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**Monday 20 April 2009**

**Lundi 20 avril 2009**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 April 2009

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 avril 2009

*The House met at 1030.*

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

*Prayers.*

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Jim Watson:** I'm very pleased to recognize four physicians from the Canadian Dermatology Association: Dr. Cheryl Rosen, Dr. Peter Vigneich, Dr. Lisa Kellett and Dr. Vince Bertucci. They're here to conduct a skin cancer screening clinic from approximately 11:30 to 2 p.m. in room 228. I'd encourage all members to go. Two years ago I went to this clinic, and they discovered I had skin cancer. I was treated as a result of the preventive measures. So I'd urge members to go, and I want to thank the members of the Canadian Dermatology Association for being with us today and providing this clinic for all members, staff and journalists. Welcome to the House.

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** It's my pleasure to introduce representatives today from ACTRA Toronto: Heather Allin-Pres, Wendy Crewson, Peter Keleghan, Mayko Nguyen, Gordon Pinsent, Art Hindle and Brian Topp. Thank you all for coming today.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I'm delighted: Today we have as guests, in the east members' gallery, Hans and Gertrud Feldmann. They are with us from Parry Sound, formerly farmers from the Listowel area.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** It's my pleasure to introduce Bev Currie, the mother of page Robyn Currie, and her grandparents Alan and Helen Currie.

**Hon. Margaret R. Best:** Good morning. It's my pleasure to introduce, from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, William Burch, a student who is with us today.

**Hon. John Milloy:** I would like to welcome Andrew Vellathottam and Nicole Hawkins, chairs of the Ontario Medical Students Association, along with 45 medical students and residents, who are joining us at Queen's Park today for the Ontario Medical Association and PAIRO medical student day. Thanks to the Ontario Medical Association for hosting this.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. It deals with the McGuinty sales tax.

Every single day, more and more victims of Dalton McGuinty's indifferent attitude toward taxpayers are coming forward. It's becoming clear that the Premier went ahead with this tax grab behind the backs of his own caucus.

Sorry, that should be going to the Premier. I was told he wasn't going to be here.

Once again, as you tried in 2004, you're nickel-and-diming hard-working people for tax on meals at restaurants, coffee shops, hospital waiting rooms: déjà vu all over again in the form of a soup-and-sandwich tax.

Premier, are you not at all concerned that Ontarians—seniors, students, young families, those on fixed incomes—are realizing that you went ahead with this tax grab without thinking it through?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. First of all, I want to assure him and Ontarians that we spent a lot of time thinking about this. We weighed the fact that what is happening out there, globally speaking, is very, very big. It is proving to be powerful and very persistent.

Some, like my honourable colleague, would argue that there's no need for us to do anything, that the world as it existed before this worldwide recession will somehow return to us and everything will be restored to its natural order. We don't believe that. We think we've got to do something; we have to do it together.

I know that what I'm asking of Ontarians is not easy; I understand that. But I think it's absolutely essential that we find a way to move forward together. That's why we're going to move ahead with a single sales tax. That's why we're going to cut personal income taxes and cut corporate taxes. We have to do these things to put ourselves on a stronger footing so we can seize new possibilities.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Our caucus was relentless in fighting the Premier's earlier attempt at a soup-and-sandwich tax grab, and we're prepared to do it again. We know, and I think Ontarians know, that this is nothing more than a different wolf in the same McGuinty clothing.

My colleague from Simcoe North said it perfectly in 2004, after you backed away from the soup-and-sandwich tax: "Hold on to your wallets, because who knows what Dalton will go after next?"

It was a shameless tax attempt, and again we're seeing that there's nothing this Premier isn't prepared to go after to feed his tax cravings, even if it means taxing a family going for an ice cream, or young people getting a slice of pizza on the way to work.

Premier, how can you not see that this sales tax is a full-bore attack on seniors going out for a coffee, on a parent taking her daughter and friends to a local restaurant for a birthday party, on students and on families?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** One hundred and thirty other countries have done this, as have four other provinces. I think that even my honourable colleague would admit, in a dispassionate and objective way, that this is the kind of step that has been recommended by thoughtful economists for a long, long time.

The reason that my honourable colleague did not do it when he was in government, and the reason that the NDP did not do it in government, is because it is fraught with political risk, to be honest. It is fraught with political risk. But we've been hired on to do a particular job on this side of the House, and that is to provide leadership. The world as we knew it before the recession has left us. My friends may think it's going to be the same and we need do nothing to make ourselves stronger. I disagree with that. That is why, as we move forward, we're cutting personal income taxes in the province of Ontario for 93% of Ontarians. We think that's going to be very helpful as they proceed with grappling with the new single sales tax.

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

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Well, in terms of sincerity, I want to quote the Premier: "You don't have to spend too much time outside of this place to talk to real people at the street level to gain an understanding that there is simply no tolerance whatsoever left for increased taxes in this province. People have had it up to here and beyond when it comes to taxes."

That was you, Premier, in 1994, speaking to Bob Rae, whose tax-and-spending deficit and debt-building records you've smashed. Now you are going after soup and sandwiches.

Approximately 1.5 million meals priced under \$4 are sold every day in our province. Approximately 86% of all meals in school cafeterias are priced under \$4, Premier.

Premier, are you and your colleagues, your silent backbenchers, bankrupt to the point where you feel the need to force seniors and kids to pay a tax on a cup of coffee or a sandwich?

1040

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I know that my honourable colleague would like to take a look at the package in a more fulsome manner, and I'll speak to that now.

We are going to proceed with a tax cut for 93% of Ontarians: We're going to provide families earning less than \$160,000 with \$1,000 in payments; individuals earning less than \$80,000 with \$300 in payments. There's a new Ontario sales tax credit—\$260 each for adults and children—which is permanent annual tax relief. We're also going to ensure, for example, that a single parent on social assistance with two children will save over \$1,200 under our new plan; a single parent earning \$25,000 with one child will save over \$1,100 under our tax plan.

Again, I'm saying it is not easy, but it's essential, and we've done it in a way that protects the overwhelming majority of Ontario families.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Back to the Premier: I'd like to read into the record an e-mail I received from a constituent of one of the Liberal backbenchers. "Mr. Runciman please see the latest letter I have sent to Mr. Duncan trying to get answers ... as you can see Mr. Duncan doesn't even feel he needs to respond to a citizen, with a legitimate question and concern. This level of Liberal arrogance is beyond my understanding...."

Premier, do you feel it's acceptable to a hard-working family that the Minister of Finance doesn't care enough to respond to an Ontarian's very real and legitimate concern about your latest tax increase not once, but twice?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to commend the Minister of Finance in his absence. He's working hard. He's on the road now to speak to foreign investors in our bond. I can say that the minister, like every member of our caucus, has given careful thought as to what we need to do together to strengthen ourselves.

My friend opposite believes that we need do nothing. He believes firmly in the power of inaction. We reject that. We think our world has changed. We think we have to take certain kinds of steps. We think that we've been given a special responsibility to demonstrate leadership. That's what we're doing. We're doing it in a way that protects the overwhelming majority of Ontario families. We're doing it in a way that will strengthen our businesses and make them more competitive so they can create more jobs and hire more of us, and generate the wealth to support our schools, our hospitals and supports for our vulnerable. That's why we're moving in that direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** This is a constituent of a Liberal backbencher, a backbencher who was led down the garden path by this Premier and his Minister of Finance who was signing a deal with the federal government behind the backs of his own caucus. They have a clear and direct question about your sales tax grab.

I want to quote directly from what the constituent has asked the Minister of Finance not once, but twice:

"Although we have firmed up our offer to purchase prior to the budget announcement, our possession date will fall outside the deadline of June 2010 where the effect of the additional PST may be added. The PST will cause an approximate \$40,000 difference in additional costs to our new home purchase.

"My question is ... will the PST component be grandfathered backward for people in our situation?"

Premier, is the Minister of Finance incapable of answering this question or simply choosing to ignore this hard-working family?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I want to remind members of this House that my honourable colleague the leader of the official opposition, when first asked about the single sales tax, said that in principle he supports such a tax, so I'm just wondering why he might have changed his mind at this point in time.

I want to remind Ontarians that we put in place a complete exemption from the new single sales tax and its provincial component for homes up to \$400,000. It's phased in between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The overwhelming majority of new home purchases in the province of Ontario are valued at less than \$400,000. That means the overwhelming majority of Ontario families who buy brand new homes will not be encountering any new expenses.

Again, what I'm saying to Ontario families and businesses is we need to do this together; we need to make ourselves stronger; we need to become more competitive; we need to generate more wealth to support all those public services that all our families count on.

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

**Mr. Robert W. Runciman:** Premier, this is a huge issue with significant implications. Thousands of Ontarians have made commitments on new homes with closing dates after July 1 of next year. They have a right to know now whether your tax grab will hit them. The Minister of Finance has refused to answer. I have to ask, is this just another indication that you people don't have a clue about what you're doing over there?

This appears to be the standard McGuinty approach to tax policy: Never properly think it through, break your promises, grab the money and run and then let the chips fall where they may.

Premier, is that what this is all about: McGuinty government incompetence?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I'm always grateful for the positive encouragement from my colleague opposite. I obviously have a different perspective than does he on this particular matter, as in so many others, but I appreciate the vibrant debate that this question period gives me an opportunity to engage in.

Again, our world has changed. We need to do certain kinds of things in the province of Ontario to make ourselves stronger, to ensure that we always have the capacity to turn to our children and say: "In the time of this great recession, we took a difficult step, but we knew it was an essential step. We did it so that you could have good schools and your kids will have good schools. We did it so that you could have good health care and your family will have access to good health care. We did this so that if anybody in your family needs supports because they're most vulnerable, we've got the capacity collectively to provide those kinds of supports. We did it to ensure that our businesses could compete in a global economy so that they could create more jobs and hire more of us and generate more wealth." That's—

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

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Premier. Here's the state of Ontario's economy: After more than five years on this government's watch, 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost, an unemployment rate in this province

soon to hit double digits and a confused, bewildered government which has no answers to the pension crisis, no answers to the auto crisis and no answers to the crisis in forestry and mining. Why is this government failing these industries, these workers and these families?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** As I think I said a few times in this House, the most recent estimate from the United Nations is that we are going to lose from 40 million to 50 million jobs worldwide. Notwithstanding my honourable colleague's effort to indict the government here at Queen's Park with exclusive responsibility for a worldwide recession, I just don't believe Ontarians are prepared to accept that.

We are going to continue to move forward with our five-point plan. We're going to continue to invest in the things that will make us stronger. We will also move ahead with corporate tax cuts. We're going to move ahead with more supports for people who are losing their jobs, more supports for communities that are caught up in this distress caused by a worldwide recession. As well, we're going to cut taxes for Ontarians; 93% of Ontarians will experience a tax cut.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** While this government is struggling for answers, Ontario workers went through another long and agonizing weekend. Here are some examples. In Sudbury, the Vale Inco shutdown will affect 5,000 workers, leaving the Sudbury nickel mine silent this summer. There's an eight-week closure at the Xstrata copper smelter near Timmins. And AbitibiBowater, as we all know, filed for bankruptcy. In response, this government had a photo op in Chapleau that created less than 40 jobs.

Does this government think that a photo op and 40 jobs make up for the tens of thousands of jobs that have been lost across northern Ontario?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** My honourable colleague may be dismissive of 40 jobs in Chapleau, but I was in Chapleau and had an opportunity to speak with the people there, the young entrepreneurs in an organization that is 51% owned by the aboriginal community in that part of Ontario. They're very proud of the effort that they're making, very proud of those jobs that they're creating. I'm very proud to associate with that business and to help put them on a stronger financial footing going forward.

My friend may be dismissive of those kinds of steps, and there are a myriad of them that we're taking around this province, but that's exactly the kind of approach that we will continue to take: work with entrepreneurs, work with our communities and create those jobs.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** You know it's a similar story across southern Ontario as well. GM and Chrysler are on the verge of bankruptcy. Jobs and pensions are on the line, yet we hear precious little from this government. Why is the government standing on the sidelines while

the financial security of tens of thousands of Ontario families hangs in the balance?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I really don't understand where my honourable colleague is coming from on this score. She knows that we have been working with the federal government, together with Washington, to do what we can together to lend support to an auto sector that is struggling in North America. We've now put forward over \$1 billion in support by way of short-term financing, for GM and Chrysler in particular. We are encouraging Chrysler and CAW to pursue their negotiations. We stand at the ready to play a still greater role. We understand that, globally, we are the only subnational jurisdiction that is at the table when it comes to supporting our auto sector. So again, I just don't understand where my colleague is coming from when she says that we're not there for the auto sector and autoworkers in Ontario.

1050

#### ONTARIO BUDGET

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Perhaps I can help the Premier, because there's more. In Niagara, at John Deere, GM, Vale Inco and Abitibi, thousands of good-paying jobs are gone or in doubt. The backbone of Niagara's entire economy—down the drain. What does the Premier have to say to the hard-working people of Niagara region?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** I would say don't give in to the pessimism, the negativity and the gloomy outlook of the opposition. That is just not helpful.

I understand that these are challenging times and that many of our families have been affected and, indeed, have been hurt by this. But I want to reassure them that they have a government in place that will never give up on them and never give in to that negativity and that pessimism. That's why we're continuing to move ahead with our budget. Notwithstanding these difficult financial times, we can assure our families we are investing more in their schools, in their health care, in supports for the vulnerable. We're going to build new hospitals in that part of Ontario as well. We're also investing in more training opportunities for folks who have lost their jobs.

So again, I want to say that we understand these are difficult times, that they are up against it, but I want them to know this government is in their corner.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The government's budget answer was the wrong answer. Here's what their answer was: more than \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts, not to the companies that are hurting, but to profitable corporations. This government is giving away billions and billions of dollars to companies that do not need it and standing idly by while the jobs and pensions of tens of thousands of people disappear. How does this government justify the choices that it is making?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** Just so we put things in some perspective here, the budget is about building both

a more competitive and caring Ontario. While we have cut business taxes—we will be cutting business taxes by \$4.5 billion over three years—we're cutting them for people by \$10.6 billion over three years. At the same time, we are investing in more affordable housing; we're investing in more health care, more education, more post-secondary education. We're putting \$32.5 billion into infrastructure to create those hospitals, schools, roads and public transit that benefit our communities and create 300,000 jobs in the short order, exactly when we need them. I would just ask my colleague to bring a more balanced, more measured consideration to the facts that make up our budget.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The \$4-billion corporate tax giveaway is the wrong policy at the wrong time. It's based on bad economics, plain and simple. The focus should be on sustaining jobs and protecting pensions. That's what Ontarians need to get through these extraordinarily difficult times, but that's not what the government is doing. When will this government admit it made the wrong choice when we, as a province, and the people of this province can least afford it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** We took a lot of time to consider the advice that we have received. I'm not sure any Minister of Finance has ever engaged in more consultation than did Minister Duncan in preparation for the budget that we recently introduced in this House. These are very difficult times. It's the greatest economic crisis we've had to grapple with in 80 years. And it's not just affecting us and the rest of Canada or the US; it's affecting the world.

We thought it was important to send a strong signal to the rest of the world that we understand the significance of this crisis before us and that it's important for us to take bold steps, and that's what we are doing. We're moving ahead with a single sales tax, we are cutting taxes for 92% of Ontarians, we are reducing business taxes so that our businesses can grow stronger and become more competitive and create more jobs. It's not an easy thing to do, but we believe it is absolutely essential to get Ontario on a firmer footing.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Minister, as you know, the golf club course sector is a very important part of our tourism industry here in the province, providing tens of thousands of jobs, many to students, billions of dollars of investments, and of course they've had some difficult times as well. Minister, can you explain to the House today who your government consulted with in the golf club sector, as well as the tourism sector, before proceeding with the 8% tax harmonization increase?

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** As the member knows, the Minister of Finance consulted broadly in the leadup to the budget. We also had the Standing Committee on Fi-

nance and Economic Affairs that travelled across the province, and the Minister of Finance did extensive consultations with a variety of stakeholders. I, too, have met with a number of our stakeholders in tourism, and I look forward to the \$40 million that will be flowing to our tourist destination marketing organization, starting with the single sales tax next year.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Minister, maybe you should have consulted with some of your Liberal friends. I have a quote: "But let me repeat, so there's no doubt about it. No Liberal Party with a brain in its head is going to raise taxes in the middle of a recession." That was said by Michael Ignatieff last week, on April 16.

Minister, I made a point last week of contacting the owners of 10 golf courses. I asked them, with the 8% tax increase in the cost to their customers, how it would impact jobs, and in particular student jobs. They unanimously agreed that the HST would—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** Well, you might think it's funny. It's costing us jobs here, if you don't have a clue.

They unanimously agreed that the HST would have a negative impact and that between three and seven jobs would be lost on each golf course. Minister, that's an average of 50 jobs on 10 golf courses in one small part of the province. As Minister of Tourism, what will you do to ensure that no further jobs are lost in the tourism sector as a result of your HST—

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

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** As the member well knows, and as the Premier has discussed on a number of occasions this morning, by moving to a single sales tax, we'll make our tax system more efficient, saving business costs on their investment inputs, and that will be a saving of more than \$500 million a year in paperwork costs alone. This will make Ontario more competitive and will lead to more jobs and new investment.

We're also cutting taxes for small businesses, which, as the member knows, are the backbone of tourism across the province, and this will help create jobs and grow even stronger businesses. The corporate income tax rate for small businesses will be cut by 18%. Ontario will become the first jurisdiction in Canada to eliminate the small business deduction surtax, removing a significant barrier for growth for many of our small businesses. We're also lowering the general income tax rate for corporations to 12% from 14% on July 1, 2010, and to 10% in 2013.

We are helping our small businesses, including those—

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

#### POVERTY

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today's Toronto Star reports that 450 organizations criticized the McGuinty

government's poverty reduction bill because it doesn't require governments to work for a poverty-free Ontario. Will the minister commit now to include the goal of poverty elimination in the bill or does the minister accept that Ontarians, particularly those with no children, should suffer poverty, hunger, homelessness and sickness from now until all eternity?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Of course, I am committed to reducing poverty for all people in this province. We have made a very big step forward. We have released the first poverty reduction strategy. The legislation that is before committee today and tomorrow takes it further, so that subsequent governments will be mandated to bring forth comprehensive poverty reduction strategies going forward.

There is a lot of work to be done. Clearly we have a long way to go, but we're taking very important steps: the first step, the release of the strategy; the second step with the legislation.

I say to the member once again that we need the support of all people in this House if we want to reduce poverty in this province.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Michael Prue:** If the minister truly wanted to help all people, there wouldn't have been 2% coming next November for all those people who don't have children.

Sarah Blackstock of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction says this: The purpose of poverty reduction strategies must be to create a poverty-free Ontario and the bill should explicitly say that. If that's not the goal, why are we doing this?" The very first clause in Quebec's successful poverty reduction act commits the government "to strive toward a poverty-free Quebec." Why won't the McGuinty government listen to and give hope to the men and women in Ontario who are hurting the most and commit now to work for an Ontario without poverty?

**1100**

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** As I said earlier, today and tomorrow the committee will be hearing from a number of people. I know that there are written submissions coming from others. I can tell you that we're going to listen very carefully to what people have to say. We want this legislation to be strong, to be meaningful. I think it's very important, though, to acknowledge that we are a leading jurisdiction in the world when it comes to poverty reduction, and I'm proud of that record. I look forward to hearing what people have to say, and we will carefully consider the recommendations that we hear.

#### TRAVEL INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** My question is for the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services. Last week and over the weekend, I've seen stories in the newspaper and on television about the closure of Conquest Vacations. Many individuals and families seem to have been caught off guard by this news. Travellers who

are currently on a Conquest holiday are obviously very worried. We've been hearing of hotels threatening to block travellers from leaving unless they pay outrageous fees on top of what they originally paid Conquest.

As the minister responsible for consumer protection here in Ontario, can you tell me what is being done to ensure that travellers already abroad get home safely and that consumers who have purchased travel services from Conquest will be compensated?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** First of all, I really want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for asking this question. Conquest Vacations, Inc. actually voluntarily terminated their wholesale registration and operations after 37 years in business, and that has caused some inconvenience to the travellers and vacationers who have been vacationing outside.

We are very fortunate that in Ontario, consumers are protected by the Travel Industry Act, 2002, and the travel industry compensation fund. I'm going to be very pleased to outline some of the things that TICO, the organization that is responsible for the management of this act and for the compensation fund, has been doing. They have put an advisory on the website informing travellers what to do, but they also have worked very aggressively with chartering planes and with other carriers to bring all the vacationers back home to Ontario—

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

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** Minister, I'm glad to hear that TICO is taking these steps to ensure consumers can enjoy their holidays uninterrupted and return home to Ontario safely. However, there are still many consumers who purchased Conquest travel services who have not yet departed and whose travel plans have been cancelled due to Conquest's closure.

