly call on the McGuinty government"—it's very respectfully requested—"to amend Bill 162 to provide that the McGuinty government table reports in this House no later than five sitting days before the end of each of the sitting periods of the 2009-10 fiscal year." Now, what's so onerous about that? If you're not tracking it, why

aren't you? If you are tracking it, why not share it? That's not that complicated.

It says "to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates." They already do that, the quarterly reports. Businesses do it. Just tell the people; that's all we're asking for. It isn't that onerous. In fact, I expect reasonable, thinking people on all sides of the House will support this because it doesn't have any jagged edges on it or any surprises. It's right here. It says "to detail the actual implementation of the budget." Not a problem—quarterly reports. The estimates committee can review this spending.

Item (c) here says "to itemize the actual effects of the budget with respect to the minimizing of existing job losses." Aren't we trying to spend money on infrastructure to create jobs? In fact, Bill 150, Mr. Smitherman's Green Energy Act, accounts that they're going to create thousands of jobs. Well, let's share the good news. I would hope there is good news, because some will be for my constituents who have been laid off in the auto sector. There are 300,000 families without an income.

They don't seem to care, but what they have done there in this bill—I'm getting off topic a bit. I am saying this: I heard the review today, done by chartered accountants, of the HST. This is the Dalton McGuinty new tax. It's hard for people to understand, but the young people here would understand it. What it means is that everything that you buy is going to cost 8% more. It's that simple. If you have a candy bar, or if you go to McDonald's—hopefully you don't because you've got to have better-quality food. An apple, for instance; an apple a day will cost you 8 cents more, I'm sure. It's like this for every single expenditure, especially seniors and people on fixed income. When they get on the bus, they're probably going to pay more. If they take a taxi, they're going to pay more. If they have somebody do their income taxes, they'll pay more.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Not for gas. You wouldn't pay more for gas, would you? Gasoline?

Mr. John O'Toole: Gasoline, exactly; home heating oil, cable television. This is an independent, third party professional report by chartered accountants; these are qualified, educated, independent, self-regulatory professional people. They say it's probably going to cost about \$2,000 per family a year. That's almost \$200 a month.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: We figured out, just by talking to people at Tim Hortons, that it's probably going to be \$25 to \$40 a week per individual. It's only a new tax. We're trying to find out a simple way for the people of Ontario to understand that you've just been clawed.

Our advice, basically, is to get a button on your pocket so they can't get at your wallet, and a hand in your pocket. We're going to run that ad, hand in your pocket, and we're going to have a picture of Dalton McGuinty walking around behind you with—now, I know sometimes governments need more money, but what's missing here is the accountability.

This is what Mr. McGuinty doesn't account for. Our leader, Bob Runciman, is really simply saying, "That

each such report shall automatically and immediately be posted on an accessible and interactive government website”—it's not us trying to smooth the numbers or crank the numbers—“and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates and to the Auditor General.” These are just transparency rules. We're not asking for much, but I do encourage people to consider voting for it because it's something each one of us should stand for. It's openness and accountability. I don't even think it's partisan. If I just take away that talk about the new tax—it's there, but we don't need to get aggressive about it and too belligerent. This budget is a huge whack in the pocketbook, I'll tell you.

I would like to stay on the high road here and say that the accountability thing is what troubles me.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I got carried away there a bit, but I'm getting back on the good track now. There's good track-bad track messaging.

But the fact is that I have the greatest respect for our House leader, Elizabeth Witmer. She has asked several questions of David McGuinty—David McGuinty, Freudian slip—David Caplan. David Caplan's mother, by the way, was the Minister of Health at one time. Do any of you know that? She was a good minister. She usually answered the questions. Minister Caplan isn't answering the questions. In fact, the media now are on this. They're on this story that this agency we had—it was called SSH; it almost had kind of a strange name—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, yes. The Minister of Transportation raises a very good question. And it was run so modestly. In fact, I was on that committee. I was appointed to that committee, and it was a proud moment in my life when I was given the privilege of being on that committee. Having worked as a programmer, as a systems person, in my life for quite a few years—actually, maybe before computers—