Minister, as we all know, these are challenging economic times and Ontario families, more than ever, are conscious of how they spend their hard-earned money. Ontario consumers want to be reassured that they will be reimbursed, whether it's through their credit card provider or other means. Can you tell me what steps are being taken to ensure customers who have purchased Conquest vacations and have not yet taken them will not lose any of their hard-earned money because of the company's closure?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** As I said, Ontario consumers actually are protected by the travel industry compensation fund; we are one of three provinces in Canada that have this fund established, which protects consumers. But in addition to that, I want to say this fund actually is well funded. There's about \$29 million in this fund. TICO is working very aggressively with all the people who have booked their vacations so that their claims can be processed as quickly as possible, so that they are not out of pocket on any of these items.

#### GREEN POWER GENERATION

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Despite the fact that

there is scientific, documented proof of serious health effects from exposure to wind turbines, you have thus far refused to conduct full, independent assessments of these health effects. As you know, there have been people appearing before the committee indicating the adverse effects that they have suffered. Having heard some of the evidence, Minister, are you prepared to address the issue and do an analysis of the health concerns that have been brought forward?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I do want to thank the honourable member for the question and I want to thank the members of the legislative committee who spent a considerable amount of last week hearing from a wide variety of perspectives on the Green Energy Act.

We know that there is a tremendous amount of support for the Green Energy Act. We also know that some concerns are raised around health matters and we think it's incredibly important that we take those very seriously. As the committee hearings continue to go forward, there will be opportunity for people to bring amendments, as an example. But at the heart of it, what we intend to do through the auspices of the Ministry of the Environment is to establish universally strong setbacks across the province of Ontario, unlike the patchwork quilt which has emerged so far, that are designed with the best science in mind related to the natural environment, and certainly related to human health.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer:** Well, I didn't hear a "yes" from the minister indicating that they were going to do any health study regarding the adverse health effects that have been reported by people appearing before the committee. Whether it's migraines, whether it's sleeplessness or a list of other health effects, they are quite numerous.

I know that you're going to hear from individuals this week who are going to continue to provide you with evidence—scientific evidence—from around the world. Will you, after hearing the evidence this week, take it all into consideration and will you finally do the health study that is necessary to reassure the public that there will not be adverse health effects, which people are already suffering to date?

**Hon. George Smitherman:** I think what this debate has shown, which is kind of interesting, is that that party has reverted to a position of supporting coal as part of our energy supply mix. I want to remind the former health minister that the Ontario Medical Association—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Oh, they don't like it, but several of them are on a record called Hansard where they talked about coal. We know that the Ontario Medical Association has said that between 2,000 and 3,000 people in the province of Ontario died prematurely, associated with coal. It's interesting to see their policy critic articulating their view in favour of coal.

But on this matter of health concerns—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. George Smitherman:** Oh, a sensitive subject, I think. But on this matter of health concerns related to wind turbines, yes, we're taking very seriously the con-

cerns that are being raised. We expect for the Ministry of the Environment to put in place very, very strong protections for human health and we'll listen very carefully to reports that have come from all over the world around—

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

#### PUBLIC HEALTH

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Ontario acting chief medical officer of health released his report on the management of the listeriosis outbreak that killed 16 Ontarians. Dr. Williams's report paints a disturbing picture of a public health system that failed to communicate with the general public. It gets even worse: It relied on Maple Leaf executives to do that work.

Families and friends of the 16 people who died from this outbreak deserve to know that it won't happen again. What Ontarians want to know is, why was the minister missing in action?

**Hon. David Caplan:** I think the member lets her rhetoric get carried away. Quite frankly, Dr. Williams and his team in public health did an outstanding job protecting Ontarians. It was because of the lessons that we learned from SARS that the IPHIS system was put in place and, through a number of instances that were found around the province, they were able to piece together these different pieces of evidence to be able to alert federal officials to the fact that they believed that there was a food-borne illness.

Dr. Williams and his team did an outstanding job to protect the public health of Ontarians. Notwithstanding the member's comments, I want to thank Dr. Williams here and now—as I have had the chance to privately—for the kind of work and dedication that his team, the Ontario lab system and the Ontario public health network have put in place to protect the health and safety of Ontarians. That will be in place in the future to ensure that Ontarians have the kind of public health—

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The fact remains that in the post-SARS era, Ontario's public health system failed to communicate to the public. It is six years post-SARS and nothing has changed. There are still 13 out of 36 health units that lack a permanent, full-time medical officer of health; yet the decision to communicate to the public continues to be left to the discretion of the medical officer of health. How many more fiascos like this need to happen before this minister takes public health seriously?  
1110

**Hon. David Caplan:** Again, the member's rhetoric doesn't match up with the facts. The facts are these: We have learned the lessons of SARS and put in place the public health network, which was able to detect it. In fact, we have, after years of downloading begun under the New Democratic Party, begun to upload public health costs—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. David Caplan:** I hear the member from Welland say he's sorry, but I'm sorry, sir: The fact is that that is the history, the sorry legacy of the New Democrats to download these costs onto municipalities. That's why, under this government, we have uploaded those costs. As well, we have provided a tremendous increase in resources to public health. Dr. Williams did indicate the need for a federal lead in a national food-borne illness outbreak, and we have made those recommendations to our federal counterparts at the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I hope that they—

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

#### GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Speaker, first of all let me thank you for visiting the riding of Northumberland—Quinte West last week to visit three schools. Thank you for your interest.

My question today is to the Minister of the Environment. There's no question our climate is changing, and we all have a responsibility to act, as a government and as individuals, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I know that our government is committed to reducing greenhouse gases and setting aggressive reduction targets of 6% below 1990 levels by 2014 and 15% below 1990 levels by 2020. If Ontario is to meet these goals, then everyone must participate. We know that to reach these targets there are significant actions that our government must take, like our plan to close down coal. In my riding, in the community of Cobourg, there were some funding initiatives by your ministry to help that happen. Minister—

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

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** Well, the member is quite right. The community go green fund finances projects that inform, teach and motivate people to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to fight climate change. I hope we're all in favour of fighting climate change in this House.

On Friday, we had the pleasure of announcing that 34 community groups across Ontario will receive a total of \$2.15 million in provincial funding. This is for projects that by activity, scope and audience will encourage lifestyle changes that are better for our environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So in Cobourg, a fund of \$84,000 over two years went to Citizens for a Sustainable Cobourg. It basically will provide a central information clearing house for programs, incentives and tips about energy efficiency, alternative technology and waste reduction. That will help Cobourg meet its target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by some 23,000 tonnes over the next few years.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I know that creating the Cobourg Go Green Centre will provide valuable information to

those in my community who are looking for a way to reduce their environmental footprint.

While today marks the beginning of Earth Week, Ontarians are no longer waiting for a single day, week or month to consider their impact on our earth and take action; they are looking for ways to reduce their footprint every day of the year. They know that we only have one planet and we have to change our habits and the way we live to protect our homes. It is often local community-level programs, like those recognized by the community go green fund, that are among the best ways to mobilize Ontarians.

Could the minister tell this House about the community-based projects helping Ontarians to do their part that are supported by the community go green fund? For those who are interested in the fund, will there be another chance to make an application?

**Hon. John Gerretsen:** As I mentioned before, 34 community groups have received funding. Amongst them, for example, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has received \$40,000 for a two-year program called Green on Top at Waterdown, where high school students will design and build renewable energy projects at their school.

Also, in Dufferin-Caledon, the Caledon Countryside Alliance received almost \$15,000 for Take a Bite out of Climate Change. It's a program to rebuild the local food and farming system in Caledon and link local food and farming with greenhouse gas emissions.

In Parkdale-High Park, the Greenest City environmental organization received \$58,000 over two years for From the Ground Up. It's an innovative project that offers the people of Toronto's Parkdale district the capacity, support and space needed to grow local food. The next round of funding will come out in the fall of this year.

#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, it is clear from the recent Fraser Institute report that your approach to teaching our kids is flawed. Your plan is not working; in fact, I wonder if there really is a plan. I suspect that there is a patchwork quilt of policies that do not form a cohesive, functional plan for the benefit of all the students of this province—and I emphasize all the students.

Peter Cowley of the Fraser Institute says, "There's not another major district in the province that performed more poorly than the Toronto District School Board.... It's quite unusual that the ... metropolitan area in the province is doing so poorly."

Torontonians don't want to just get by. We want to compete and we want all of our students to succeed. The Premier stated in the House this morning that we need to be competitive. What are you doing to make sure that Toronto—

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

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** What we're doing investing in is every student in this province, whether that's an elementary student, whether that's a secondary student, to give them the resources they need. That's why 77% of kids in Ontario are graduating from high school, up from 68% when we came into office.

We do have a plan. Our student success strategy puts programs into our high schools. Our literacy and numeracy strategy puts resources into elementary schools, helps teachers change their practice. We've lowered class sizes in those early years. All of those things have led to those successes later on.

The other issue is that the Fraser Institute is not one of the resources and not one of the reference groups that we go to to get information. What we do is, we look at what's going on in our schools, we put the resources where they are needed and then we see the success of our students.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mrs. Joyce Savoline:** We can't pick and choose which statistics we want to read. I find it ironic that one minute you're rating your own schools and displaying them on a website, and the next minute you suddenly don't put a stick in school ratings.

It is interesting that schools in low-income neighbourhoods were doing really, really well, but what that says to me is that you are letting students who are just scraping by, who don't fall into that category—they continue to just scrape by.

Minister, what actions will you be taking to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to succeed in Toronto and Ontario?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** One of the reasons that we wanted to put the school information finder on our website was exactly what the member opposite is highlighting: that simplistic, overly simple view of organizations like the Fraser Institute and the C.D. Howe Institute, which take a group of schools and rank them. If you take any number of schools and rank them within a narrow band of achievement, there's going to be the top and there's going to be the bottom. What we wanted to do with the school information finder was to contextualize that information, to give families and the community more information so that they can assess what's happening.

The reality is, we're closing the gap between kids who are achieving and kids who aren't. We've put resources where they're needed so that kids who were having issues, kids who were struggling, are now achieving more. I would think that the member opposite would celebrate the fact that kids who were struggling are doing much better. That's cause for celebration. That's why—

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

#### TRAVEL INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. TICO knew half a year ago about

Conquest Vacations's cash flow problems. Its working capital had fallen below prescribed levels. Why didn't this minister warn the people of Ontario?

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** Let me say this. First of all, I want to thank the member for asking this question. We are very fortunate in this province that we have a travel compensation fund for consumers, and TICO has worked aggressively to actually update consumers and provide them with all the support they can provide.

**1120**

Let me just outline some of the things they have done. TICO worked immediately to guarantee the return travel of all of the approximately 2,600 customers in destinations. They had about nine planes standing to bring all Ontarians back to Ontario. They have worked with the hotels—27 hotels—to guarantee that the customers are not overcharged. Not only that, they have provided the information on their website. They're also working with the travellers who still have not taken their—

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

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Horse feathers. I had hoped that by giving this minister written notice of my question, it might improve the quality of the response. I can tell you it doesn't work.

Look, TICO knew. TICO is the regulatory agency that's designed to protect consumers. It knew that Conquest Vacations was failing to meet TICO's standards. That means travellers were at risk.

Regardless of what the minister wants to say today, thousands of tourists, kids, honeymooners, have been left stranded, have been extorted for thousands of dollars by Mexican hoteliers and have had the Mexican police bullying them. This government failed to protect those Ontario travellers. Providing compensation after the fact doesn't change the reality for those people stranded in resorts in Mexico.

Why didn't this government warn the people of Ontario that they were at risk if they were purchasing from Conquest? How can the public ever trust them again? How can the public ever trust any travel agency—

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

**Hon. Harinder S. Takhar:** Let me tell you, what is really important right now is to work with the consumers who have faced some inconvenience because Conquest Vacations Inc., after 37 years of operations, decided to voluntarily terminate their operations in Ontario.

TICO has worked very closely with them to bring all the vacationers back to Ontario. They have worked with the hotels. They also previously worked very closely with Conquest Vacations Inc. to make sure that their operations were in order, and they had given them notice to terminate their wholesale contracts if their performance hadn't improved. So they have done everything they could possibly do.

These are ongoing operations. It doesn't matter when you terminate these operations; you're still going to face the same kinds of issues that you're facing today.

## ELDER ABUSE

**Mr. Mike Colle:** A question to the minister responsible for seniors: Minister, "elder abuse" is a phrase that is being heard too often these days. Ontario's seniors population is growing rapidly, and as they age, they're more susceptible to abuse. Many experts report that elder abuse is under-reported because seniors are afraid and ashamed to come forward. Seniors are also afraid to report abuse because they don't want to reveal the identity of their abusers for fear of reprisal. I ask the minister, what program have you put in place to help protect these seniors, day or night, wherever they live in Ontario, from elder abuse?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** The dignity and safety of our seniors is something for which we all bear responsibility. Elder abuse, whether it's physical, emotional or financial, cannot be tolerated.

Last week, I was delighted to be in my colleague's riding here in Toronto to launch a province-wide seniors' safety helpline to assist seniors at risk of abuse. This helpline will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and it's accessible in 154 languages. That's who we are in this province: a people who speak 154 languages. By making this helpline accessible to seniors at risk in their languages, I think we have moved the bar considerably.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Our hard-working seniors will be very heartened to hear that they'll be able to communicate their concerns in the language of their choice, because many of them do not have English as their first language.

The creation of a province-wide seniors' safety helpline is an important step, but it's also important that the government has coordinated a plan to fight elder abuse in all its forms. I hope that in this Legislature we would agree that our seniors must be protected from this shameful abuse. Can the minister tell this House what action plan it has in place to prevent elder abuse in Ontario beyond the hotline?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** The McGuinty government has supported a number of initiatives to help our seniors live safely. Since the strategy was created, the government has invested over \$6 million in combating elder abuse, and over the last three years, the McGuinty government has provided more than \$1 million in grants to local elder abuse prevention networks throughout Ontario. In that regard, Ontario is the leader throughout Canada in adapting and promoting this very innovative strategy.

I would just like to address the point that my colleague made in his opening question, and that is the issue of privacy, because elders in this province who are at risk or suffering abuse often don't come forward for fear of their name and reputation being known. Protecting privacy, as well as making it available in many languages, was key to the success of this program, and that has been in-

corporated in it. It's obviously well received. We had a tremendous press turnout. It's an—

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

#### NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I have a question for the Premier, and it's with regard to northern Ontario. Premier, last year the federal government provided Ontario with \$358 million from the community development trust fund intended to help one-industry towns, like most of those in northern Ontario, that are currently suffering. Can you tell me where this money went?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty:** To the Minister of Economic Development.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** I say to the member that we have been working, certainly, with the industry minister right now with respect to the coordination of the provincial funding and the federal funding. The member will know that, with respect to infrastructure funding, there has been an unprecedented investment over the last five years under this government.

I say to the member, I'm not sure exactly which projects he's referring to. I'm happy to work with the member to ensure that they are pursued on a timely basis. But I would say that we're talking about a situation where the funding, in fact, has been implemented and executed in this province much faster than it has been on the federal level.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** Thank you, Minister, for that answer. One of the federal government's conditions of the program was to encourage the province to report directly to constituents on the expenditures and outcomes achieved with the funding provided from the community development trust fund. The Premier said he would consult on the best ways to apply and leverage the new funding for maximum benefit for Ontario workers.

Northern Ontario mayors are calling me and they're asking, "Where's the money?" Nobody seems to see any benefit from it. They feel northern Ontario and the forestry sector are being neglected.

If that's not the case, then please tell the members of this Legislature which communities received money, how much did they get, and how much of the \$358 million is left.

**Hon. Michael Bryant:** In Red Lake, millions of dollars invested to do build the road, water, power and sewer infrastructure for a new industrial park; Chelmsford, \$2 million for a long-term-care home, 128 beds, 160 jobs created; Sioux Lookout, a \$1-million investment, 10 new jobs, retrofitting to retain space into a carpentry and electrical—Dryden, Sudbury, Rainy River, Red Rock, Timmins, Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie. This government has and will continue to make these investments in northern communities, and I really appreciate the member's question.

#### ONTARIO ARTISTS

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** My question is to the Minister of Culture. Minister, Ontario's artists have been waiting a very long time for status of the artist legislation. The 2007 status of the artist act was a great disappointment, as you are well aware, and failed to improve the economic status of Ontario's artists. The arts community was told at the time that this legislation was just a first step; more would follow.

Can the minister explain what further steps have been taken to keep that promise to Ontario's artists?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** While the government did indeed pass the status of the artist legislation in the last mandate, the government has been very active and involved in the cultural sector and in supporting artists. This government values the important contributions of Ontario's 57,000 professional actors. The Ministry of Culture champions a number of things. Since 2003, the McGuinty government has increased funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$15 million, and that is a 140% increase to the Ontario Arts Council. The budget that we are proposing has \$100 million annually in additional tax relief and \$30 million in investments to support entertainment and creative industries.

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**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Peter Tabuns:** Minister, it's always a bad indicator when you completely sidestep the question. As you know, Ontario's artists earn, on average, 37% less than the Ontario workforce in general. In the report of October 2006, the status of the artist subcommittee recommended, "That the Ministry of Culture establish a time-limited process where parties with a direct interest in any mandatory collective bargaining regime are invited to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Labour to work toward consensus." You've talked about funding. There was a promise made about status-of-the-artist legislation. There was a recommendation made about a process that you could put in place. Why haven't you done it and what are you waiting for?

**Hon. M. Aileen Carroll:** I'm not sidestepping the honourable member's question. Yes, the legislation was passed; yes, it is one of a number of initiatives. I, like many members here in the House, look forward to meeting again with the members of ACTRA during today's meeting session, but I think we also need to recognize that we have been delivering skills seminars to artists across Ontario in partnership with the Ministry of Small Business. We've been helping to train the next generation of digital media designers at the Ontario College of Art and Design, we've been helping to create a digital new media institute at the University of Waterloo, and since I came into this wonderful job I had the great opportunity to meet with the Canadian Film Centre people, approach my government and see this government under this Premier put \$2.5 million into enhancing that exceptional facility that indeed has much to do with continuing education and assistance to the artists. I think we might—

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

## MOOSE TAGS

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as you know, hunting is an activity enjoyed by many Ontarians and many of my constituents. Moose in particular are icons of Ontario's ecosystem and contribute substantial social, economic and ecological benefits to the people of Ontario. They also hold significant value for aboriginal peoples. They are highly sought-after game animals, a means of subsistence and are very popular for viewing and important for tourism. This widespread value has resulted in moose being highly coveted by hunters and being one of Ontario's most intensively managed species.

I am aware that the ministry has been undertaking a review of Ontario's moose management and tag draw system. Can the minister share with the House what level of response has been received during public consultations and whether the input received will actually be implemented in the management policy?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'd like to thank the member for his question, for indeed this is a very significant part of the economy in Ontario. We have approximately 100,000 moose and unfortunately we have about 100,000 hunters as well. We have over 54 wildlife units and unfortunately the moose are not similar in each unit.

What we did is we contacted over 500 hunters in over 20 locations right across Ontario, and we've received over 1,600 responses. This is going to be in two phases to ensure that we'll manage to have sufficient tags and to listen to what the hunters have to say as we put the policy in place. The policy has been in place for a number of years and it needed revision, and we also need to ensure that we have a sustainable moose population. There have been some challenges with regard to the moose population, especially in northwestern Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** The minister mentions the review of the tag draw system. I know that this is of particular importance to many of my constituents, as I've received a number of complaints over my 20 years here from people who have been waiting years to receive a moose tag. Public consultation is a very important part of the review but I'm wondering how people have been made aware of these sessions and where they are being held so that they can in fact have the opportunity for input. Particularly in the north, there are many great distances between towns. Minister, can you tell us how many sessions are being conducted and explain how your ministry is making sure they are accessible to all Ontarians?

**Hon. Donna H. Cansfield:** I'm pleased to say that there's a total of 27 communities and we've recently added two more at Kenora and Kapuskasing. We've had over 3,500 moose hunters who have attended these 25 different sessions, so we've issued local news releases; we've gone onto our website; we have multiple sessions within municipalities and local media; we give information about the time, the date and the location; and finally, we're also working with the associations. We

have NOSA in the north, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters across Ontario.

What we're trying to do is reach out and get as much information as possible. They said that there hasn't been a review of the moose tag allocation for a number of years. As the member has indicated, there have been significant challenges, so what we're trying to do is to get it right. Given the time, over two years, we will in fact put out a new moose tag allocation that reflects the input that we receive from the hunters across Ontario.

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

*The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## CANADIAN CORPS ASSOCIATION

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I rise in the Legislature today to ask all to join me in celebrating the Canadian Corps Association's 75th anniversary of service to veterans and their families.

In 1934, a reunion of World War I veterans was held in Toronto, where it was decided to perpetuate the spirit of the Canadian Corps' front-line soldiers, and they formed an organization dedicated to promote the welfare of veterans and their dependents. They called the newly formed organization the Canadian Corps Association.

Over the years, the tasks of the Canadian Corps have been many and varied. They include the work obtaining assistance for veterans who, through circumstances attributed to their service during World War I, found themselves in need of hospitalization, pensions and so forth. After World War II, their activities were greatly increased, assisting in recruiting as well as advocating for adequate re-establishment benefits and preparing the World War II veterans for rehabilitation back into civilian life.

The 75th anniversary of Canadian Corps Association convention, from April 24 to 26, will be hosted by Unit 42 in Memorial Park in my riding of Oshawa. The convention will include a statue unveiling and a memorial service. The theme is, "Serving veterans and their dependents since 1934."

I'd like to thank all the wonderful members of this organization for the countless hours they have dedicated to supporting our veterans. The inscription on the statue says it best:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.

## BRAMPTON SPELLING BEE

**Mr. Vic Dhillon:** I rise today to congratulate the children who participated last Saturday in the Brampton

spelling bee, which was held at Shoppers World Brampton. This annual event promotes education and self-confidence in these young people. I had the privilege in the past year of seeing these people get up in front of hundreds of people and spell difficult and complex words.

This spelling bee is more than just a competition. This event encourages children of all ages to thrive and learn words. This is not done by just memorizing a dictionary. This is accomplished by reading, writing, researching and asking questions. I strongly support a cause that makes education a priority. These children spend months studying for this occasion. They deserve recognition and encouragement from all of us.

This event could not be held without the many volunteers who give their time to make sure that these children have a platform to express their knowledge. I wish to acknowledge everyone who worked so hard to make sure this event was so successful. I look forward to attending next year's event.

#### PEMBROKE LUMBER KINGS

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** The Pembroke Lumber Kings are champions once again. Last Thursday evening, the Lumber Kings defeated the Nepean Raiders in a 3-2 overtime thriller. The win earned Pembroke its third straight central junior title and a trip to the Fred Page Cup in Moncton, New Brunswick, where they will compete for a shot at the national championship.

The game was highlighted by the stellar performance of Kings' goaltender Eric Levine. Levine, the league's best this season, stood on his head in a remarkable 54 save effort, 14 of them in overtime, before Damian Cross's goal clinched it for the home team.

The Central Junior Hockey League could not have a better representative than our Pembroke Lumber Kings. We have the best fans anywhere. No other team draws crowds like the Lumber Kings. The people love their team and that support is a big part of their success.

The Kings are a first-class organization that has always shown its pride and gratitude to the good folks of hockey town.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the city of Pembroke, coach and manager Sheldon Keefe, the players and every member of the team's organization for bringing the Bogart Cup to Pembroke once again.

Let me also wish them the very best at the Fred Page Cup. The city, indeed the entire valley, is behind them. Go, Kings, go.

#### WESTON COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** I am very proud to speak today about a group of students from a high school in my riding who made the front page of the Toronto Star but, through their ambition, want to make it all the way to the White House.

**Mrs. Maria Van Bommel:** The White House?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** Yes, the White House, Maria.

A group of 17 remarkable young individuals got together and, under the guidance of their English teacher, created a sensational music video celebrating the historic occasion of Barack Obama's election as the US's first African-American president. The inspirational footage has registered thousands of views on YouTube and has gotten a lot of positive feedback from people in my community, bringing some to tears.

The video, titled "W2W," for "Weston to the White House," is as much a reflection of the hope that President Obama has instilled across the world as it is an indication of how the collective initiative of a few can reach the households of many, showing that youth have an active role to play in matters political. The footage also conveys a sense of community involvement that challenged neighbourhoods need more than ever.

I would like to congratulate the class for their achievement and for the message of optimism they have expressed through their work. In this vein, I would encourage other young girls and boys to showcase their creative faculties to their communities.

I would like to invite all members of this Legislature to view the video from the Weston Collegiate students by logging on to [www.pricework.weebly.com](http://www.pricework.weebly.com).

#### RED BARN THEATRE

**Mrs. Julia Munro:** On Saturday night, the town of Georgina lost its most cherished cultural centre. The Red Barn Theatre, after 59 years of performances, burned to the ground.

As Canada's longest-running summer theatre, the Red Barn has been a venue for many of Canada's greatest actors, producers and directors.

The Lake Simcoe Arts Foundation operates the theatre, which sits on land owned by the Sibbald family, the owners of The Briars resort. It is local volunteers who do the fundraising, maintain the theatre and grounds, and do so many other tasks.

Despite the fire, the theatre company is determined to go on. It is committed to doing its best, as their board president, Bob Smith, said, "to put on all or at least the majority" of their 60th annual season.

Ideas are already coming forward to keep the theatre alive, and I share the hope that it will continue. I have attended performances at the Red Barn Theatre every year for the past 36 years, and I can certainly attest to the quality of its productions.

I urge the government to provide whatever assistance it can to rebuild this cultural jewel.

#### FOREST INDUSTRY

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** Another week in Ontario, with more and more forest sector jobs at risk, more and more forest sector jobs disappearing, communities watching the base of their economy being crippled. What

is the response of the McGuinty Liberals? There is no response.

AbitibiBowater forced to file for financial restructuring: The government of Quebec immediately steps up and says that they're prepared to guarantee loans of \$100 million to help with that restructuring, to sustain jobs in that province.

What are we seeing from the McGuinty government? The McGuinty government has announced and re-announced its forest sector investment plan, but after four years there is still \$92 million that was announced that has never been disbursed, never been used. Meanwhile, literally 4,000 jobs are at risk. When is the McGuinty government going to respond?

Another example: Recently, the most modern paper mill in Ontario, in Dryden, which had over \$2.5 billion of new investment in the last 15 years, closed. It produced office paper like this. Where will the office paper be produced now? In North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Wisconsin, but not in Ontario.

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#### CITY OF CORNWALL

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** My riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has always been a hotbed of creative talent, ranging from authors like Maggie Wheeler to actors like Ryan Gosling. Among these talented artists are two up-and-coming filmmakers, John Earle and Frank Burrelle. Under their company, FishRizzo productions, John and Frank have already brought us two outstanding films: *Submerged* and *Treasures of the Lost Villages*. They are now set to bring us their third film, *86400*; 86400 refers to the number of seconds in a 24-hour period. With this film, John and Frank and their colleague Ron Piquette spent 24 hours continuously filming the city of Cornwall, speaking to its citizens from all walks of life, trying to capture the pulse of the city. They even spent time at my constituency office in Cornwall.

Cornwall has endured its share of hardships in the past but has been blessed with some great moments as well. This June, for example, the community will celebrate the 225th anniversary of its founding. The ability to endure, to find the positives and build on them, is a hallmark of the city of Cornwall and a tribute to its people. *86400* will be premiering at 7 p.m. on April 29 at the Galaxy cinema in Cornwall, and I would encourage anyone interested in learning about the film to visit [www.86400themovie.com](http://www.86400themovie.com). I look forward to this film, as I so enjoyed *Submerged* and *Treasures from the Lost Villages*.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

**Mr. Khalil Ramal:** I rise in the House to announce the strides my city of London is making to better their community.

Just recently, I joined Minister Bentley for his annual Think Global Act Local event at White Oaks Mall. It's a

simple idea geared towards changing the environment. The idea was to make green energy products, services and education available to everyone. It was a market geared towards everyday citizens who are concerned about their impact on the environment, and the event provided all necessary means for them to help make a difference.

The event was successful. Several thousand people actively engaged in it, and the key speakers expressed their gratitude to us as representatives of the government. We were pleased to see many people learning about different ways to make their community greener. Mr. Bentley's Greenfoot Award was given to several community leaders who were recognized for "taking charge" by making a great difference in the community.

I would like to extend my thanks to Minister Bentley's office, especially to Ashley Conyngham, for organizing such a successful event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to do that.

#### CHANTAL BERTRAND

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** It is with much appreciation and thanks that I rise to congratulate Chantal Bertrand, a teacher and campus coordinator at le Centre d'éducation et de formation de l'Est ontarien in Hawkesbury.

Chantal is a recipient of the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence, for excellence in leadership. She is committed to helping everyone learn in English and French from age 16 to 60. She champions a vision of excellence and helps create a family atmosphere that makes everyone feel welcome and respected. She ensures that programs and courses meet high standards, programs that have since been adopted by other schools. Throughout her career, she has worked to build community partnerships and collaborated on the introduction of courses that meet students' needs, such as welding for women and computing for adults 55 and over.

Chantal and all 20 recipients of the Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence will be recognized at a special event during Education Week.

Félicitations à Chantal. Au nom des étudiants et étudiantes du Centre d'éducation et de formation de l'Est ontarien à Hawkesbury, un grand merci.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Coroners Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les coroners.

**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.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mrs. Van Bommel assumes ballot item number 12 and Mr. Qaadri assumes ballot item number 74.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE), 2009

#### LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (VIOLENCE ET HARCÈLEMENT AU TRAVAIL)

Mr. Fonseca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters / Projet de loi 168, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la violence et le harcèlement au travail et d'autres questions.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

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

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** I'd ask that I make my statement during ministerial statements.

### STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** Just before I begin, I would like to welcome the following individuals who have travelled to Queen's Park today to witness the introduction of the bill. These individuals are as follows: the Lori Dupont family—Barbara Dupont, Christine Dupont and Brad Dupont; the Theresa Vince family—Jim Vince, Catherine Kedziora, Kim Kedziora; and Michelle Schryer. I thank them, and I also thank the ministry staff who have worked so hard on this legislation—Alison Smyth, Brian Hanulik, Yvette Shirliff, Kathleen Therriault and

Maxime Cappeliez—who are also with us in the members' gallery.

I rise today to ask my colleagues to stand with me in taking action against violence and harassment in the workplace. The bill I'm introducing today would, if passed, clarify for employers and employees their responsibilities and rights to prevent and respond to workplace violence and harassment.

Under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, all employers are required to take every reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of their workers in the workplace—including violence. After consulting with employers, labour, and women's groups, we recognized that the protections and responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act could be clarified so workers and employers know what is expected.

Today, I am proud to introduce amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, amendments that would help strengthen and provide clarification to the existing act. The proposed amendments, if passed, would require:

- employers to prepare a workplace harassment policy and develop and maintain a program to implement that policy;

- the addition of a definition of "workplace violence" to the act itself;

- employers to understand their responsibilities, and workers their rights, in preventing workplace violence;

- a provision for workers so that they may remove themselves from harmful situations if they have reason to believe that they are at risk of imminent danger due to violence in the workplace; and

- require employers to take reasonable precautions to protect an employee from domestic violence in the workplace.

Our obligation is to deal with workplace violence, not just from another worker, but from anyone who enters the workplace.

The act, as it is now, does provide that employers have a general duty to keep their workplaces safe. These proposed amendments, however, will help strengthen existing provisions under the act and provide clarification to current regulations. We want workplaces to create an environment that says to each and every worker, "Violence is unacceptable in this workplace, and violence will be dealt with."

The proposed amendments would be performance-based, providing clear direction about what is required while allowing employers the flexibility to develop policies and programs that meet the needs and risk levels of their workplaces. Preventing injuries and absences translates into higher worker morale, increased productivity, reduced lost-time injuries and reduced workplace insurance premium costs. The government will continue to work with our health and safety partners to create easy-to-follow guidelines, checklists and templates to help employers comply with the proposed amendments.

I ask the members of this Legislature to stand with me in passing these amendments and to stand with me against workplace violence.

1320

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Responses?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** On behalf of the official opposition, it is my pleasure to rise and offer some comments on this bill today.

First off, I would like to say that it's about time. Our colleague the member from Durham has been pushing this government for months to act on the recommendations put forward from the Lori Dupont inquiry. Lori Dupont was a nurse who was murdered in 2005 by a fellow employee who worked at the same hospital. Eventually, the government did call an inquest into this tragedy, and the inquest reported in 2007. That was 2007; it is now April 2009.

To the point of this bill, we notice that there is nothing in the amendments that outlines punishments. The bill requires employers to develop policies with respect to workplace violence and to develop and maintain programs to implement them. Employers will have to assess the risk of workplace violence, and it will require employers who are aware that violence may occur in the workplace to take every precaution to protect a worker who is at risk of injury. It will also specify existing duties on employers and supervisors to provide that information and advise workers and to include professional information about a risk of workplace violence from a person.

This will be welcomed by teachers and education assistants, who will now have to be told if a student has a history of violence. Workers will now also have the right to refuse work if that worker has reason to believe that workplace violence is likely to endanger him or her.

We on this side of the House would have liked to have seen clearly-laid-out penalties for not living up to this act, and that seems to be missing. It seems like this is a process that may or may not protect anyone, and that is shameful.

I would also like to say that on this side of the House, we feel that violence is unacceptable in any workplace and that violence should be dealt with. I hope that when we study the amendments, the proposed amendments will provide clear direction about what is required while allowing those employers the flexibility to develop policies and programs that meet the needs and risk levels of those workplaces.

Under the guise of making people safer, the government is also proposing regulatory changes that will allow them to pass regulations contained in any policy required under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These will be done behind closed doors with no public input. Our party will have a real problem with that.

But we will be looking for changes once this bill gets to the committee. I commend the minister on his announcement today and look forward to working with him and the government to make this a better bill.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I want to first of all acknowledge the people who have come today, the families of victims of the worst kind of workplace violence that we've seen in the province of Ontario. It's great that they

are here. It's probably a very painful time for them but certainly a time when they would like to see some positive changes occur in terms of the situation of workplace violence and harassment in the province.

I have to say that I'm pretty disappointed with the minister's bill as it's before me today. The minister claims that this is a bill that's going to be the be-all and end-all in terms of ending violence and harassment in the workplace, and I don't believe that that is the case. I know that Ontario has never had legislation that was specifically related to violence and harassment in the workplace. However, this government had an opportunity to put in place the toughest, the most comprehensive legislation on workplace violence and harassment, and they have failed to do so in this bill.

Certainly it's a baby step, but in the province of Ontario, when people are being harassed at work, when people are being bullied at work, when we know that's happening day in and day out, when domestic violence spills into the workplace, when workplaces are poisoned because of the kinds of behaviours that are occurring there, we get this bill that is not, I submit, going to help many hundreds and thousands of workers in this province deal with that harassment and violence.

In the recommendations that have come forward by this minister—I think he needs to take a look at legislation that has been in this Legislature for many years now, legislation that was put together in consultation with Ontario nurses' unions, with public sector workers' unions and with private sector workers' unions; legislation that looks at the recommendations coming out of the inquests of Theresa Vince and Lori Dupont but that also looks at what happened with SARS and talks about the precautionary principle that needs to be put in place in workplaces in this province, so that we are anticipating the potential for violence, for harassment, for bullying; so that we are not waiting until workers have to deal with these incidents where their very lives are put at risk because we did not foresee circumstances brewing in the workplace that will likely end up creating a situation where someone is going to be hurt, either physically or mentally.

Unfortunately, the government has not taken the opportunity to put that strong, effective kind of legislation in place. Instead, they've got a piece of legislation here that sets out significant obligations to the employer around development of policies, and yet there is no requirement that the government ensure that not only are the policies up to snuff but that they are being implemented and followed up upon. In fact, it leaves employers with the responsibility to ensure that their internal processes are helping to address violence and harassment in the workplace. That is not good enough. That is not good enough and that is not what the workers of this province need. The workers of this province need strong legislation that is upheld by their government. That's what they need, and unfortunately, they are not getting that in this bill.

What they could get it in is in Bill 29, legislation that I brought forward several months ago—in fact, well over a

year ago. That includes strong powers of investigation for designated Ministry of Labour staff. It exercises the precautionary principle to the fullest. It covers all workers, but not only workers; any other person within the workplace is covered in Bill 29: suppliers, contractors and other personnel who might be entering the workplace. They are also responsible; they have to be held to account when it comes to harassment and bullying in the workplace. This legislation doesn't do nearly enough.

I just wanted to talk briefly about one of the specific recommendations in the Lori Dupont case—a couple of them. Recommendation 49: “It is recommended there be a review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act to examine the feasibility of including domestic violence”—and I know the minister will say that it's in here. But it says, “Specifically, the review should consider whether safety from emotional or psychological harm, rather than merely physical harm, ought to be part of the mandate of the ministry. In this regard, the review should be directed to include an examination of the legislation and policies.”

I would submit that you had failed in that regard, Minister. It's a sad day in the province of Ontario when you didn't do everything that could have been done to end violence in the workplace.

## PETITIONS

### TAXATION

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) 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 ... 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'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Myriam.

1330

### WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I have a petition, and I want to thank the workers of the Canadian Union of Postal

Workers as well as the Ontario Public Service Employees Union for providing it for me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas workplace harassment (physical/psychological) and violence are linked to the mental and physical ill-health and safety of workers in Ontario; and

“Whereas harassment and violence need to be defined as violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act so that it is dealt with as quickly and earnestly by employers as other health and safety issues; and

“Whereas employers will have a legal avenue and/or a legal obligation to deal with workplace harassment and violence in all its forms, including psychological harassment; and

“Whereas harassment poisons a workplace, taking many forms—verbal/physical abuse, sabotage, intimidation, bullying, sexism and racism, and should not be tolerated; and

“Whereas harassment in any form harms a target's physical and mental health, esteem and productivity, and contributes to trauma and stress on the job; and

“Whereas Bill 29 would make it the law to protect workers from workplace harassment by giving workers the right to refuse to work after harassment has occurred, require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment and oblige employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to treat workplace harassment and violence as a serious health and safety issue by passing MPP Andrea Horwath's Bill 29, which would bring workplace harassment and violence under the scope of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.”

I agree with this petition and sign my name to it, sending it to the table with Nicola.

### GARDE D'ENFANTS

**M. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I have a petition that I received from a constituent of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craitor.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement obstacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2) de la Loi énumère les questions dont le tribunal doit tenir compte pour établir l'intérêt véritable d'un enfant. Le projet de loi modifie ce paragraphe de façon à inclure une mention

expresse de l'importance du maintien des liens affectifs qui existent entre enfants et grands-parents;...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

J'y ajoute ma signature.

### SALES TAX

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the provincial and federal governments to implement a three-month tax holiday in order to support the auto sector.”

I affix my name in full support.

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** This petition is regarding property tax assessments.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the MPAC tax assessment system, the near impossibility to predict one's assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried they may be forced to sell their homes; and

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

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

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

I couldn't agree more. I affix my signature, and I'm giving it to Lindsay to deliver.

### LUPUS

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member

from Niagara Falls. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and comes through the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to sign this petition and ask Kenzie to carry it for me.

### TAXATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to support my constituents.

### PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

**Mr. Mike Colle:** A petition on behalf of our vulnerable caregivers:

“Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

“Whereas ... ”caregivers “are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

“Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect ... ” caregivers “from these abuses; and

“Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for ... caregivers; and

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

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

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

### HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr. Norm Miller:** I’ve received more petitions to do with the Burk’s Falls and District Health Centre, and they read:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

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

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

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

I support this petition and give it to page Cooper.

### FIREARMS CONTROL

**Mr. Mike Colle:** A petition from the students at the Yorkdale Adult Learning Centre.

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

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

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

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

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

I support the students at Yorkdale, and I support the security guard who got shot last Thursday at Yorkdale.

1340

### TAXATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Simcoe North do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign it and give it to Michael to present at the table.

### CEMETERIES

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition from a number of constituents from my riding, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

## TAXATION

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I have a very important petition; I've had hundreds of them signed this weekend.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Simcoe North 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 will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians in particular;

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

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

I'm pleased once again to sign it, on behalf of my constituents, and give it to Cameron to present at the table.

## CHILD CUSTODY

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, as above, to emphasize the importance of

children's relationships between their parents and grandparents."

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2009

## LOI DE 2009 SUR

## LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 9, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 162, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires et d'autres questions.

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

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I want to say at the outset to people who might be listening or who are in the galleries today that Bill 162 is a conglomeration or an omnibus bill of 31 different pieces of legislation.

Surprisingly enough, the bill—Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures—doesn't include some of the major thrusts and some of the major topics which people around Ontario are talking about in terms of the budget which was introduced by the finance minister in March. Bill 162 does not include the legislation dealing with the harmonization of the federal and provincial sales tax. Bill 162 does not deal with corporation tax relief, nor does it deal with individual tax relief in terms of their income taxes. So this bill, in large part, deals with a lot of housekeeping matters, but it also deals with a few very important matters which I will be alluding to as I go through my speech.

I would, at the outset, like to thank officials from the Ministry of Finance for briefing myself and members of the staff for the Progressive Conservative Party. I was overwhelmed by the number of people who showed up at the briefing. There were three of us on one side of the table and, without a bit of exaggeration, there were 40 on the other side of the table. That is, in part, due to the fact that there were 31 different acts amended here in this legislation, and each act required an official or two to explain what that particular act meant.

I've had the opportunity to review the remarks of some of the other members of the Legislature with regard to Bill 162 prior to making my remarks today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. I noted that Mr. Prue from the New Democratic Party limited his debate and remarks to Bill 162. He talked about the Ontario Securities Commission. He also talked about the pension insurance fund, and he had some comments with regard to that. I did note that the three Liberal members who have talked on this bill—Mr. Arthurs, Mr. Mauro and Mr. Colle—talked little about Bill 162 but talked about general budgetary matters and how good the government was with regard to those matters. This points to the

observation that a bill like this can be glossed over and a lot of the content of the bill would never be brought to light and therefore not evoke the proper public debate with regard to some of the content in this particular act.

I did note from Mr. Prue's remarks that he said, and I agree with him, that much of the bill deals with very technical matters. When you get into taxation and when you get into insurance funds and those kinds of things, many questions pop into mind. It would be my hope, at the outset, that the government would see fit to sever two parts of the bill and let the other 29 stand and that we debate those particular matters.

The two matters which I would like severed out of the bill relate to the interim allocation of some \$46 billion more for the government to spend out of the consolidated revenue fund, as well as the matters dealing with the pension insurance fund, because I think the pension insurance fund requires a focused debate by people in Ontario and we should not just deal with one very small matter with regard to this very important topic and leave the rest to come to light sometime in the future.

I think this is a great opportunity for all members of the Legislature and the public to seriously consider true pension reform, not only dealing with the insurance but also dealing with fully funded pensions and how all of that occurs. The government, as members know, have in their possession a very important study which they commissioned and is now in their hands and was delivered to them in November of last year. They claim that they are studying it. What better opportunity would it be than to refer that particular report to something like a select committee of the Legislature where the members of the Legislature who are interested in this could in fact put forward the politics of reforming our pension reform system.

**1350**

I can remember a long time ago, in the late 1970s, we had a select committee on insurance. That committee sat together for four years of the parliamentary term and went through the insurance schemes that were there. We talked about it, and we came up with a unanimous report for reform. I think it's time that we looked at that as well.

I'm going to talk about a lot of the bill. I want to talk about eight different sections of the bill which deal with eight different acts. Some of the acts, I fully support the changes contained in them.

One of the problems we in the opposition have with a bill like this is, with 31 acts, there's probably one or two that we would oppose, and they're very, very important ones that we want to oppose as well. If these acts were read separately and were presented separately, we would support probably 28 or 29 of the 31 because they are basically housekeeping amendments, and there's really a need to keep the laws up to date with the changing environments that occur.

However there are two, maybe three, that we would oppose. There are some that we would like to make very, very minor amendments to in order to provide more accountability. But we've heard all too often in this

House that when we vote against Bill 162, we will have the finance minister stand up day after day and say, "You voted against this," "You voted against that," which is patently false. In fact our party, and I know the New Democratic Party as well, would support parts of those particular bills.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** As well, I just heard one of the Liberal backbenchers say, "You were here when omnibus bills"—yes, and I was here when the Liberals in opposition stood up and said, "We don't want any omnibus bills." I don't mind an omnibus bill dealing with small, minor, technical amendments.

When I was the House leader, actually what I did with omnibus bills is I went to the opposition and said, "Do you object to any of the sections or the acts that are contained in this?" I took those sections out of the act in order to allow the omnibus bill to go through with very little debate. So I did it. I did it with consultation. You can ask your finance minister, who was then the Liberal House leader. That was the method that we went through. Of course, now there is a different attitude towards this place.

At any rate, I wanted to first talk about the Commodity Futures Act, which is schedule 6 of the bill. I'm commenting on this because my good friend Mr. Prue bought this to light in his speech that he brought forward. I do so because he asked about the fact that this particular change to the act gives the Ontario Securities Commission the right to make specific orders that last for 10 days, or they would last for 30 days if it had the approval of the Minister of Finance. He was concerned about that, asking about the particular dates.

I don't have any problem with that particular act or those particular powers given to the securities commissioner or the finance minister because I think there is a need, which has been proven in the latest financial breakdown of our securities system, for immediate action in certain circumstances. Fortunately, there is a time limit on those particular acts: 10 days in the case of the Ontario Securities Commission, and 30 days in the case of the Minister of Finance.

But the important point that Mr. Prue was making was—he had some questions about this: Who does he ask about this? How do we include that in the legislative debate? He called for, and I agree with him, some very serious committee hearings on the various different bills contained herein.

The first thing I want to say is that I support, we support, the changes to the Commodity Futures Act contained in this bill.

Next, I'd like to talk about the Financial Administration Act, which is included in schedule 12 of the bill. This particular amendment to the act allows the government to shove yet more immediate costs off into the future, to be amortized into the future. What we have seen from this government over the period of time that they have been in power is a huge increase in our long-term debt. They have taken the long-term debt from \$130

billion, and it is now projected to go over \$200 billion. They've been able to do that because they changed the accounting system in 2005, and therefore they were given basically carte blanche in dealing with the construction of schools and hospitals across our province. They've been able to shove that off as an expense on their balance sheet or on their profit-and-loss statement each year and put it into a long-term amortization, as we would with a mortgage.

My concern over this, once you give this government the right to spend future dollars for future governments by saying, "You don't have to pay for that hospital this year, but you can pay for it over 40 years," is that they continue to do this recklessly, creating more and more debt for our kids and our grandkids. That's what this government has got itself into. This particular section of the bill, schedule 12, on the Financial Administration Act, allows them to exacerbate that. I have some difficulty with that, and I wanted to bring to light the fact that once you give this present government carte blanche in terms of spending money, they will spend it. Our party has called for them, in the budget, to bring new accountability mechanisms to the Legislature to deal with their stimulus package. We brought forward a motion to say, "We need more accountability with regard to the stimulus package which you have outlined in your budget," which I believe is about \$32 billion over the next two years—money which they don't have; money which they are going to borrow. We want them to show us where the money is being spent, who got the contract, how many jobs it created and how many long-term jobs it created. We think that all of those kinds of matters should be part of the accountability mechanism in their stimulus package.

To date, we've only heard that what they're going to do is spend the money. They've created an excuse for them to spend \$32 billion more than they would have without additional accountability mechanisms. Oddly enough, there is a debate in the federal House of Commons over this very matter, dealing with Prime Minister Stephen Harper's budget. Oddly enough, the stimulus package which the Liberals threatened to close down the government on was a stimulus package of \$3 billion. They wanted more accountability mechanisms; the federal Liberals wanted more accountability mechanisms. All I say is, if you're dealing with \$32 billion in a stimulus package, as we are here, we should have 10 times more reasons to have additional accountability mechanisms to deal with this particular unusual thrust of spending. You couldn't give a worse bunch of incompetent managers the green light to go and spend \$32 billion than these people here. With regard to the Financial Administration Act and giving the government even more tools to spend more money, to not be immediately accountable to it I think is bad.

#### 1400

The next particular act that I wanted to talk about was schedule 28, which I agree with. Schedule 28 is part of the Taxation Act. What this particular section of the act

deals with are children which are in the custody of children's aid societies across the province of the Ontario. This particular section gives these children the Ontario child benefit, to be paid to the children's aid society on behalf of the child. It will allow our children's aid societies to benefit kids that are under their direct care, in their own care, in their own premises, and it will also allow them to provide benefits to children, up to \$1,100 a year, in foster homes. I think it's a good section, which will allow these kids an additional opportunity to thrive and to perhaps have some benefits that all of the other children in the province might have.

The one part that was not answered when I went into the briefing with the finance ministry was the accountability for this. In other words, does little Johnny who is a foster child with the Smiths get \$1,100? Or is it up to the allocation of the children's aid society whether he receives \$1,100 or \$2,400 worth of benefits or \$30 worth of benefits? It was made clear to me that there are no accountability mechanisms to ensure that someone is watching over, that the money is fairly distributed amongst all of the children who are in that children's aid society's care. So I would ask for some amendments to introduce some kind of accountability mechanisms from the children's aid society to show how this money was being spent and that it wasn't being spent all on one child, that there was some fair distribution amongst all of the children. I don't think it has to be \$1,100 for each child, but I think there should be some measure of fairness between all of the children, as would be the case if they weren't in the care of the children's aid society; they would all be entitled to \$1,100, as determined by their parents.

I also want to indicate our support for changes to the Tobacco Tax Act in schedule 30. In schedule 30, there is a change which would restrict very much the possession of unmarked cigarettes. Under the current act, a person can have in his possession up to 200 unmarked cigarettes without contravening the act, as long as the person doesn't possess the cigarettes for purpose of sale. This particular act prohibits the possession of any number of unmarked cigarettes for any purpose unless authorized by the act.

I want to say that we know, particularly those members of the public accounts committee, of the serious problem that we have with contraband cigarettes being sold across the province. In fact, in the last Auditor General's report, which came out in early December of last year, the Auditor General estimated that we were losing over \$500 million a year in tobacco tax revenues. Not only is there a loss in a tremendous revenue source, but every illegal cigarette encourages young people to smoke. A carton of cigarettes sells for \$60 or \$70—I don't know what they sell for, but it's somewhere in that neighbourhood; the illegal cigarettes sell for \$12 or \$15. We all know, and I know, that the cheaper the cigarettes are, the more likely it is that young people will take up the habit. So we support that, but we also call on the government to start enforcing the laws that are already

there and cracking down on the people who are manufacturing, transporting, and selling unmarked cigarettes.

Our public accounts committee has brought forward a report on this illegal sale of cigarettes, and there are some very practical recommendations in there to address this problem.

One of the major problems we have is the problem of jurisdiction. If an RCMP officer stops a truck on the 401, they can lay charges under federal laws. They can actually take away the truck and the contraband in it. However, if an OPP officer stops a truck on the 401, they can't do anything save and except hold the car in place until they get permission from the Ministry of Revenue to take control of the cigarettes. They can't take the truck away from the particular individual. The committee was astounded to find that an OPP officer can't impound the illegal cigarettes without the permission of a member of the special investigations branch of the Ministry of Revenue. The problem is, the OPP don't find these people between 8 and 5, Monday to Friday. They find these people at 3 o'clock in the morning on the 401, and it's very hard to find a special investigations officer at that time, being that they are all located in Oshawa and a lot of these trucks are found around Cornwall and the 401. For God's sake, it requires a little bit of brainpower to start delegating power to change the legislation in that part and allow the OPP to impound the cigarettes immediately. What's happening now is, when the OPP officers stop this, they get another call and they have to go to the other call, so they let the guy go. It's all done. So those unmarked cigarettes get sold, the person doesn't get charged, and the problem is not faced.

So we support the stiffening of this particular aspect of the Tobacco Tax Act, but we do need some significant changes in other parts to really make the enforcement work.

I just want to talk about schedule 16—it deals with the Legislative Assembly Act—which says that MPPs' salaries should be frozen this year. I agree with that, and I believe my party will agree with me on that as well. However, I do believe that there are a lot of people in this province who are paid through the taxpayer who earn significantly more than members of this Legislature. I also believe that there should be some obligation on their part to hold their salaries where they are in this very, very difficult time.

#### 1410

The other matter that we would agree with—because it was raised by Mrs. Witmer—with regard to this act is schedule 13 of the act, which deals with the ability of the government in terms of how they advertise and try to promote various ministers in various parts of this province. This particular section of the act was, I imagine, a direct response to a question raised in this Legislature by Mrs. Witmer about the Deputy Premier's profile showing on bus shelters across greater Toronto and who was paying for that particular advertising. This indicates that that kind of advertising will not go on in the future—and paid by ministries.

Now I want to talk about the two more serious parts of the legislation. I have indicated support by my party for a number of sections, and many of the other sections that I haven't commented on would be supported by my party.

However, this bill sort of slipped in there—under schedule 27 of the bill is the interim allocations act. That act gives permission to the government to spend another \$47.5 billion out of the consolidated revenue fund. For those at home and those who might not understand how the Legislature works, as part of the accountability mechanisms in the Legislature of Ontario, for the government to write a cheque, they need a bill passed in this House. I asked a question of the Ministry of Finance staff: "Why do you need this now? This is the start of our budgetary year." It's now April 20, and they're asking for the right to spend \$47.5 billion, when last October they obtained from us in this Legislature the right to spend some \$56.5 billion. So they've already got \$56.5 billion—the right to write those cheques. You'd think that that would do them for the first half-year. I would have thought that they wouldn't have brought in another—it used to be called a supply motion; now it's an interim allocation motion. I would have thought they would have waited until September, when we were halfway through our budget year, to come back in. This will give them, after this bill passes—and I understand that we may be in a time allocation on this bill—the right to spend a total of \$104 billion. They'll have that right if they move time allocation. God knows whether they'll give us any committee hearings to deal with some of the controversial parts of the bill, which I'm going to talk about next. So, \$104 billion of the \$108 billion that they're planning to spend—they'll have the right to spend it before May 1. In fact, they may have that right—and I suspect that's why they're hurrying the passage of this bill along—before they deliver the estimates to the House. We don't have the estimates. Under our process, what has to happen is the government must present to the Legislature the line-by-line estimates of how each ministry is going to spend money. That has to be done by this Thursday. Now here we've had most of the debate on this bill and the allocation of all of the money to spend for this whole fiscal year before we've actually seen the estimates of the various ministries. So we have rough figures in the budget. The Ministry of Health is going to spend—I haven't got the number right here in front of me—\$35 billion or \$40 billion, but that's all we know. We don't know how much is going to be spent here, there and everywhere, and all the rest of it.

One of the things we do not know is what they might allocate in the estimates dealing with the pension insurance fund, which is another part of this bill.

So we have this kind of weird scenario going on here, and the ministry officials were very apologetic to me when I said, "How come you're asking for your second interim allocation bill so early in the process?" They're just \$4 billion short of what they say they're going to spend in the budget. They might have enough with this particular interim allocation to run them right through to

March 31, 2010. I'm a little weary about that—leery about that. I'm weary too, but leery. I'm very much concerned about this interim allocation bill being brought forward so early in the session.

The other and major part of this bill that draws our attention is with regard to the pension benefits guarantee fund. This particular fund was considered by the committee I talked about a few moments ago. It was reviewed by the pension group that the minister had asked, the Expert Commission on Pensions. They issued their report in November: *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules*.

The pension benefits guarantee fund doesn't apply to all Ontarians. It applies to maybe 30%. It applies to people who are lucky enough to have a defined benefit pension plan. This means that if you work with the Ontario government for 30 years, you get, I think, 2% a year of the average of your best five years. You're guaranteed that for life, and your spouse is guaranteed a certain amount—I think it's 60% of that amount—if she or he survives the spouse. Seventy per cent of people do not have a defined benefit pension.

One of the dichotomies of this debate is this: If the province is going to provide insurance for people who have defined benefit pensions, in the past what has happened is that if there was a shortfall in that fund, the province loaned money to the pension fund. In fact, on March 31, 2004, this government did lend this particular pension insurance fund \$330 million at zero per cent interest. They gave them \$330 million for 30 years at no interest. Some might argue that that's a heck of a benefit for a pension insurance fund to get, especially when it applies to only 30%—probably the most lucky 30%—of our population having a defined benefit pension plan. In giving this generous loan, this government has already said to this very select group of citizens of Ontario, "We're going to spend general taxpayers' money in order to help a person who has a defined benefit pension plan." I'd say to the other 70%, "That ain't exactly fair."

**1420**

What this bill does is it says the next time there may be a shortfall here, they don't just lend the money at zero percent interest; the finance minister has the right unilaterally to hand them a cheque, and the rest of the taxpayers pony up. All those people who do not have a pension plan, all those people who don't have a defined pension plan, pony up for the people who are the best off. I think we should have a debate about that. That's why I would like this particular section taken out of this bill and dealt with in a reasonable and logical fashion as to who should be ponying up to support this particular insurance fund.

I asked the ministry officials, "Does everybody who has a defined pension plan pay in? Does their employer pay in?" Because this isn't paid by the employees; this is paid by the employers. "Does everybody pay in?" Well, no, everybody doesn't pay in. In fact, there are more exemptions than there are people who do pay in.

Interestingly enough, of course, anybody who is employed by the public service—all of OPSEU, all of the

provincial employees, all of the teachers, all of the municipal employees—they're all exempted, their employers are all exempted, from paying any premiums into this fund. Well, is it any wonder that if you exempt probably 70% or whatever of the people who have the defined benefits, it is weak in its structure?

So I think we should have a debate. We should have a debate as to who pays in. If we're going to insure, as a government under the people of the Ontario, some people who have a defined benefit plan up to \$1,000 a month, why should people have a guarantee that their pension is going to be paid 100%—not \$1,000 a month. If you worked for the government or you taught in this province or you worked for any municipality, there is no way—you are not going to get everything that has been promised to you.

Is there any requirement on the government or the municipality or the teachers' employers, the boards, to pay into this particular fund? No, even though they have a 100% guarantee. Yet the guys out there on the line at GM or Chrysler or involved in this particular scheme, their employers have to pay in—mostly have to pay in. It's kind of an odd situation with GM, but that's another story altogether.

I'm not sure what the answer is, nor was the special pension committee that was set up and who reported. They basically have said, and there's been a lot of discussion, "It's a mess. It worked for a while, but it doesn't work anymore. It's really broken."

What the minister is asking for here is a *carte blanche*. He's asking for the right—not even the cabinet has to approve—to write a cheque. He can write a cheque if they run out of money. He doesn't have to loan the money; he can write a cheque. To cover that cheque, all taxpayers in Ontario are going to have to come to the table. I don't think that's right without a discussion. I think we should have a political discussion about that. Who should be compensating for that payment?

Those are basically my concerns over that particular act. I know my friend Mr. Prue from the New Democratic Party, their critic, has indicated that he wants to have significant public hearings on that particular section of the bill too. I think we have to talk about the protections of people who relied on this fund and how best to achieve fairness and equity with regard to their hopes and aspirations, because a lot of them have counted on this money and we can't leave them out in the cold, but we also have to consider who's benefiting and who's going to pay—who should pay and who should benefit. We have to talk about those issues and whether or not we can sustain this kind of matter in the future.

I think we should have a debate about whether we should have any defined benefit pension plans in the province. Maybe you don't have them; you just have defined contribution plans. I know my friend over here says, "Oh, yeah." Well, if you don't properly insure it, then you've got to deal with those issues. That's what I want to do here.

With regard to whether I've heard from any constituents or from my colleagues etc., and looking at the news

clippings with regard to this bill, the only issue that has been raised has been on the pension insurance fund issue, and I suspect that that will go forward. What I have been receiving, and what all the other members have been receiving, is tremendous reaction to the PST/GST combination coming together. I have never seen such a negative reaction to this. The big problem that I find with that tax is that it's going to hit the little guy, the seniors, disproportionately, when you have to pay it on your heating oil, when you have to pay it on your electrical bill and on all of the things where these people don't have an income that is expanding. They have a fixed income, often relatively small, especially as they get older and inflation attacks what they were entitled to in the beginning.

At any rate, I think that all of these issues—the issues raised by our failing economy, the issues partially raised in this bill with regard to insurance funds for benefits. Talking about defined benefit plans, quite frankly, I feel if we are going to have defined benefit plans, every citizen in Ontario should be entitled to get one. I am fine with that, as long as everybody else understands how it's going to happen: who pays in, how it's paid in and all the rest of it.

People scoff at the United States of America and they talk about how hard they are on the people. Well, I tell you, they've got better pension schemes run by the state than we do.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** We have no pension.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** You have a defined contribution pension, and you voted for it. You voted for it, Mike. I was here with you.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Madam Speaker, there's some background noise.

I guess what it comes down to is, we need a full debate, and that's why I, at the outset, called for the fact that we should have a select committee on pensions to deal with the report of November of last year. We should have a select committee on pensions to talk about what is in the realm of possibility. It's easy to say that everybody should have a certain amount of money, but somebody's got to pony up in order for that to happen.

1430

I do believe that the average citizen who doesn't want to invest in the market, who doesn't have time to invest in the market, should have some of the advantage that people have who are working for the public service. This may sound strange from a Conservative, but I think that there should be an option for a small businessman to say, "I don't have time to take care of that, and I'm willing to pay in X amount of dollars a month in order to ensure that I'm going to have a nest egg to retire on, come hell or high water. It may not pay nearly as much as it would if I invest in a stock market that's skyrocketing, but I'm going to do that." I think we should give that opportunity to everybody in the province of Ontario, and I think we should talk about those things and consider those things.

This is a patchwork that is being applied by the finance minister. He's giving himself power. I think he's

asking for a lot of trouble. Once you give yourself that power, then you'll have people at your door asking you to utilize that power. I think he should, in prudence, say, "I don't want this power. I want to have to go to the Legislature in order to turn that tap on."

Now, if the finance minister did decide in September, let's say, to turn that tap on, if he decided to say, "I'm going to give a billion and a half dollars to the insurance fund"—if he decided to do that, all he would have to do is unilaterally do that. He would file supplementary estimates; this Legislature would have a total of two hours' debate—45 minutes or 35 or 37 minutes per party to talk about the exercise of that particular power.

We support many sections of this bill, but we vehemently oppose—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I've already said that, Mr. Delaney, if you'd been listening. We oppose this section here. We oppose the interim allocation bill because they do not need that until September. They have enough spending power that they got last October. They're asking for the right to write cheques for the next year before the opposition and members of the Legislature have had the opportunity to look at the estimates; that is, line by line how the ministries are going to spend this money.

I believe that, as this government did before Christmas, they tried to have speedy budget hearings. They tried to speed them in, squeeze them in to keep the consultation at a minimum. We are seeing a continuing show of the idea that this government wants to be able to have unfettered control of writing cheques without coming to the Legislature for approval at the appropriate time.

We need to debate on this pension insurance fund. We need to protect not only those people who have a defined benefit plan in the province of Ontario, but we need to protect those who do not have a defined benefit plan.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** The NDP member from Trinity–Spadina is going to be speaking to this bill in short order from his seat here on the front benches of the NDP caucus, and I'm looking forward to his comments. I will be addressing this bill later this afternoon as we get closer to prime time, I figure, oh, around 4 o'clock, and invite people to—if you want to, you will switch over to PBS or the National Geographic. Just press the last channel switch around 3:30 or so and I'll be addressing this bill. I'm looking forward to it.

I listened very carefully to Norm Sterling who, of course, is the most senior member of this assembly and the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I always take what he has to say with great interest. I think he's raised some important points. He's raised the need for a genuine debate around some of these very important issues. These are critical issues in the most literal sense because there are crises out there. There are crises out there around jobs, there are crises out there around pensions, and there are crises around—never mind defined benefit pensions.

There are crises out there around defined contribution pensions because all those people who have defined contribution pensions have seen their pensions erode even more dramatically than defined benefit pensions. It's a very serious issue for a wide range of people. This Americanization of pensions—defined contribution pensions—that the members of this Legislature voted for; I remember it in 1996. Members of this Legislature have a pension plan, but it's not a defined benefit plan, it's a defined contribution plan. I recall members unanimously supporting it, and I want to speak to that in about an hour's time when I get a chance to take the floor.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Worldwide, young grads and raw recruits in the financial sector were richly rewarded by the financial institutions that employed them while they wrote securities whose underlying value depended upon prices rising forever. Prices always fall after an economic expansion, and uniquely, Canada in general and Ontario in particular avoided much of the damage caused by the failure of some \$5 trillion in securities that should never have been written in the first place, which led to the current economic climate.

This government's economic policy is Ontario's answer to that worldwide economic downturn. After every such downturn in the past, Ontario has always emerged stronger because we've made the tough decisions at the right time. Today, facing what many experts call the toughest economy in the last 80 years, Ontario has stepped up with a bold series of measures that will give Ontarians and the organizations that employ them a sustainable edge and a competitive advantage as the Ontario economy recovers and goes forward.

This province has cut your taxes. If you're a small business, Ontario has cut your taxes in this budget. If you're an exporter, this Ontario budget has cut your taxes and brought your tax system in line with the rest of the world. If you're a senior, this Ontario budget has cut your taxes, raised your property tax credit and improved your access to health care. If you're a working family in Ontario, this budget has cut your taxes; built better roads, schools, universities and hospitals, and improved your access to public service. Some 93% of Ontarians will pay less tax as a result of the measures in this budget. If for no other reason, it deserves the support of every member in this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Nepean–Carleton.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** I want to congratulate my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. He's my next-door neighbour. He's spent an awful lot of time in this chamber debating budgets throughout several different administrations. We have a lot to learn from him, and I think his deputation today and his presentation to this Legislature ought not to be looked at as partisan. In fact, I thought he was trying to collaborate with the government and offer them criticisms where they were due. He also offered opportunities where we could have worked together.

That has been one of my greatest disappointments since coming to this chamber. In fact, on the day-to-day stuff we deal with here, there's often an opportunity to tussle and debate with one another. But never since the Great Depression has this province been confronted with an economy this slow, job creation that is actually job decimation, and a period of time where taxes have increased at an unprecedented rate and the debt and the deficit are growing so quickly that we can't catch up.

My colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills made a point that suggested we convene a select committee for further study of the impacts of this economic crisis. I agree with him. There are a lot of times when I disagree with the government. I will not support this budget based on the harm it will do to my constituents. Having said that, this party stood before this government and continues to stand before this government to talk about solutions to the economy and how we can be better briefed to solve the problems our constituents are faced with.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Trinity–Spadina.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I have to admit that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills raised six or seven items in a fair way. We often are very ideological around this place, as we should be, but I have to say that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills raised some good questions on the Tobacco Tax Act. He agrees with the government, as I do, that no one should be in possession of any unmarked cigarettes. But the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills went a bit further and talked about the fact that the provincial and federal governments are not co-operating very well in terms of enforcing the law as it relates to the manufacture and transportation of illegal cigarettes, particularly from the US into Ontario. I was part of the same committee with the member, and we did hear the other Auditor General talk about the loss of \$500 million to the Ontario government because we don't do a very good job of going after those who manufacture cigarettes illegally. Yes, there are jurisdictional issues involved. The question is: What is the Ontario government doing with the federal government to make sure we either find a way to co-operate or get the federal government to actually do its job, one or the other? But it's not happening. The Attorney General hasn't said a word about that, and this government hasn't said a word about that. That part of it is very, very true. We should be talking about that and having a debate about what we should be doing; that's one of the items with which I agree.

I'll talk briefly later about the pension benefits guarantee fund, because he raised that too. I don't have enough time to speak to that, but I will soon.

1440

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I do wish that government members would engage themselves in talking about the bill. I appreciate Mr. Delaney's remarks about the bud-

get, et cetera, et cetera, but let's talk about the legislation we're talking about, so that people back home who are watching or dealing with this can, in fact, talk about the issues that are on the table so we can have a good debate and have better laws, rather than blah-blah-blah about how wonderful the government is and how wonderful they have done for the world in the worst recession we've had in my lifetime.

I particularly want to thank Mr. Kormos, Ms. MacLeod and Mr. Marchese for dealing with some of the issues I talked about. Let's talk about the bill and not just fill this place with rhetoric. Thank you very much.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm going to be speaking to a couple of items that were raised by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, and then of course raise other issues of interest to me as they relate to my portfolio and to my pleasure in attacking the government as often as I can; why would I lose that kind of opportunity?

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills talked about the Tobacco Tax Act changes. I agree with him and I agree with the government as it relates to this particular issue; that is, no one should be in possession of any unmarked cigarettes, because clearly they're illegal, and whatever is illegal is something we shouldn't be condoning and/or supporting. I think that's a good start, but I do believe the Attorney General and the Liberal government have to start getting serious about attacking the illegal manufacturing of cigarettes inside this province and outside our own borders. We know that a whole lot of trucks come through the border from the US every day with illegal cigarettes that are sold in our schools and around our schools on a regular basis, and that our students are smoking on a regular basis. We know they are caught with illegal cigarettes—we know this—but it goes on. And not once—not once—have I heard the Attorney General or any other member of the cabinet of this Liberal government say, "This is wrong, this is bad and we're going to go after the manufacture and transportation of illegal cigarettes no matter where they are made."

Something is wrong in the state of our affairs in Ontario when there's actually no debate on this matter. The Auditor General says the Ontario government is forgoing \$500 million because of the manufacturing of illegal cigarettes and the selling of illegal cigarettes—half a billion bucks. It would be better if people weren't smoking, of course, but the fact of the matter is they do, and a lot of the times the cigarette butts that we find outside of our schools are cigarette butts that are illegally made. So that's the debate that the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills introduced in the Legislature but a couple of moments ago, and in that regard, I absolutely agree with him. And in this regard, yes, it's a debate that we should be having. I thought it was a very good observation on the basis that he's the Chair in that committee and I happened to be, that day, a member reviewing those stats, and I found the arguments made by the Auditor

General and others compelling. So we should have a debate.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills talked about the pension benefit guarantee fund and talked about how 30% of people, who were largely in unionized jobs, have access to this particular fund. He raised the question about whether or not that fund should even exist. I think it should. I think it's a benefit that people have acquired over the years, and I think they should continue to have the benefit of that fund.

But he does raise the question about what happens to the other 70% of the people who don't have any pension, let alone any guarantee fund that they can access in the event of a breakdown in their workplace. In that regard and on that basis, I think we need to have a debate, because 70% of the public has absolutely nothing else except access to the Canada pension plan. One must assume, of course, that they've been working for 30, 35 years steadily and contributing, and that they would have access to the old age security. Those are the two funds that most human beings have access to in this province, in this country, assuming the people have been working and paying into the Canada pension. If you've paid into this fund over the last 33, 35 years, you have, between those two pensions, close to about \$15,000 a year. That barely pays for your taxes. Depending on where you live, it barely pays for your property taxes. I exaggerate to make the point, but people are paying \$5,000, \$6,000 for their taxes in the city of Toronto; that's a whole lot of money. Then they've got to pay the bills. You figure it out. You know all the bills that you've got to pay. At the end of it, what do you have left as a senior, if you do not have access to a private pension? And 70% do not.

Now, some are well paid and they have, depending on their salary, up to \$18,000 to contribute into an RRSP. For those lucky enough and wealthy enough to be able to not have a defined benefit plan but earn over \$150,000—over \$100,000, \$150,000 or \$200,000—and able to put aside up to \$18,000 in RRSPs, that's not so bad; you're doing not too badly. But it's still casino-playing. You're playing in a casino, as we are, as MPPs. We have a defined contribution plan. We don't have a pension plan, courtesy of Mike Harris, one of the former Premiers of this province. Mr. Kormos likes to make fun all the time about these things. Mr. Kormos is a champion of a defined plan. He spoke so frequently about our need to have that pension plan, and he's going to speak to it again very shortly. But we don't have a defined plan as MPPs.

Mr. Harris did well because he was vested, as the language goes, and he was here for many years as Premier. When he left I think he had \$800,000, close to a million bucks. He did okay. Some others did not. Those who were only here for a couple of years didn't do very well. But I believe we should all have a defined benefit pension plan, all of us. All the workers should have access to a defined pension plan, because in this country, if all you rely on is a Canada pension and old age security, it isn't much. So I believe we should have that

debate. Why is it that people cannot contribute to a private pension plan? Why can they not do it? They should be able to do it and they should be able to have access to another pension plan. Whatever it takes, we should be doing it.

**1450**

I think the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills might have a different view than mine, because he raised the question of whether we should be having a defined plan at all within government. That I don't support. I think people are entitled to a defined benefit plan, and I decry the fact that 70% of the public does not have one. They too work hard. Everyone works hard. It doesn't matter what kind of a job you're in. In this country, if all you have is access to a Canada pension plan and old age security, you're almost poor, you're very poor, and you really have to tighten your belt to be able to survive. It doesn't matter who that is.

But I know in the Italian-Canadian community, one of the things they talk about all the time whenever we meet is their pension and how inadequate that is. This is where I attack the federal Liberals, because they've been there forever, with the exception of a few stints with the Harper regime. The Liberals have been there forever and the pensions have been low because of the Liberal government on the whole, and Italian Canadians still vote for the Liberal Party. It doesn't matter who is in there and it doesn't matter the lack of benefits; they keep on voting for the Liberal Party. Yet every time I meet some Italian Canadian at the door, it's about the pensions and how inadequate they are. So I say to those Italian Canadians, it's time for a change. It's time to consider other parties; it's time to consider other parties who are interested in them, because the only ones who talk about the inadequacy of the pensions are New Democrats. The only ones who believe that those pensions should change and be different and should be raised are New Democrats. The only ones who believe we should have access to more and more defined benefit plans are New Democrats.

You can see universally, in Canada and beyond, corporate desire to get rid of the defined benefit plan. There is a movement afoot in Canada and beyond to get rid of the defined benefit plan. You see it every day. Those who read the business section in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* talk about the unsustainability of our current pension plans. What they mean is, "How do we get rid of these defined pension plans?" That's really what they mean when they say they are not sustainable. How come? Why aren't they sustainable? And if they are not sustainable, how do we make them sustainable? That is the question, rather than saying, "We can't do it anymore. It should be a contribution plan." You kick in a couple of bucks, the employer kicks in a couple of dollars, and you invest whatever few dollars you got into an RRSP, and then you throw your money into the casino and you say, "God bless. Hope for the best."

Casino investments, casino gambling, are just not good. In the end, you lose. Casinos were invented to steal your money so that somebody becomes rich. In this

particular case, governments make close to \$2 billion because of people's desire and love to gamble. It's a sad thing that governments have to rely on casinos now because we're addicted; everyone's addicted to that money, just like the addicted poor folks who go to gamble. The majority of them lose their money and their shirts. There are terrible stories of people who lose their homes and second homes, those people who gamble and who take from their family, from their wives, from their brothers and sisters, from their relatives. It's just a terrible mess, casino gambling. "Defined contributions," they call it, and that's what we're moving to. And yes, we need to have a debate. Boy, do we need to have a debate.

I wanted to talk about those two issues that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills raised, and I want to talk briefly about the response to his remarks by Bob Delaney, from Mississauga–Streetsville. This government used to say to the Conservative government, "We have cut corporate taxes to the bone. We're not going to do it anymore." Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, said to the Tories, "We're not cutting corporate taxes anymore."

That was but six months ago, and what has happened since? They say, "Oh, the economy has changed so badly, so dramatically, so drastically that we've got to cut corporate taxes even more." How do you make sense of that? Those of you who are left-leaning Liberals, how do you make sense of that, and how do you support your leader when he reverses himself and gives away \$4.2 billion over a three-year period to corporations that do not need my money? He takes \$4.2 billion of my money—yes, it is partly my money and yours and the money of all the taxpayers who are watching this program, all the citizens who are watching this program. He's giving away \$4.2 billion to corporations who do not need our money. These are dollars that go to profitable corporations. They don't need our money, but McGuinty says, "Yes, they do." He's reaching into my pocket and your pockets, and he says, "I want to give \$4.2 billion away to the corporations, because they need your money."

They need my money? The corporations need my money? Rather than give back to society, you're going to take from me so I can give them \$4.2 billion over three years? Why would you do that, Premier McGuinty? To every left-leaning Liberal: Have you thought about it; have you spoken about it in your caucus; did you have the debate; did you go after the Premier and any other minister who supports this? What did you do? Where were you? Where are you? If you exist as a left-leaning Liberal, I don't hear you. I don't hear your voices; I don't hear the debate. All I hear is \$4.2 billion going away to the corporate sector because they say they need to be competitive.

Have you noticed that every year for the last 15 years we have given more and more to the corporate sector and every year the corporations say, "We're still not competitive." When are they going to be competitive? When does it end? They're never competitive, it seems. They

keep taking money away from me and giving it to them, and they keep saying, "It's not enough; we can't compete." Well, when are you going to be able to compete? Tell us, left-leaning Liberals, when are we going to be able to compete? Where are you? If any one of you is a left-leaning Liberal, raise your hand. Where were you? Did you have the debate? No. I didn't see that. I didn't hear you. I didn't hear that debate.

To the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, I know it's your job. You're a good soldier—you are—and you've got to defend your government. That's what you do. He gets paid to defend the government; I understand that.

But you have just introduced harmonization of the GST and the PST. You got together with Flaherty, the finance minister at the federal level—he used to be the finance minister over here. The two of you got together in the backrooms—in the backrooms, you understand, with Harper yet, in agreement to harmonize the PST and the GST. Did you left-leaning Liberals notice that not once did McGuinty or Finance Minister Dwight Duncan criticize Flaherty? Do you notice? He's mum. He was silent. He didn't say a word. Do you know why? Because there was a pact. There was an agreement to give away \$4 billion to hush them up. All it took was \$4 billion from Harper, the friend of these Conservatives here, to hush them up.

**1500**

You've got to understand, I've been urging the Tories to let it all out, just go after their federal cousins, but they too are hushed, as if the money that they got from the federal government to this provincial Liberal government has quietened them all down, quietened the Liberals, quietened the Tories. There is some harmony afoot here between these two levels of government. They have been so tight in the last little while. With that \$4 billion that the federal Tories gave to the provincial Liberals, they've been able to say to a whole lot of people at the higher-income level, "Don't worry, we're going to give you a couple of bucks just to shut you down."

But you understand this is a permanent hit? This tax, harmonized provincial and federal, is going to be with us in perpetuity. You're going to be whacked till you die. You're going to be whacked with a tax every time you buy something till you die. Your children are going to be whacked till they die. You understand? The \$4 billion that the feds gave you has hushed all the criticism up and is an attempt to hush a whole lot of people by saying: "You're going to get \$1,000. Don't worry. Three instalments, but you'll be okay."

What happens after that, McGuinty? When my three instalments are in my pocket, then what? You're going to be whacked in perpetuity, eternally, till you die. A whole lot of middle-class folks are going to get hit with that unfair tax. Every time you buy a product, you're going to get hit, each and every day. So the people who earn anywhere from \$40,000, you're going to get whacked forever.

Dalton McGuinty says this is revenue-neutral. No, it isn't. This is about making money. It's about making

money. It says that every time you buy a product, you're going to get taxed, and you're going to get taxed good. It's a consumption tax, and it's going to be there forever. It's a tax from which they are going to raise billions and billions of dollars. In the short little while, the \$4 billion given by Flaherty, he's just going to give to a couple of people to keep them all quiet and happy. After that, we'll be stuck with it forever.

So is this a great budget that the Liberals have introduced? Not in my mind.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I've always listened to the member opposite from—what is it?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Trinity–Spadina.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Trinity–Spadina—I want to say Spinity Tradina. It's that dyslexia in me.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The Holy Trinity.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** The Holy Trinity.

He raised three key issues. I think I've got it right. In the first, he started off with concern for illegal cigarettes, talked about the pension reform proposals and then ended with his concern for the harmonization tax. Of those three key issues, I want to try to touch on at least one of them for sure, but I'll see if I can get to the other ones. I'd like to see if he could come back and explain. When he said "the perpetual whack" of this particular harmonization, has he acknowledged that 93% of all Ontarians will be receiving a decline in their income tax? That's permanent.

The other question I want to ask him about is the pension plan. He's aware of the teachers' pension plan, how that evolved and the fact that in the old days, when both of us were in the profession, the pension was set up so that the only way in which the teachers could have an investment done was if they lent it back to the government for 3%, and the evolution of that particular fund took on a new life when negotiated between the teachers and the government of the day. I would say that yes, indeed, there is some room for some very honest debate with how we proceed with pensions and what we should be doing to ensure that people are safe and secure in the future. I'm going to say a blunt yes, that I think we should be debating that. It's about time that we got a fulsome debate about the whole evolution.

The second is the cigarette—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Speaker, stop him.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Wholesome. Wholesome.

We talk about the cigarette issue, and the picture painted was a little bit bleaker than what it is. The RCMP, the OPP, and the federal and provincial governments are working with ways in which to capture some of this illegal trade and working towards a solution. So I would hope that we would work together to find that.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to rise to comment on the member from Trinity–Spadina, on two things in particular.

I'm not sure where the member from Trinity–Spadina has been in the last number of weeks for question period, but without a doubt we have been raising the issue of illegal cigarettes. Our party has been giving examples of where illegal cigarettes have been sold and highlighting the issues during question period in this Legislature. We've even shown a scientific investigation on what's in these illegal cigarettes, and I can tell you it's more than just tobacco. So I think we're in agreement that more needs to be done on that.

On the HST, we in this party have also been raising, during question period, the many problems that we foresee and that are happening with the HST. He made reference to an understanding that was happening between the parties federally and in Ontario, and I have to say that question period has shown that we have raised lots of concerns with the HST. The 13% tax is going to be a problem. Whether you're a senior, a student, on a fixed income, on a low income, it's going to mean a huge change, and it's a tax grab by the provincial Liberals. We've been highlighting that, and I hope that we will continue to work together to highlight the problems that are happening in the federal and provincial harmonization that's occurring with the 13% tax.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker.

I, too, sat through the explanation by the member for Trinity–Spadina as to why New Democrats won't be supporting this budget bill because of its failings: its absolute failure to meaningfully address the pension issue, its absolute failure to address the incredible new costs that are going to be imposed upon, especially, those lowest-income families. Those very lowest-income families are going to be bearing an inappropriate new cost, and not just inappropriate, but one that's disproportionate.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Unfair.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Sales taxes in and of themselves are unfair. If the government wants to contemplate some sort of luxury tax on people who buy a \$150,000 Mercedes-Benz S series, that's something we might want to sit down and talk about. If the government wants to sit down and make sure that those corporate rip-off artists, the corporate bandits, the \$500,000-a-year-plus people who drive companies into the ground and kill thousands of jobs and then walk off with incredible golden handshakes—if the government wants to talk about taxing those lump-sum payments a little more thoroughly, well, hey, we're ready to sit down and talk. If the government wants to talk about capping corporate salaries at a point in time when corporate thieves, the ones in the boardrooms, are ripping off little people left and right across the province, well, then, we're prepared to sit down and talk about that.

But imposing new and disproportionate taxes on the poorest people in the province—don't give me “income tax reduction” stuff. Many of these people don't pay income taxes; they don't make enough money to pay

incomes tax. You get it? It means absolutely nothing to them, because the poorest people, the ones who don't pay any income tax, are still out there buying consumer products and spending every penny of their income on them.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** It's a pleasure to comment on my neighbour here, the member from Trinity–Spadina. I was listening intently—

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** No, you weren't.

1510

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** I was. I was, because when the member speaks, we listen. Now that he has been moved up to the front benches, we have to listen doubly attentively, obviously, with the clout that he carries.

I'm going to be able to speak about this in a few minutes, following the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and I'll talk about some of the things that are happening in my riding dealing with the budget that we introduced in this House just a couple of weeks ago. But I guess, a bit confusing—maybe in his response he could address this. We often, as I am in my riding or even here at Queen's Park—you know that we're always encouraged to work with other levels of government, with municipal, federal; none of this tug-of-war back and forth. Here we are, we're following the lead of three or four other provinces across this country that have a harmonized tax. We're working with the federal government on how we can make that best step in Ontario to help us during this economic time. And yes, we're giving back to some folks some of their hard-earned money. So here we are accomplishing the task of working together with other governments and putting those measures in place that help Ontarians, but I gather from the member that he's against trying to give those Ontarians, whether in permanent tax incentives or in one-time negotiated, some money to move forward.

He talked an awful lot about pensions and the structure of pensions. Yes, maybe we should have that debate. Relating it to gambling? Well, I don't know where we've all been, but in the last five or six months the whole world is in a gambling situation because we don't know from day to day where we're going to be.

I look forward to talking about this a little bit later.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Trinity–Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Just to agree and restate the argument my colleague from Welland made: If the government were taxing luxury items, we'd be on board with that, because if you're buying expensive items that most human beings can't afford and you want to tax them, I say God bless, go after them. He's right about that. This is not the case. They're going to harmonize a tax, the PST and the GST, on all items that everyone needs and needs to buy. So it isn't just a couple of things that we're going to go after and make sure those who have the money will pay. It's about a harmonized tax, the PST and

GST, that the Conservatives federally and provincial Liberals are in bed with and have done silently, with the \$4 billion they got from the Tories to give to the Liberals to quiet them down. They did this together. This is the wrong, unfair tax.

The member from Brant talks about the fact that 93% of the people get a tax break. McGuinty is giving me an income tax break. I don't need that tax break. Yes, those earning under \$36,000 need it and that's okay, but to give wealthy Ontarians an income tax break makes absolutely no sense. So why you would defend that and why your government defends it as a good thing when you need that money to be able to make sure the services are kept in the province, rather than giving me money that I don't need, as a well-paid Ontarian—this is wrong. When you, with pride, say, "This is great; I'm giving you an income tax cut"—please. You haven't thought it through, most of you left-leaning Liberals, if some should exist. Where are you? Raise your voices in unison against McGuinty and what he's done with his budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** First off, I'd like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time speaking to Bill 162 with the member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Although I've had the opportunity to speak in the House on a couple of occasions since being sworn in as the new member from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, this is the first time that I am able to stand in this House and formally thank the voters of my riding both for taking part in the election process and for placing their confidence in my ability to represent them at Queen's Park. It meant so very much to my family, and I enjoy their support. Thank you to all the voters, Liberal and not, of my riding's many communities for engaging in this contest. Thank you for demonstrating that our democratic process is alive and well. I am sure that this has been said many times in this room, but I am truly honoured and humbled to be standing here as a member of provincial Parliament in this great province of Ontario.

There are many people that I should thank personally for helping to show me the way to Queen's Park, but I know that if I start to name people I will forget someone, so I would just like to thank personally the two people who first pushed me into public life in 1997. The former director of education for the Victoria county district school board, Diane Dalton, and the principal of my children's elementary school, Grandview Public School in Manvers township, Hugh Armstrong, were the two people who tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You can make a difference." They convinced me to run as a public school trustee, and that changed my life. The path they set me on led me to this moment before you today.

As this is an opportunity to introduce myself to the Legislature, I would like to provide my fellow members with a brief biography of myself. I hope that by giving you a bit of my background, you will know me better and understand why I am here with you today.

I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. My father was a firefighter with the city, and my mother ran

the house and guided me, my older brother Gary and my younger sister Karen. My mother died of breast cancer in 1966, when I was 12. I can remember my father saying many years later that if it wasn't for our country's health care system, he would have lost everything when my mother was sick.

I believe that we can never let our health care system be forfeited for political purposes. It has become an integral part of what our province and our country are. I am proud that our budget continues to support our provincial health care system by increasing the allocation to health care while looking for ways to help make our society healthier through education and health promotion.

I met my wife, Terri, while attending high school in Winnipeg. We actually formed a rock 'n' roll band together in 1971, and then moved to Ontario in 1976, a year after we were married. We spent the next three decades touring the province and country with our music. We've recorded eight albums or CDs of original music. It was an incredible experience, because it gave me the chance to spend time in so many areas of the province and country meeting people, hearing their stories and learning what makes our province tick.

The arts stand as a pillar for our culture as a people. Music and the arts opened doors for me to colleges and universities across the country. For this reason I sometimes explain that I have been to more universities than some of the more accomplished academics—and many in this room, as a matter of fact.

During our career in music, we were fortunate to work and tour with a virtual who's who of Canada's music industry. Music is a huge part of our arts and culture industry that provides approximately 4% of our country's gross national product—an industry that is so vital to who we are as a province and a nation. As much as Karen Kain's artistry personified Canadian dance, so too do did Gordon Lightfoot, Tom Cochrane, Bruce Cockburn, Rush and so many others become a part of who we are as a people. I'm very proud to say that the musicians Neil Young and Serena Ryder were both born in my riding.

Our budget provides assistance to our current arts and culture community through numerous grants that support festivals and events across Ontario. The budget also provides guidance and support to our future artists through the Ministry of Education's investment in specialist teachers in our province's schools. My hope is that through exposing our children to music and art in our schools, we won't miss the next Beethoven, Picasso or Lennon and McCartney. No child with potential should be denied a chance to excel because of his or her social standing.

It was during these travels with my wife that we decided to purchase our home near Pontypool, where we have lived for the past 22 years. Our two children, Patricia and Michael, were born there and attended school there, and it has truly become our home and our community.

As a member of that community, I successfully ran for the office of public school trustee for the Trillium Lake-

lands District School Board in 1997, 2000, 2003 and 2006. I served as board chairperson on two occasions. I was elected president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association four times, a feat duplicated only by the member from Guelph.

I am very proud of my term as a school trustee, and I believe that school trustees perform an invaluable service to communities across Ontario. They are empowered to make sure that the knowledge of past generations is passed along to our province's most valuable natural resource, our children.

As president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, I was able to visit almost all the public boards in the province, from Moosonee to Windsor and from Kenora to Cornwall. I learned so much about the unique challenges that school boards, and people in general, face in our province. My experience in music and education has given me an incredible insight into the people of this province, and I look forward to drawing on that experience as I take on my role as MPP.

The residents in my community spoke very clearly on March 5 about local democracy and the importance of being represented by a local resident. The minister from London North Centre described local democracy so clearly for me at an event during my campaign. She said that our democracy works when residents from all areas in our province send a person from their community to be their voice in the Legislature. It is from these collective voices that good decisions are made in the best interests of our province. I believe that, and I am glad the people in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock believe that as well.

**1520**

They also believe in and spoke clearly to me about their support of a strong public education system, a system that brings children and communities together, an education system that will prepare our children to face a world that does not yet exist. It will be through our well-funded public education system and the successful students it produces that our province will emerge from this worldwide economic crisis stronger and better prepared for the future.

Our students are doing better. Test results have improved over the past six years; graduation rates have improved over the past six years. These improvements didn't happen by accident but by focused investments into our education system and by the hard work and dedication of our province's teachers and support staff. Every staff member in our schools, from the custodians to the directors of education, play an integral part in the success of a child.

As a trustee, I have been privileged to visit hundreds of schools, both within my riding and across the province, to witness firsthand the amazing work going on to promote student success. During the election, on several occasions I was accused of focusing too much on the importance of education in solving so many of our current economic issues. As someone who has spent a great portion of my life working to improve education through

out our communities and across the province as a parent and a trustee, I refused to apologize for that focus. I am guilty; guilty of thinking that education is the keystone to any arch of prosperity and peace for our families. Education means better jobs. Education means better health care. Education means safer communities. Education means greener communities. Education means smarter agriculture. Education is the key to our province's future.

I am pleased to join the team that brought effective change to this province through these past six years—a team that works well with federal and municipal governments, no matter their stripe, to make people's lives better; a team that is not afraid of making tough tax decisions to better prepare our province for the future; a team that has worked towards addressing the social deficit that was inherited in 2003; and a team that cares about hard-working people in this province.

In this budget, our government has announced an investment in infrastructure of \$14 billion a year for the next two years. This investment will help to get people to work and address the province's infrastructure needs. The Minister of Finance has also announced that there will be a \$14-billion deficit next year as well. My math says that our government could have decided to make no investment in infrastructure and jobs and to balance the budget instead, but that decision would have been devastating to our province, and I am proud that our government chose the path to economic recovery in this budget that it has. I urge all the parties in this Legislature to support this budget because the only way we can improve the lives of those in our province is by coming together in these very tough times. There is no room today for the politics of division.

People in my riding and across the province are worried. Seniors are worried about their pensions; parents are worried about their jobs and their children's future. We are watching our investments disappear. College funds are shrinking and people are looking towards the government for leadership and support. We all need to work together for the sake of your neighbours, your parents, your children and everyone else who is worried and looking for help during this global economic crisis. The people in Ontario are looking to the people in this room to be there for them. They are looking for us to guide this ship through troubled waters.

There has been a change at Queen's Park since our government was elected in 2003. We have worked hard to promote an attitude of peace and stability in every area of the public sector. Billions of dollars have been reinvested into our hospitals, infrastructure and education. Our government has reversed the downloading of services that the previous government so graciously forced upon municipalities during their last term. This has been good news for my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, but there is so much more to be done.

My community is looking for the government's support for the riding's infrastructure needs and they have elected me to be their voice as we work together to fight

this recession. Whether it's making the right decision on roads and highways, investing in and preserving the waterways throughout Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, encouraging our farmers—starting with giving them the respect that they've earned—or developing and encouraging tourism throughout the riding, we need to continue to work at it.

My riding also has one of the oldest demographics in the province, which in turn makes the health care needs and costs in my riding above average as well. I'm sure that this is also true in many rural communities. Although our population numbers may be low, our needs for seniors are often higher. Many seniors and less fortunate people move to rural communities because of the lower cost of living, but that fact creates greater pressure on our local municipal governments and health care providers.

I spoke many times during my campaign about making sure that our seniors live with the dignity and respect they have earned, and I believe that we need to further protect our seniors by looking into a rural transit model so people can get to the store or the doctor, the things that help keep seniors in their homes. Many seniors have a hard time in their homes keeping up with the basic things they need to do, whether it's touch-ups, small home repairs, cutting the lawn, shovelling snow, or fixing peeling paint. I would like to see our seniors' home care program expanded so that more could be done to allow our seniors to stay in their homes for as long as it is possible. Dollars invested into a program like this would be dollars saved from our health care budgets.

We need to make sure that our local kids can be rightly encouraged to come back and work and live where they grew up. My former school board surveyed a recent graduating class and found out that just 11% of the grads believed they would find a job and live in the riding. This was a very disappointing answer. We all want our children to live and work close to the homes that they were raised in, but today that reality is not yet fully realized in rural Ontario. Keeping families together builds stronger communities. I believe that as a government we need to look at ways that we can spread public service jobs across the province so that our rural communities can thrive again. Our highways need to bring workers to jobs both in and out of our major cities.

During my campaign, I spoke often of the need to preserve and protect our history. As I stand in this historic building speaking to you, I'm constantly reminded of the history that has taken place within these walls. Since being elected, I have spent many late nights in this building and I have taken the time to look at the paintings that decorate the halls. The workmanship that has gone into the carvings and paint in this room is a treasure and a monument to the artists that created them. My riding also contains many treasures, but they need help and a lot of tender loving care. The province's last grain elevator in Pontypool, the Austin mill in Kinmount, and the Academy Theatre in Lindsay are just a few of the historical and cultural landmarks that deserve our attention. They define our heritage and who we are.

I plan to work hard as the MPP for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock to help make my community a destination for families of all ages to move to, a community with a thriving agricultural sector, a year-round tourism industry, a first-class public education system, a roads system that will allow businesses and visitors quick, safe access, a community with a thriving arts sector, a community where anyone will be welcomed, a community that anyone would be proud to call home.

My riding has enjoyed superb local representation more often than not over the past few decades, no matter the stripe of the MPP, local representation that understood our values, our needs, our history and our opportunities. I am honoured that my community has placed their confidence and trust in me to be their voice in this historic chamber, not just as a Liberal, not just as a long-time community servant, but as a local father, businessman and member of this, my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

My community has high expectations for everyone in this room. I believe that many of their expectations and needs are addressed in this budget. My community expects us to work together. I urge all members to support this budget so that we can get to work for all of our communities.

In closing, I would like to thank the Premier both for his confidence in my candidacy and for the effective, stable, consistent leadership that he has brought to our province. I am proud to be a colleague in such a government, and, again, honoured to be the voice and representative on behalf of the good folks of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Thanks as well to the members on all sides of this House for your advice and for the warm welcome that you have given me.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence today and I look forward to working with all of my fellow members on behalf of the people of this great province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde):** Thank you. I believe that you are sharing your time with the member from Northumberland-Quinte West.

**Mr. Lou Rinaldi:** Let me first congratulate the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I know I've done this in the past, but welcome to Queen's Park. I know you'll make a great addition not just to our party but to the whole legislative process with your background. It's an honour to follow you today.

Mr. Speaker, yes, I'm going to speak about Bill 162, but the approach I'm going to take in the few minutes I have left is really to bring to this House some of the comments that I have received since the budget was introduced a couple of weeks ago.

I'm just going to quote from some of the media articles. I want to clarify that the quotes are going to be considerably positive about the budget, but I do get some calls about some issues where people might not understand, and whenever I have the opportunity, not only do my staff respond to those, but I take the time to call these folks directly. In many cases it's a matter of explaining that this was a budget of more than one plank.

**1530**

I'm going to begin with an article from the *Trentonian*, on the day after the budget, after I had the opportunity to speak to the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce. I'll just quote:

"Trenton-based Royal LePage real estate agent, Mike Cowan"—by the way, Mike Cowan is also the president of the Quinte West Chamber of Commerce—"said the harmonized tax likely won't affect the local market for the simple reason not many buyers are moving into \$500,000-plus homes.

"I don't think the harmonized tax will have a huge impact on us," said Cowan.

"We don't see a lot of homes being constructed over \$500,000. People are moving towards homes between 2,000 and 3,000 square feet. When people move to high-end homes, they really want high-end," said Cowan. "That's not really happening in this area."

That is from the east end of the riding.

From the west end of the riding, one of the articles after the budget, from one of the Northumberland papers:

"As the minimum wage rose from \$8.75 to \$9.50 across Ontario this week, Northumberland poverty activists and the business community were in agreement that it is a good thing for the area"—and I will have those quotes from those folks.

"Mary Anne Rowlands, managing director of the Help Centre, is happy to see the minimum wage increasing to \$9.50 per hour"—this is dated April 2, 2009.

"While many in the business sector have lamented the raise to the minimum wage as doing serious damage to their bottom line, Bruce McCartney, president of the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, doesn't see it that way. He's not opposed to minimum wage going up, and thinks many small business owners already pay more than minimum wage to retain the best workers."

"If you want to have good people come work for you, you have to pay more than the minimum wage," said Mr. McCartney....

"Poverty activists think the raise could actually be a boon for the local economy.

"The small businesses are going to be the first to benefit," said low-income poverty activist Paula Fillion. "When those increases come in, the first thing they're going to do is spend it locally."

Mr. McCartney, the president of the local chamber, went on to say his "big concern is that Ontario's minimum stays close to minimum wages across the world, so businesses don't move their operations and jobs to other countries to lower labour costs.

"We are in a global economy, so if our minimum wage is much higher than somewhere else, it's going to have an impact," said Mr. McCartney....

"Minimum wage should be going up a tad every year," said Mr. McCartney."

I quote that because those are basically the steps that our government has been taking in both the local—as you

can see from these quotes from these people, they agree with our philosophy that we've incorporated.

Out of Northumberland Today, which serves Cobourg, Port Hope and Port Colborne: "Lois Cromarty, head of a county poverty reduction committee, supported the early, almost doubling of the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 per child per year starting this July, along with permanent funding for rent banks"—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** I'm sorry, the member has run out of time. Questions and comments?

**Mr. Norm Miller:** First of all, congratulations to the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock on his maiden speech. He noted that Serena Ryder is from his riding. That name certainly catches my attention because Serena is probably my daughter Renee's favourite singer. I think she's seen her half a dozen times in concert. We've accused her of being a stalker of Serena at this point. In fact, she's got her parents motivated to go watch Serena when she plays at the Stockey centre in Parry Sound in early July.

The member, in his maiden speech, brought up a few points, one of them being the importance of education, and certainly I would agree with that.

I can't help but highlight some issues in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, where they finished the accommodation process and decided that the best thing to do in the Near North District School Board is to close two primary schools and open one new school. They made that decision and went through the process but are now waiting for the government to act. So I'd encourage them to get the Minister of Education to act on that so Parry Sound can get going with that new primary school.

I'd also point out that in Parry Sound we need a new high school and in Huntsville we need a new high school, and the Near North District School Board is facing some huge budget challenges this year.

On another education-related issue, we need the boards of education across the province to decide to start the calendar year after Labour Day. Trillium Lakelands District School Board is revisiting the issue this week, but we need them all to start after Labour Day so that it doesn't negatively affect one of the industries he talked about, and that is tourism. I'm sure it would be negative for tourism in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, as it would be for tourism in Parry Sound-Muskoka, if the calendar school year started before Labour Day instead of the time when it usually starts, which is after Labour Day.

Madam Speaker, those are all the points I have time to communicate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member for Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. It was a pleasure to be here to listen to the inaugural speech of Rick Johnson, the new member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Of course, we used to call them "maiden speeches," but that isn't politically correct anymore. Maybe it's just as well; "inaugural speech," in fact, says so much more.

However, I do want to tell that member that as I listened carefully to his references to Canadian musical icons, I was heartbroken to note the omission of Walter Ostanek from Port Colborne, the polka king of the world. Walter Ostanek has received more Grammy nominations than the Rolling Stones. I would simply encourage my colleague to, please, think of Walter Ostanek. Stompin' Tom Connors: My God, I age myself, but the Guthrie-esque Stompin' Tom belongs on anybody's list. The list could go on for so long. But I've got to tell you, I was delighted just this morning, in the very early morning, as I'm getting ready to come over here to Queen's Park listening to 96.3, who do I hear but Malka and Joso. That brought back incredible musical memories. Of course, Joso, who lives in Croatia now, still drops in at the restaurant occasionally in the summertime, and you can run into him.

The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has proven himself to be a hard-working and capable member. I'm sure he's going to bring a great deal not only to this Legislature but to his caucus. His caucus and the Premier need a great deal brought to them, and this is just the man who can do it. I'm looking forward to seeing it happen.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

**Mr. Mike Colle:** It was a pleasure listening to my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock reminiscing about his involvement in music and certainly his appreciation of Canadian music. I got to thinking of the Tragically Hip and their iconic song about Bobcaygeon that we all know, and the incredible—although I do agree about Stompin' Tom Connors; he should have mentioned Stompin' Tom. Who can forget Tillsonburg, and on and on?

But I just want to say that he does represent—we have so many beautiful parts in this province, but that part of the province is just spectacular. It's so close to the GTA. The Kawartha Lakes—I spent some time at Lake Catchacoma up there, and it's beautiful. There's the Buckhorn Fine Art Festival. It's just an incredibly beautiful part of this province. It's rugged. It has small towns and cities like Lindsay and Fenelon Falls. It is worth visiting.

The people there have really got a strong independent streak in them. As you know, many of the pundits predicted another outcome in that by-election, all the so-called experts and talking heads, who had already decided who was going to win that election. But the people of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock made up their own minds and they said, "We are the ones who are going to choose our MPP."

I think they've chosen a very good one, who really is compassionate. He's also very passionate about the people he represents. He cares about the basics, and the basics go to education and building those strong communities so people can have their health care, can have their good schools and be proud of this spectacular place in Ontario called Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

So congratulations on a meaningful speech, and it will be something that we'll all remember.

**1540**

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'll be speaking myself to Bill 162 in a moment, but I would like to comment on the member from Victoria–Haliburton—no, sorry. I always get that riding mixed up, I'm sorry. And it's right next door to me.