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I didn't know that.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. But here's the deal: The spending has gone through the roof. They brought it up; I didn't. I just brought up that health is a big part of the budget. About 50% of the budget is health care—and growing. In fact, the member for Cambridge's speech was about standing up for his hospital and the people in his community. What am I doing? What is the member for Sarnia-Lambton doing? They want to close the emergency in his hospital. In Cambridge, he has been fighting for years for that hospital. In my community last weekend, there was a big demonstration with thousands of people. What was it? They want to close the emergency. And they tell us in the House that there is no problem. If there's no problem—and now they're saying it's the LHINs, these local health integration networks. They're local, all right—they're bigger than most provinces—and they're integrated, meaning with the Liberal Party—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: To me, the LHINs are a shield for the minister; they're a shield so they can't get to David

Caplan. Look, it's a designed method so you can't get to the minister. But here is what has happened with the SSH, the Smart Systems for Health—and the Minister of Transportation said, and I have the highest regard for him, normally. Here's what has happened. In 2002-03, the expenses were \$82 million. That's a lot of money. They did connect up about 700 different health networks—pharmacies, doctors' offices, hospitals, integrated hospitals. So they did some work.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's a good thing.

Mr. John O'Toole: And the Minister of the Environment with the sludge bill, he's saying things too. Kingston has a lot of trouble with their hospitals. They're laying nurses off by the hundreds.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, and he's a minister.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Take that back.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speak to the press. Line it up, and I will.

The spending for Smart Systems for Health—let's stay on topic because this is a budget thing, serious stuff. In 2003-04, they spent \$82 million. Let's just move forward a few years here. In 2006-07, \$125 million; that's almost double the budget. And what have they done? They fired them all; exactly.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: They fired them all. If you look down into the detail—if people watching are interested, I'd be happy to send you these notes because we got them under freedom of information, and these have been independently proven by the ministry. They spent \$85,000 on food and expenses. You could buy a lot of sandwiches for \$85,000.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: A lot of pizza.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not sure there was any pizza. It sounds like filet mignon to me.

Travel expenses: half a million dollars. Where did they go? On a holiday? It was 17 times the previous—accommodation, \$85,000. Here's the really good one: Entertainment and catering was \$143,000. I'd like to find out some of the names of the people, because if they weren't eating the right kind of food, they'd all be overweight. There's a lot of food here. There's a lot of dieting needing to be going on right now. I hope there wasn't any alcohol on the bills. But usually what happens with these arm's-length agencies, you can't get the bills. They just sign the Visa bill and it doesn't itemize four bottles of wine at \$100 each. You don't see the detail. It worries me.

I'm going to roll this back to the budget. What worries me most is—we're asking for accountability. We don't want to see this stuff on the wine, the consultants and all that stuff. We know it went on. They won't answer it, but we know it. What is this? They cancelled it. They fired them all, actually. They must have fired them because they couldn't put up with the expenditures that were going on. I would suspect the minister did the right thing in this case by firing them, but I'm going to give him a bit of advice in the few minutes I have left.

Just go with Health Infoway, the federal program. It works already and other provinces have adopted it.

It's another boondoggle. I'm afraid they're going to spend more money on more boondoggles.

But vote for this. It's the right thing. It's about transparency and accountability. It will be the first right thing you've done this session. It's the right thing to do. It isn't as if it's Premier McGuinty versus our leader, Bob Runciman. This is about the people of Ontario needing to have the information. It's their money that you're spending without many rules around it.

I think there's more to be said on this bill, and I'm in hopes that next week when you debate Bill 162, that some of the speech I had prepared I'll actually use next week when I speak on Bill 162. With that, next week—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Not next week, but I'll be preparing the speech next week—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think your time's up. Further debate?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I find this motion to be most curious. We have a lot of profound and very serious debate in this chamber, but when it comes to this motion and others that the party opposite has put forward—the official opposition, the Conservative Party—when it comes to economic and fiscal responsibility, I just have to chuckle. I've been sitting here all afternoon kind of chuckling at their motion. They held a budget at Magna, a parts plant. They went outside of this place to put a budget before the people of Ontario. They report and say that they ruled during times that they themselves claim were good times, excellent times in Ontario, and yet they produced a \$5.6-billion deficit that they hid from the people of Ontario. Also during what they claim were good times, they added \$48 billion to the Ontario debt.

We're on the right course over here on this side of the House. I chuckle and I laugh when I see motions put forward by the party opposite that talk about fiscal responsibility that they have in their history. It is, in fact, mythical. It's a mythical notion that they, that party opposite, the Conservatives, are fiscally responsible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Mississauga—Pickering—Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. Mississauga's close to my heart but not close to my home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I keep trying to put it in the Scarborough—

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I appreciate the time we have left this afternoon to speak to—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mississauga-Scarborough?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Yes, that's a stretch. Mississauga-Scarborough would be a bit of a stretch for a riding.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to today's opposition motion. We've heard a number of members of the

Legislature. We've heard, I think, a couple of those sort of barnburner speeches.

I want to thank particularly the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his speech earlier in which he articulated where we will stand in respect to this opposition day motion.

I want to talk a little bit, though, if I could, because this is intended, I guess, to speak to issues of transparency, issues of accountability—not that the members in this House need to be reminded, but I guess we need to do that on occasion—just briefly about at least a few of the processes we currently have in place in this place that provide exactly those levels of accountability that they're asking for, by publishing something as opposed to necessarily debating certain things.

We have the budget itself, we've been through a budget motion debate, and we're in the midst of a budget bill debate, as well as now the second opposition day motion, with more than ample opportunity for every member of this Legislature to have an opportunity to put forward their views on the budget of the government of the day.

We have the question period process on a daily basis in this place, which provides an opportunity for the opposition to hold government to account, the Premier and the cabinet. That's their role, to hold them to account, to keep their feet to the fire as Her Majesty's loyal opposition and the third party. So each and every day, there's an opportunity to seek out and hold government to account for exactly the reasons that the opposition is putting forward.

Partway through the year, once we have finished with the budget process, in the fall we have a fall economic statement. The fall economic statement very formally puts before this Legislature yet again the status of the economic condition of the province at that point in time, as well as any new initiatives that may have come along during the course of the year. Once again, the opposition has every opportunity to hold the government to account around the fall economic statement, which is an update on the status during the course of a fiscal year of the current budget as well as any new initiatives that might occur.

We have standing committees in this place, which takes the debate out of here, with opportunities for opposition to ask exactly these kinds of questions, to put those matters on the record, in Hansard, to have called before them members of cabinet individually and to hold them there for many hours on end in which they can question them on any number of matters in respect to their ministries, not the least of which would include any of the matters that are referenced here, and that process is part of our estimates process on an ongoing basis in this place.

We have public accounts, which also has an obligation to report back to this place on the accounts of the province and the various actions of government.

So we're not without process already—more than readily available to us either in this Legislature or in

standing committees, in which all three parties are engaged, with opportunities that go well beyond what we might be able to achieve here on a given day, in a more direct format, and certainly in more than one standing committee format.

The auditor also plays a very big role in this in providing to this Legislature a report on an annual basis of the actions of government. It's important that we have that information, that we have the opportunity to review what the auditor has to say about the actions that a government takes and, at the same time, for the opposition to be able to use the auditor's report, again, to hold government to account.

Those are only a very few of the types of initiatives that already exist in this place that provide the types of opportunities purported to be asked for in the opposition day motion.

What I find particularly interesting in this motion is that it fails to speak to some of the principal concerns that the people of the province of Ontario have. It fails to speak at all to the vulnerable. They're quick to talk about infrastructure funding, but they're loath to speak to the needs of children. They're quick to speak to new private sector jobs, but they're loath to speak to the disabled within the context of this motion.

If they want to bring forward an opposition day motion to try to hold government further to account, of higher transparency, I would suggest to them that maybe the motion should read along the lines of, "We need a reporting mechanism to ensure five days before the end of each session that you report on the successes you're having in the implementation of the Ontario child benefit; that you report on the implementation of increases to Ontario Works; that you report on the successes you've had in implementing the increases for the Ontario disability support payments," all of which are included in this budget. I would think that they would want to hear in this place from us the impacts of the implementation of increases in the minimum wage from—I think it was—\$6.75 when we took office to \$9.50 now, with one more increase yet to come.

I would think they would be interested in knowing what's happening to those people in our communities who are working at the lower end of the wage scale; would want to know what's happening to them in the context of the work environment and how they're finding themselves in a better position with an increased minimum wage.

They might want to hear about what the impacts are for seniors when we see a doubling in the property tax grant. I think those are the kinds of things the people of Ontario want to know. These budgets aren't always about just me, just you or just you. They really do have to be about us. They have to be about all of us in the province of Ontario, particularly those who are not in the position to speak up for themselves in the same way that we might be; who aren't necessarily in the same position to speak up for themselves through some other organized environment. I would think the opposition would want to ensure

that this government is protecting the interests of those very vulnerable individuals, those children, those with disabilities, those who are finding difficulty getting into the workforce, those seniors. I think they would want to have us account to that matter first.