But there's one thing I wanted to point out, and I appreciate all his comments on the music etc. Mr. Johnson and I share a common border on the eastern end of my riding and the western end of his riding. We've got a huge amount of aggregate in this area, some of the best aggregate in the province, and it's limestone. If there's one thing we can do—because so much of the land has been purchased by the large quarry companies across the world, the Lafarges and the Beamishes; they're the owners of thousands and thousands of acres of aggregate—I think that's an area where I'd like to be able to work with him, work with the government and work with MTO, because I think one thing that's really required is a transportation master plan for aggregate in the province. Most of that aggregate heads to southern Ontario, and all you have to do is drive down Highway 12 and see the ruts in the highway from the huge tractor-trailers to know that we've got a problem. There are the safety issues as well.

So I congratulate him on basically his first speech, and I congratulate him on his victory in the election. I look forward to working with him, particularly on some of these aggregate issues.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Rick Johnson:** I'd very much like to thank everyone who spoke in response to my speech.

The representative for Parry Sound–Muskoka: When I was chair of the Trillium Lakelands school board, we also represented the Muskoka area—that board encompasses that—and we talked about his needs for new schools in the area. I was very proud of the fact that during my tenure as chair of the board we built a brand new high school: the new Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School in Bracebridge, and also I believe it was Muskoka Falls Public School that was built a couple of years ago. So I'm very much aware of his area and look forward to having the opportunity to work with him in the future.

The member from Welland: I actually own one of Walter Ostanek's CDs. Although he's had numerous Juno Award nominations, I would just say that my wife, singer Terri Crawford, has had two, which we're very proud of, as there are not very many people in the country who can say that.

The representative from Eglinton–Lawrence, talking about all the areas in my riding: I do live in a beautiful area of this province. My wife and I, after touring this country for 20 years, made the choice to live in that area because of the quality of life it had to offer, both the

education system and just the territory. We live at the top of the Oak Ridges moraine. It's a beautiful spot to live, and we are very fortunate to be there. I'm thrilled about it.

The representative from Simcoe North: I'm very aware of the aggregate areas up there. During the campaign, I had the opportunity to go skeet shooting up in that area, in one of the abandoned areas. It was quite an experience and one I would call a highlight of the election. I did make sure I was pointing the gun in the direction of my own riding as opposed to yours.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget measures and other matters. Of course, on this side of the House we hear all the negative things, and on the government side we hear all the positive things. But I wanted to speak about the budget, how it impacts my riding in a lot of ways and some of the concerns I have with it; some of the concerns I have, really, about the direction we're going as a province and maybe even as a country—maybe even a world, for that matter.

I guess I'll start out by talking about government spending and the fact that—we've said this before in the House—it took from Confederation to 2003 for the government spending to reach \$67 billion here in Ontario. I believe even as recently as when Bill Davis was the Premier of Ontario it was something like \$19 billion, \$20 billion, so even in that time it escalated. But with the spending today from 2003 to 2009, if we look at the forecast of the expenditures for the next year, we're actually going from \$67 billion to \$109 billion, which is a \$42-billion increase, or about a 62% increase in government spending in that time frame. You have to wonder, with people having smaller families, with families being a little bit smaller, how long we can sustain this kind of spending as we move forward.

Obviously the governments not only here in Ontario, but nationally, the federal government, along with a lot of the countries around the world, have decided that we have to spend our way out of these very difficult times. That's a real concern I have for my kids and my grandchildren and those in the future. It's easy to make these fancy announcements that we're going to build a new hospital here, a new school here, a new college here, but the reality is that this money is the money that we're borrowing and that our children are going to be expected to pay for.

We've got the Build Canada money coming up, phase two. I think the applications are due on May 1. We've got the stimulus package coming. These are billions and billions of dollars in the province of Ontario. A lot of municipalities are counting on getting a number of grants approved in those particular areas, but the reality is that this is all borrowed money that we're looking at that's for our children. It's really our children who will be expected to pay for that. What this really means, Madam Chair, is that—you've watched this government. We got a lot of

fancy announcements, we got a lot of fancy programs, but the reality is that by the end of this particular run of deficits, we'll be over \$200 billion in debt, so they've added about another \$80 billion on to the debt load of the province of Ontario.

I want to just point out how it will be paid down, looking at the budget document here. The spending next year will be a \$14.1-billion deficit for 2009-10; for 2010-11, a \$12.2-billion deficit; 2011-12, a \$9.7-billion deficit; 2012-13, an \$8.0-billion deficit; 2013-14, a \$5.8-billion deficit; and 2014-15, a \$3.1-billion deficit. Those will add substantial debt to our overall province. Finally, they expect that in 2015-16 we can actually pay it down.

One of the concerns I have is the amount of money the government is expecting to raise next year. When you look at this particular document, the revenues they're expecting for this coming year, 2009-10, are approximately \$96 billion. That jumps up in 2011-12 to \$103.6 billion. In very difficult economic times the government is actually expecting the revenues next year to increase by \$7.6 billion, from one year into the next. The only thing I can see on that is that this is the new harmonization coming in, and they realize that the tax harmonization will be some type of a windfall for the province, because obviously it's going to add billions of dollars in revenue. I was under the understanding it was something like \$2.6 billion, that sort of thing, but the reality is it looks like the government is expecting some very substantial increases in revenues next year. It would be interesting to hear some of the comments come back from the government side to see just why they would expect, in these difficult economic times, to have such a—it works out to be about a 7% increase in growth as far as revenues are concerned for that time.

The other thing is, we're losing these manufacturing jobs: 300,000 manufacturing jobs. It comes up every day. I was talking to a gentleman the other day who just retired. Actually he retired before the very, very difficult economic times from the parts manufacturing business. I think this guy is a very brilliant man. He's actually retired now and has a foundation of his own that distributes money to all kinds of organizations around the communities. He suspects that the automotive fallout is going to be much worse than what we're even hearing here today—whether it's the comments coming from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, from the federal minister, or even what we hear internationally, in the United States—that this may have a bigger impact than we're suggesting it could be right now.

**1550**

When we look at this budget document and we look at the fact that the government has this plan to lower this deficit over the next seven or eight years, I'm wondering how accurate that really is; whether it's best wishes or we're looking at a fairly positive turnaround, I'm not sure. The reality is that when you talk to some people, to some of the forecasters, it may not be quite as positive as you think.

Today I asked a question of the Minister of Tourism, and I was actually a little bit insulted. I was sort of

laughed at because I asked questions about golf courses in my riding. I actually last week had phoned or visited—not golfing—the owners of 10 golf courses in Simcoe county. I asked them what they thought of the harmonization and what they felt the impact would be. Each one of them—there were 10 of them—predicted it would cost them between three and seven employees, or approximately five employees, all or most of whom would be students. So in 10 courses, that would be 10 times five employees per course; that's 50 young people who wouldn't have a job. Quite simply, here's what their concern is. It's not that there won't be people who can afford to golf. There will always be people who can afford to go out and golf. But when a family is under pressure and they may not be able to go to as many recreational types of activities throughout the course of their year, then they will cut back on some. The harmonization tax averages about \$4 a round of golf. The gentlemen I talked to felt that the sheer numbers alone would drop quite substantially and there would end up being a loss of jobs for young people in the tourism sector.

As you know—I'm not sure if you've seen some of the data that came out last week—for student unemployment we're already at 17%. It's one of the highest in the country. We have some very, very challenging times for student employment across Ontario. Quite frankly, I was trying to find out if the minister had anything more positive. She talks about these tax cuts for all Ontarians, but you know that you can say that you are having a tax cut for all Ontarians, and some of the people are getting a \$3 tax cut or an \$8 tax cut or \$25 tax cut, when in fact the harmonization factor is costing the average senior citizen in the province of Ontario—if you look at their heating bill, the gasoline they'd require for their car etc., the harmonization could cost the average senior in Ontario around \$1,500 a year. So it's not fair to talk about the tax cut and the harmonization impact in the same sentence.

Each and every year, myself and a federal member have a display booth at the home and recreational show in Midland and in Orillia. This past weekend we had a show in Orillia. There were probably 100 people displaying their products and probably another 2,000 or 3,000 people went through the show and were looking at potential products to buy as we look forward to the summer. The things that were positive were the rebates on energy programs for water furnaces or high-efficiency heating systems. As well, the tax credit the federal government issued was very popular, because these small renovations up to \$10,000, \$12,000 would give them about a 10% rebate as they move forward with their products. So that was very popular.

I can tell you that what was negative, and I'm not trying to exaggerate this at all today, was the harmonization. Most people—I'm saying the bulk of the people, 95% of the people—were absolutely opposed to this. They felt that it was the wrong thing to do at the wrong time. Maybe they would have bought into it if the harmonization had been implemented but the sales tax had been reduced so that it would have been sort of a

revenue-neutral type of program. That might have sold more, but right now they're looking at it as a tax grab, quite frankly. They signed petitions over the weekend; I think I had about 450 signatures. I can tell you that that is something that people are very, very concerned about in my particular part of the province. Maybe the government members aren't hearing that in their ridings, but it was certainly prevalent in the riding of Simcoe North.

I can also tell you that jobs for young people are very important as well because in our area we have a huge number of tourism resorts, golf courses and ski resorts. All of the owners of these particular facilities are out there saying that it's the wrong thing to do at this particular time, that they're very concerned about the number of people they'll be hiring and that the cost of doing business is going to be very substantial as well.

As we implement the harmonization—apparently it's going to take place on Canada Day in 2010—it should be a very interesting lead-up to the implementation process if we continue to see these manufacturing jobs lost over the months, particularly if it is at the same rate as we've seen them lost. I think it was even this morning that I looked at the news, and I don't have the exact names off the top of my head, but a number of companies were having a very, very difficult time with the present economy and were look at shutting down or closing, shutting down more jobs. One of them, of course, was General Motors this morning, with the huge issues that they face.

One of the things I think we forget about when we talk about something like the harmonization or a tough economy is just how much of the work, particularly home maintenance and smaller-type jobs, will be done by the underground economy. I've talked to a number of people about this as well. My guess is that this will increase fairly dramatically in the foreseeable future; that people will be working for cash, doing things on the weekend and in the evenings, that sort of thing; and that people will just forget about paying any of the taxes as we move forward in the future. That, of course you know, is very, very difficult to police, although they've tried a few pieces of legislation here to resolve it, but it really doesn't help when people are desperate and they need a bit of work done.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the implementation of the budget and how it actually impacts the Green Energy Act, because this has become a real problem. I don't know how many people are hearing this. I know the Minister of Agriculture was present a while back in the House here, and I wanted to talk to her a little bit about it.

We have a huge farm on the 9th Concession of Oro-Medonte. It's adjacent to the Highway 400 extension. A company has leased that property with the full intention of putting in a solar farm. The people are already mad about the name "farm" because this is a beautiful farm it's going on. It's on prime agricultural land.

We've actually been getting fairly mixed messaging on what the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's stand is on these solar farms, because it's a big part of the Green Energy Act. I don't think there's a problem at all with

wind generators on farms. In fact, I've been up to Melancthon, I've seen the cornfields surrounding the wind turbines, and they seem to fit in fairly well. They're not taking up a lot of square footage of actual agricultural area. But these solar farms apparently are taking up most of the acreage in a 200- or 300-acre farm. It's a multi-million dollar proposal. The community is very concerned about it, as is the agricultural community up there. I've heard that in the Green Energy Act hearings, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has come out opposed to building these particular units on prime agricultural land, and I hope that is the case.

#### 1600

Earlier, when we were doing our comments with the new member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, we talked about some of the land we have up in the western end of his riding and the eastern end of my riding. This land is owned by quarry companies today. It's not good agricultural land. It's basically sort of rugged, small-shrubbery-type land. That is the sort of place where I think people feel more confident that these solar farms would fit into the equation much more easily. However, I want to point out that it is an issue. I can't support the Green Energy Act if my own constituents, including my farmers, are saying that they don't want these solar farms built on prime agricultural land. I hope the minister will listen and I hope that's an amendment that will be made to the legislation as we move forward.

The final thing I wanted to talk about in the bill is that the government seems to brag all the time about how much money they're putting into education. This is my 10th year here at Queen's Park, and it's the first time that we've ever started talking about school closings in my riding and school closings in Simcoe county. People who are in government now but were in opposition—they continually criticized Mike Harris and Ernie Eves in the past, but in our riding we weren't having school closings. Now we're seeing it. We've got a desperate situation in the village of Elmvalle. It's part of Springwater township. The people are very, very concerned about that. The town of Stayner is in jeopardy of losing their high school, and also the town of Penetanguishene.

These are all independent, small, closely-knit communities that depend on their post-secondary education and they depend on their secondary schools for their existence. They're a very key part of those communities, and now we're starting to hear that the school boards, because of the lack of funding, don't have the money to keep these schools open, so they have to look at alternatives: either to combine them, shut them down or relocate them, whatever it may be. The reality is, that's what we're seeing in Simcoe county right now. I don't like it a bit, and I think it's going to come back to the minister to try to find more funding in those particular areas, because these communities are all growing. There aren't as many children in some of the families; however, they all have potential growth for the future. It's sad to think that a small village like Elmvalle or Stayner or Penetanguishene, that we remotely think that we would

take their secondary school education away from these communities and bus the kids off 20 miles or 30 miles or whatever it may be so they can find a new, more modern school. The communities want the schools left alone, and I think I can speak very clearly on their behalf here today as I mention that.

As was mentioned earlier here today, I can't support Bill 162; I wouldn't support Bill 162. I think that there are far too many flaws in it, and I know also that every time anything happens in this House, the minister stands up and says, "You voted against that." There's no question; I support the corporate tax cuts. I think that's a good thing. But if there are too many bad things in this budget, if it's going to be an omnibus type of budget, you can't—one on one, you could support the corporate tax cuts, but not included with all these other what I consider defects with the government spending.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words today and look forward to further comments. We won't be supporting this budget, primarily because of the tax harmonization. I think that's the biggest flaw in the budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Comments and questions?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'm going to be speaking to this bill in around 10 minutes' time, and I suppose that's fair notice for folks to either change the channel or to stay tuned. Regrettably, because debate is so truncated here, so abbreviated, I'm only going to have 20 minutes, and I truly regret that.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I hear colleagues from the other side sharing my disappointment that I have but 20 minutes, because there's a whole lot to be spoken to. But what I'm confident I can do is, in that 20 minutes, speak for the folks who live down in Welland riding, who live in Wainfleet and Port Colborne and Welland and Thorold and south St. Catharines, even maybe some folks who used to be in the riding but have moved out, like the folks in Pelham. I have no doubt that I can speak for them because I've been talking to them during the course of last week and on the weekend. They had some very interesting things to say about this budget. They particularly enjoyed Kevin Gaudet's reference—he's from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation—to this budget as a BS tax, a blended sales tax. Now, I'm not sure that when Kevin Gaudet coined the term "BS tax" and defended himself with the explanation that it meant "blended sales tax", he didn't intend for folks to draw the appropriate inferences. Understand that BST is not an acronym; it is an initialization. For something to be an acronym it has to be pronounceable. NAFTA is an acronym; IBM is an initialization. People often confuse initializations for acronyms and put them in the same group. We should be very, very careful not to confuse our initializations with our acronyms, shouldn't we, Minister of Agriculture?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** I appreciate the lesson from the member from Welland, and as Minister of

OMAFRA, because I can say O-M-A-F-R-A, I'm happy to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Simcoe North.

Any time that members in the assembly speak to the issues of farmers and agriculture, I do pay close attention. I'm happy that the honourable member this afternoon has identified that the agriculture community is going to be impacted if the bill is passed—most positively, I would like to remind the honourable member. If the bill is passed, it will mean that farmers in the province of Ontario will not have to pay sales tax on vehicles or equipment—computers or freezers—that they purchase for their farm. This is very good news and has been very well received by the agriculture community.

The member also referenced the Green Energy Act, and addressed an issue of some significance with respect to solar panels on agricultural land. I am aware that the agriculture community is working with the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to have them understand some of the challenges and issues there. But I would also like to make very clear for the honourable member who spoke—and I appreciate that he raises points with respect to agriculture—that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has clearly stated, and in fact issued a news release, that they welcome the Green Energy Act. It is welcomed by Ontario farmers because, “by welcoming wind turbines, biodigesters and the production of crops used for the production of energy on their farms,” they have demonstrated flexibility in enabling their industry to become, in addition to food producers, energy producers in the province of Ontario.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Oshawa.

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill 162 and my colleague from Simcoe North's remarks. He mentioned a number of key things. He talked about the auto sector—I think his quote was about the auto fallout—and then he spoke about seniors as well and the impact. Quite frankly, when you're talking about the impact of the auto fallout—as a matter of fact I happened to be in conversation with a former publisher for the National Post and the Toronto Sun, whose concern was that the advertising for those communities from the auto sector represents about 60% of their revenue, and look what is happening to the TV stations as a result of the media problems.

When you talk about the auto fallout and seniors, the big concern there is pensions, and how an individual who is 80 years old is going to be able to move forward. I know that I have relatives—my mother-in-law—and individuals in my office who are very dependent on the General Motors pension and what is taking place there. When you talk about this and you're talking about a budget, you have to look at all opportunities and how this is going to affect those individuals, or make funds available to somebody in their 80s to be able to live at a standard they are used to in any way, shape or form, or where they are going to be able to recoup revenues in the event there isn't support from the government.

At the time the deal was struck, there were three partners in it: the CAW, General Motors and the government of the day. When you have three partners, you should assume a third of the responsibility, and when you're dealing with that, to give some security to those individuals who are in their 70s and 80s as to how they can move forward, government needs to play its part in anything they can do in this budget to ensure that those components are looked after for those individuals in the long run. Because if and when they don't receive those funds, General Motors, for example, will no longer be able to pay for the health care costs. It'll be dependent on OHIP—also, when they drop in tax brackets. Not only that, they'll receive subsidies from the Canada pension plan or old age security, for that matter. It all comes around one way or another. We need to be there to support these individuals.

**1610**

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

**Mr. Pat Hoy:** I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon, and I want to pick up where the Minister of Agriculture was speaking just a moment ago, about some initiatives for agricultural persons and, as well, rural Ontario. Also included in our budget is tax relief for businesses. Some of those businesses are indeed farming, fishing, mining and logging, which will see a cut in what is known as the CIT in the Ontario manufacturing and processing rate, which will be a 16.7% reduction, as I say, for farming, fishing, mining and logging. Those are all welcomed by the farm community, I am certain.

As well, through our government, there will be initiatives through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to provide monies to promote a greater knowledge of our food system; some \$8 million for a broader public sector involvement; providing \$1.5 million from the ministry to plan the development of new agri-food research centres. Those centres will be focused on livestock and crop production in the main, renewable energy, nutrition and health. Those are all very important to the rural communities, as with the broader Ontario public, and I think it's all very welcome news for them in this last budget of ours.

We'll be investing \$1 million, which will be of great benefit, shortly to our rural summer jobs services program. I know the young people in our community have availed themselves of that particular program over the years, year after year, and are very supportive of that program and grateful to the government for providing those jobs. They use it as an experience equation when they go to get their final workplace job when their education is completed.

These are all just a few of the many initiatives in this last budget put forward by our government.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Garfield Dunlop:** I want to thank the member from Welland, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and

Rural Affairs, my colleague from Oshawa and the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for their comments. I think we all know where we stand on this sort of legislation, but I wanted to go back just for a moment. I know the minister made some clarifications on her role as the minister, and certainly the comments and the press releases from the OFA—I'd seen those things. What's come to light is the fact that the Green Energy Act does have an impact with the solar panels much more serious on prime agricultural land than, let's say, the wind turbines. The wind turbines take up less than, at the bottom of each concrete stand, probably around 500 square feet of land. If you put 30 generators like they have at Melancthon, you can have less than an acre of land used, and they can grow corn and hay around it. It's not a problem at all. They're quite interesting and people even like to go and view them.

The problem we've got now, what we're concerned about, and I hope this is a discussion that can take place here, is that the solar panels—on this prime agricultural land up in Oro-Medonte, it's actually going to use up 260 acres of land; not one acre, but 260 acres. Everyone thinks that green energy's not a bad idea. I mean, hardly anyone would disagree with that. In fact, we had that standing committee that went out and made those recommendations and came back. But these solar panels have to be put on more land, in our opinion anyhow, and in the comments I'm hearing from my constituents, they have to be put in areas that are more rugged, that you can't farm as good. This farm that they want to do it on in Oro-Medonte is some of the best agricultural land in the province.

That's all the time I've got.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Like almost everybody here, I spent the last week out and about, down in Welland riding—Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, south St. Catharines. I was in Niagara Falls; I was over in Pelham as well. Of course, on the weekend, I went to a whole lot of community activities and I had a chance to talk to folks—seniors, unemployed workers, young people, grandparents and their grandkids. Sunday morning, Malcolm Allen, the newly elected federal member there, and Peggy Allen, his wonderful wife, and I were over at the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church at 610 Ontario Road. It's been a few years since I've been there. I got a chance to meet the new pastor. Most of the congregation were folks I've known either from my previous attendances at that church or through other contacts. These people, by God, they were worshipping God. There was music and they were clapping and they were singing and dancing and praying. It was just delightful to see such a wonderful community of people. There were probably four generations there, everything from little kids to grandmas and granddads. It was just a delightful visit to a delightful church community. Malcolm Allen and his wife, Peggy, and I look forward to getting there again.

But what we did after we left the Apostolic Lighthouse Pentecostal Church—it was lunchtime, and I said to Malcolm and Peggy, “Let's go down to the Fireside Restaurant.” That's over on Southworth Street, on the east side of Southworth. And, of course, the Fireside Restaurant has been run for Lord knows how many years, speaking of the Lord, by Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis. I haven't been there for a couple of years now, and first Mary came out of the kitchen and she hugged me and she kissed me, because, of course, yesterday was Easter. Yesterday was Easter for Orthodox Christians, and for my people, the Greek or Byzantine Catholics. It was nice to be with Mary and Charlie, because they're Greek folks and they were celebrating Easter as well, and they served us breakfast. I said to the waitress, “Please, could I have a little piece of feta cheese?” Well, out came a whole platter of feta, along with some black olives and some tomatoes. We finished the lunch off with some glasses of a wonderful liquid called ouzo—because we were celebrating Easter and it was in a Greek restaurant—and some wonderful little Greek pastries.

Well, who walks in but Sophie, the member for Hamilton Mountain, because of course Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis are her parents, and she grew up upstairs of that restaurant, and in it. It was a delight to see Sophie on Easter. I was ready to leave, because I had eaten more than I should have and I'd had the ouzo and I'd had the feta and the olives and the tomatoes. Sophie said no, but she came out with a platter of red Easter eggs. Sophie explained that in the Greek tradition—it's like chestnuts. You take the pointy end—maybe the Minister of Agriculture knows the name for that end, as compared to the bigger end—and one person holds it while the other person tries—and the person whose egg gets cracked loses.

Sophie is there with her family, and I'm going, “Oh, my goodness.” So I give Sophie's egg the slightest little tap, and sure enough, her egg broke. I said, “Sophie, what do I do now?” She says, “I lost.” She says, “Oh, no; there's the second half. Now you've got to bang the big parts.” Her father, Charlie, says, “No, that's not a rule.” Sophie says, “Yes, it is.” I had to concede, because of course she's there with her family. I'm in her family's restaurant; I'm their guest. So, like a baseball pitcher, she swings that arm, and of course she breaks my egg. But we agreed that at the end of the day it was a tie. Neither of us had won; neither of us had lost.

But I was also down at the Welland Farmers' Market on Saturday morning. I was over at the Pelham home show. I was at the Merritton Legion, branch 138, on Saturday—as a matter of fact, with Jim Bradley. They were celebrating their 80th anniversary; as fine a group of women and men, veterans and legionnaires, as you could ever want to meet. But you know, there was a constant theme through all of these meetings. There was a constant concern being expressed by all of those folks.

**1620**

Young Bill Buchanan at the Pelham home show—Bill is in his third year. As a matter of fact, I went to the

Pelham home show three years ago and young Bill Buchanan was just starting out as an arborist. I had a sickly sycamore beside the house on Bald Street. Sycamores are great trees. They're native to North America, but they're susceptible to disease. Bill Buchanan, for the last three years, has been treating that tree, and it's now one of the best sycamores you've ever seen. Bill's particularly proud because he just got his master arborist certification; apparently there are only a handful of people in the province who have it. I said, "Does that mean your rates are going to go up?" He assured me that I'd be okay. But you see, just like the paving people there, and just like the home renovation people there and just like the people who sell windows and shingles, Bill is worried about the increased prices on those goods, those products, to the tune of 8%. That 8%, just like the hairdresser in the beauty salon, who works mostly for tips, who is on her feet or his feet for eight, nine, 10 hours a day earning a very modest hourly wage, depending upon tips, she might have been hoping that the owner of the hairdressing salon would increase the rates next year so that she could get a few cents more out of that increased rate. But she understands now that because of the 8% increase imposed by this government on a haircut, the cost to the consumer is 8% more. But think about it: It's also that hairdresser's raise, because the money has to come from somewhere.

I've received a lot of correspondence on this budget. I got a letter from Jacquelyn Morgan, who lives down on Canboro Road in Fenwick. Her letter is dated April 1. Can I tell you what she wrote me, Speaker? Do you mind?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Tell us. No, she doesn't mind.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** "Dear Mr. Kormos:

"April 1, and I wish that the new harmonized tax were just an April Fool's joke. We are being hit so hard, why would anyone think this new tax grab is a good idea? As seniors on a fixed pension income, we face many challenges:

"—our meagre RRSPs have lost 40% of their value"—do you realize how hard these people had to work to save the money to invest in RRSPs? I'm sure you do. It's money hard come by, and 40% is gone;

"—the MPAC valuation of our home increased in this first year by \$11,750, outrageously based on outdated and inappropriate January 2008 values, resulting in a probable annual tax increase of up to \$234"—we're talking about seniors on a fixed income, people who worked hard all their lives. People who were frugal, people who saved, people who did without, people who sacrificed; people who didn't go out to restaurants, didn't buy new cars every year, were lucky if they could buy a used one every five or six, didn't have big-screen colour televisions, people who looked for the sales in the supermarkets and who clipped the coupons;

"—Ontario Hydro rates increased from \$0.05 per kilowatt hour to \$0.056 in November;

"—in January, our gas bill rose \$19.36, an annual increase of \$232.32;

"—this \$466 total illustrates only a few increases; the list goes on.

"In addition to the above increases, the following calculations are but a few of the ways the proposed HST"—Dalton McGuinty's BST, his new 8% tax—"will impact our household:

"—car and home insurance of \$2,676—add GST," Dalton McGuinty's PST, his BST, "equals \$133 per year;

"—natural gas bill of \$203.64, \$16.29 PST monthly, equals \$194.48 per year;

"—hydro bill: Add \$6.64 ... monthly, equals \$79.68 per year;

"—Christmas magazine subscriptions for my grandchildren cost about \$319.67 per year; add 8% GST, equals \$25.57 per year.

"Total equals \$432.73."

This woman is buying reading material. She's interested in helping her grandkids, buying them magazine subscriptions so they can actually read the printed word rather than becoming hooked on the Internet and on the computer and on Wikipedia and all that sort of stuff.

"Add the PST on gasoline, water, haircuts, plumber, home renovations, groceries, vitamins and minerals etc. How much will it cost the province to cut all those \$1,000 cheques and mail them anyway? What about next year and the year after that" and the year after that and the year after that? "You can't unring the bell, we'll be stuck with the HST. This is wrong for seniors and for struggling families. We are being clobbered by the economy and increasing prices for products and services. The government adds to the hardship with a proposal for HST. Please work to defeat this portion of the budget."

That's real folks, real people, hard-working people, real Ontarians, who are going to be faced with real, new struggles and hardships because Dalton McGuinty has decided to pick their pockets.

I got a letter from Cornelius J. Duffy, at 63 Romy Crescent in Thorold, a constituent of mine. He's talking about auto jobs and the importance of keeping those auto jobs and ensuring that they're still good jobs.

How many years was this government, was Mr. McGuinty, telling us in the opposition and telling the people of this province that there wasn't a crisis? He did it. Day after day after day, he stood up and said, "There's net job creation. We're in fine shape. It's hunky-dory." He insisted that the opposition were somehow making up stories, that it was fiction. Well, the jobs lost at CanGro in St. Davids—that sure as heck wasn't fiction, was it? Eight hundred jobs lost at John Deere in Welland—that wasn't fiction, was it? Atlas Steel's workers ripped off by an underfunded pension plan and still struggling with a pension benefits guarantee fund cap of \$1,000 a month. Hayes Dana, those jobs—not fiction. I suppose the only good news a whole lot of folks down in Niagara have, however perverse this sounds, is that pretty soon there are going to be no jobs left to lose.

Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals were insisting that there was net job creation. What hooley; absolute, unadulterated bull spit. You know it, and so do they. I can't

for the life of me understand how Liberal backbenchers go home to their communities on weekends—maybe they don't—and look people in the eye. Do they emulate their great leader, Dalton McGuinty, and wring their hands and say, "Oh, we feel your pain"? Do they sing 1930s Depression-era Broadway songs about the sunny side of the street? Or are they a little more practical and tell their folks that there'll be pie in the sky when they die?

We're well beyond mere statistics. We're talking about real folks, real families, real workers, real retirees. We're talking about real pain. We're talking about real despair. We're talking about real fear.

How many times have I had occasion to comment that as a kid in the 1950s, I know for a fact the concern of so many people was not living long enough, and now every one of us has people coming into our constituency offices worrying about living too long because they don't know whether or not they can afford to.

**1630**

You've got people coming into your constituency offices, telling you that they really looked forward to helping their grandkids go to college and university, and the modest savings they had put aside to do that are gone. And what savings haven't been sucked dry by the robber barons are now being attacked by Dalton McGuinty with his 8% tax.

And it doesn't end upon death. These guys, these Liberals, Mr. McGuinty and his gang, have managed to tax everything that moves. And if it doesn't move, they'll kick it till it does move, and then they'll tax it. And even if it dies, they'll tax it again, because that 8% tax is going to apply to funerals.

This is a shameful, shameful tax grab by a government that lined the pockets of the most profitable corporations in this province to the tune of billions. Big banks got the break of their lifetime. Even in these hardest of times, big banks are still reporting huge profits. The insurance industry—the great benefactor of Ontarians and Canadians, I sarcastically note—never one to lose a buck, gets huge tax breaks, and good folks like Jacquelyn Morgan get hit hard. People like Cornelius Duffy: "I worked at the GM plant here in St. Catharines for 30.5 years, retiring in 1994. During my time with the company, a percentage of my wages was diverted to the company pension plan to ensure that when I did retire, there would be an income from that plan." Now you've got governments insisting that GM workers give up more and more and more.

Why won't Mr. McGuinty stand on his feet and tell those million-dollar-a-year guys at GM and Chrysler to quit robbing the piggy bank, to keep their hands in their own pockets, if only for a moment? What an exceptional sight that would be. Where are the corporate brass making the big concessions? They're the, oh, so clever ones who have driven these companies into the dirt, into the ground. Workers just work. They do what they're told. And for me, you'll never find a better worker than a GM or a Ford or a Chrysler worker.

So I have to tell you that New Democrats aren't supporting this budget bill; far from it. And I have to tell

you that I despair, because this government had no plan—has no plan—to deal with the huge job losses from the get-go. They were wishing it away. When they had real chances to save industries and jobs, they walked away from them, like at CanGro. A million or a million and a half bucks would have kept CanGro alive. It would have kept a whole lot of good manufacturing jobs, value-added jobs, wealth-creation jobs, and it also would have kept a whole lot of peach farmers and pear farmers and cherry farmers caring for the land.

This government has turned its back on the workers of this province. It has turned its back on the retirees of this province. This government has turned its back on the farmers of this province.

I say to you that if they could feign or somehow, somewhere, from some thespian source, demonstrate pride, I say shame on them. They've got nothing—the government has nothing; the McGuinty Liberals have nothing—to be proud of.

The folks where I come from are scared, and this government is even scarier. The folks where I come from are fearful, and this government is making them more fearful. And this budget compounds and adds to that fear and despair.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure, if not entertaining, to hear the member from Welland. When he speaks on behalf of his constituents, I think he speaks pretty well for the entire constituency that we, all of us, share.

I have to say to the member from Welland that his people and seniors and low-income people—I have them in my area as well. I speak on their behalf as well, and I have to tell the people in my area that it's not a budget dealing strictly with the blended sales tax. There is a lot more in this budget. It goes well beyond the single blended sales tax. So I think it is unfair in a way to mention one particular aspect.

I have to say that I would rather see a blended sales tax, really blended, and put in the price as the Europeans do, so they know the price they pay. If they like a particular item, they buy it, and if they don't, then they don't—but they know exactly what they are paying for.

But I have to tell you that the situation he has mentioned with respect to seniors or low-income people paying bills and high prices, utilities—the same thing happens to the people in my area.

We also have to mention the good things that are in the budget. I would like to see those things come out as we move the budget laws ahead. The member from Simcoe North didn't mention the farms because he happens to represent an area with respect to issues dealing with farmers. I share his sentiment as well.

But I would say, let's delve into the budget and not mention only one particular item where, yes, they may be affected in the short term or long term; I think we should be dealing with the entire effect of the budget and the many wonderful things that a lot of our people will be benefiting from in the budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Halton.

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** The member from Welland mentioned the small contraction that the Premier mentioned not long ago: a small contraction, indeed; a small contraction that led to the largest deficit in Ontario's history and a small contraction that looks like it's going to lead to the bankruptcy of General Motors.

General Motors will probably come back as a smaller manufacturer of automobiles; probably the Chevy and the Cadillac will be their main lines of production. Pontiac and Buick will be gone. If you want to buy a Buick, you probably can in the Orient, but you won't be able to buy one in North America.

Chrysler: a huge question mark as to whether they'll survive or not or whether they will be lopped off—that huge plant in Bramalea, that tremendously efficient plant in Windsor could be gone, all the result of a small contraction.

The budget announcements: Of course, the budget is a huge announcement. It gets lots of press, lots of attention, and there were all kinds of corporate tax cuts mentioned in the budget to restimulate the economy of Ontario. Yet here we have the Budget Measures Act that comes before the House, and that's the act that implements the budget, and that act is absolutely devoid of any corporate tax cuts. It's also absolutely devoid of any spending restraints.

So here we have the government, with all their announcements and all the photo ops, and it's basically business as usual. There are no restraints announced by this government in this bill, and there are no tax cuts announced in this bill.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Ted Chudleigh:** There are no corporate tax cuts in this legislation, and it's—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I want to congratulate my colleague from Welland. There was a time when we used to have a lot of time in this place to be able to debate, and you can see that when he tells a couple of stories, the time just flies. And yes, we could use more time to be able to tell more and more stories from all over Ontario, as he did with the stories from Welland–Thorold.

The member from York West talks about there being more things we could talk about other than those little things that affect people in the short term. The harmonized tax of the GST and the PST is here for the long term, and it's going to affect everybody till the long term, till they die. This is here with us forever. This is not short-term; this is long-term, and people are going to work till they drop to be able to pay for this harmonized GST–PST consumption tax. People young and old are going to be consumed by this consumption tax on everything that they purchase, both young and old, and it will be here with us in perpetuity.

1640

Would that we had the time to be able to tell all the stories from every riding across Ontario, because we

would be able to tell you that there is not one Liberal MPP who will stand up and say, “I am proud of the harmonized PST and GST.” You don't hear too many of them, not on that side and not on this side, who say, “I am proud of this harmonized tax.” They are all afraid of this tax, and they should be. And they should be ashamed, because it's an unfair consumption tax that's going to hit a whole lot of people hard. We should go after Mr. Ignatieff, we should go after Mr. Harper and we should go after the McGuinty government, because they've done this in collusion with each other. This is the wrong tax.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

**Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde:** I'm proud to comment on the member of Welland's speech. Let me tell you that I wish that everyone in this House would properly inform Ontarians, especially when it comes down to the seniors. Low-income seniors are going to be benefiting no matter where they live.

Last Tuesday, for example, I was at the Hawkesbury office. A person walked in with a cheque for \$250 that she had just received. She says, “What is this cheque for \$250?” I said, “Madam, if the budget passes, you'll be getting \$500 now.” Was she ever happy. It's right there in the budget on page 38. Low-income seniors will be benefiting, and this is why we keep saying that 93% of the people in Ontario will benefit from a tax cut.

Really, as I said, we are going through a recession, and I hope everybody knows about it. What the McGuinty government has done—at this time we are getting ready to get out of the recession, so we are going through a tough period of time. We have to come up with projects that will create jobs: \$32.5 billion worth of projects will be awarded to different companies so we can create the jobs. So really, when we say that people are going to be paying more taxes, 8%, I guess most of the people in the world have accepted that; 130 countries have accepted to have harmonized taxes and—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** You see, there he goes again, and that's exactly why Kevin Gaudet has coined this the “BST.” That's why Kevin Gaudet has called this the bull spit tax, because the government's relying upon bull spit to sell it to the people of Ontario. I've got to tell you: Jacquelyn Morgan—don't bull spit her. She knows exactly what's going on. That's the letter I just read a little while ago. She's got it down to the final numbers in terms of what this new tax is going to cost her.

You know what? If this government really wanted to do something, it could have incorporated a strong buy-Ontario policy into its budget: There isn't a single penny of public money spent on a provincial project unless there's a minimum amount of 100% buy-Ontario, and only when it's not available in Ontario do you start looking outside the province.

The Minister of Agriculture could have helped a whole lot of grape growers down in the Niagara region

by ensuring that when a bottle of wine has “Ontario wine” on it, it’s 100% Ontario grapes.

This government has sat on its hands and abandoned workers, seniors, farmers, grape growers down in Niagara who have watched good grape rotting on the vine. And these farmers then have to go to a bank that’s increasingly reluctant to lend them money to finance the next year’s grape production.

This government could have gone buy-Ontario; this government could have demanded 100% Ontario grape. Rather, it decided to give the biggest, most profitable corporations \$4 billion in tax cuts.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** I’m very pleased to rise in support of Bill 162, the Budget Measures Act, 2009. I thought I would begin by speaking about one of the components that’s very important to my constituents in Guelph that has been quite well received. This budget includes a \$32.5-billion investment in infrastructure over the next two years. Of course, infrastructure investment is important in two ways. Number one, obviously, we end up with improved public infrastructure. But secondly, in the short term, it creates jobs locally for the people of Ontario, the sorts of jobs that we need to weather this recession.

A few weeks ago, for one of those particular pieces of that infrastructure investment, \$213 million for GO Transit, some of the details were announced. I was very pleased to be able to announce, with my federal neighbour, Michael Chong, the member of Parliament for Wellington–Halton Hills, a couple of projects that are taking place in what is now his riding but are quite important to the people of Guelph.

The first of those was a \$30-million project to rebuild, to improve the rail bridge over the Credit River east of Georgetown.

Of course, you might reasonably ask, “Why do people in Guelph care about a railway bridge east of Georgetown?” Well, the answer is that that rail line, which belongs to Canadian National, leaves Toronto, travels through Brampton and Georgetown and eventually ends up in Guelph and Kitchener, and the bottleneck on that railway that’s preventing us from getting good, consistent, frequent GO service to Guelph is the rail bridge over the Credit River in Georgetown.

So what this \$30-million project will do—\$15 million from the federal government and \$15 million from our Ontario government—is rebuild that bridge; it will widen the bridge. Immediately, it will be double-tracked, but there will be the potential to triple-track it in the future. Why does that matter? Well, the tracks belong to Canadian National, and of course, Canadian National’s primary business is freight. While there are GO trains now, obviously, out to Georgetown, they’ve maxed out the spare capacity that isn’t already occupied by freight. In order to get more GO trains, more frequent service on that rail line, what we need is double-tracking and, eventually, for full service, triple-tracking to get us around the

bottlenecks. So that \$30-million investment is going to enable us to improve those tracks and get GO trains to Guelph.

I’ve got to tell you that one of the highest priorities that the citizens of Guelph have described to me as an MPP is to please get GO train service to Guelph, because a lot of people who live in Guelph commute into the Toronto area, and quite frankly, it would make a whole lot more sense to be commuting on the train than it would be on the 401, which is becoming increasingly congested.

The second GO Transit project is in an area just south of Guelph called Aberfoyle, which used to be in my riding of Guelph–Wellington before the boundaries were redrawn. Aberfoyle is now part of Ted Arnott’s riding, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills here, but it used to be part of my riding. This is a \$5.5-million project, again shared equally between the federal and provincial governments. What’s going to happen is, there is a park-and-ride GO bus stop in Aberfoyle, and it’s going to allow for the building of quite a large GO bus shelter.

**1650**

If I’m so excited about trains, why am I also excited about GO buses? Well, trains can only go where the tracks go. If you want to get from Guelph to where the tracks don’t go, then the GO bus is a really great alternative. About two years ago we started up a new GO bus service. It runs from the University of Guelph and goes to Mississauga. There’s a second service that goes from the University of Guelph to York University, back and forth. That has been a huge help to people who, number one, commute to Mississauga to work, and also to students who attend the University of Guelph who are now able to commute back and forth by GO bus.

The second service to York University helps Guelph students who commute to York University, and it helps students from the north end of Toronto who want to get to the University of Guelph, and, of course, it helps commuters who work in the north end of Toronto rather than downtown. So again, a very important service, and we’re making an investment that allows that transit to be expanded.

Another one of the infrastructure investments that we announced recently related to the budget has to do with \$1.2 billion that is going to be spent over the next couple of years on social housing and affordable housing. Like very many areas of this province, Guelph is desperately in need of additional social housing and affordable housing. So again, my constituents are very pleased to learn that there will be \$700 million invested across the province in rehabilitating social housing units; \$360 million in developing affordable housing units for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. I know there’s some real interest in that sort of housing in my constituency.

One of things that we find in a university town is because the students, of course, are quite happy to live in