Very briefly, all I can say is that there are a number of processes in place. Much of what we will do in this budget will be in partnership either with our municipalities, our school boards, our hospitals or the federal government, and any number of measures of accountability are built into all of those structures and all of those agreements.

Speaker, thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Miller, Norm	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Miller, Paul	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	O'Toole, John	
Martiniuk, Gerry	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza	Wilkinson, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 48.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is adjourned until Thursday, April 9, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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

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

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

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, France Gélinas
Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
Julia Munro, David Ramsay
Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

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

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

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

Continued from back cover

Markham District Veterans Association

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....5998

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis

Mr. John O'Toole.....5999

Tibetan Canadians

Ms. Laurel C. Broten.....5999

Assistance to the disabled

Mr. Khalil Ramal5999

Rural summer jobs program

Mrs. Carol Mitchell.....5999

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....6000

Report adopted.....6000

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

Student achievement / Rendement scolaire

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....6000

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....6001

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer.....6002

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Taxation

Ms. Sylvia Jones6002

Ontario budget

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti6003

Hospital funding

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk6003

Air quality

Mr. Charles Sousa.....6003

Road safety

Mr. John O'Toole.....6003

Child custody

Mr. Kim Craitor6004

Protection of minors

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....6004

Ontario budget

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....6004

Road safety

Mr. John O'Toole.....6005

Cemeteries

Mr. Kim Craitor6005

Hospital funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....6005

Lupus

Mr. Kim Craitor6005

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Government accountability

Mr. Robert W. Runciman.....6006

Mr. Paul Miller.....6007

Mr. Yasir Naqvi6012

Mr. Toby Barrett6013

Mr. Gilles Bisson6013

Order of business

Hon. John Wilkinson.....6015

Motion agreed to6015

Government accountability (continued)

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....6015

Mrs. Julia Munro6017

Mr. Khalil Ramal6018

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk.....6018

Mr. Jeff Leal.....6019

Mr. John O'Toole.....6020

Mr. Pat Hoy.....6022

Mr. Wayne Arthurs6022

Motion negatived6023

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 8 April 2009 / Mercredi 8 avril 2009

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Road Safety Act, 2009, Bill 126, Mr. Bradley / Loi de 2009 sur la sécurité routière, projet de loi 126, M. Bradley

Hon. James J. Bradley	5977
Mrs. Linda Jeffrey	5980
Mr. John O'Toole	5982
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	5982
Mr. Jeff Leal	5982
Mrs. Julia Munro	5983
Hon. James J. Bradley	5983
Mr. John O'Toole	5983
Mr. Gilles Bisson	5985
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5986
Mr. John Yakabuski	5986
Hon. James J. Bradley	5986
Mr. John O'Toole	5987
Third reading debate deemed adjourned	5987

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. George Smitherman	5987
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	5987
Mme France Gélinas	5987

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Senior citizens

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	5987
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5987

Taxation

Mr. Robert W. Runciman	5988
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	5988

Provincial purchasing policy

Mr. Howard Hampton	5989
Hon. James J. Bradley	5989
Hon. George Smitherman	5990

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	5990
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5990

Taxation

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5991
Hon. Dwight Duncan	5991

Education

Mr. Rosario Marchese	5991
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	5991

Environmental protection

Mr. David Oraziotti	5992
Hon. John Gerretsen	5992

Local health integration networks

Mr. Ted Arnott	5992
Hon. David Caplan	5992

Home care

Mme France Gélinas	5993
Hon. David Caplan	5993

Diamond industry

Mr. David Ramsay	5993
Hon. Michael Gravelle	5994

Provincial purchasing policy

Mr. John Yakabuski	5994
Hon. George Smitherman	5994

Attawapiskat First Nation

Mr. Gilles Bisson	5995
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	5995

GO Transit

Mr. Jeff Leal	5995
Hon. James J. Bradley	5996

Government accountability

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	5996
Hon. David Caplan	5996

Assistance to the disabled

Mr. Michael Prue	5997
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	5997

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Taxation

Mr. Toby Barrett	5997
------------------------	------

Earthquake in Italy

Mr. Paul Miller	5998
-----------------------	------

Herb Gray

Mr. Yasir Naqvi	5998
-----------------------	------

Green energy legislation

Ms. Sylvia Jones	5998
------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover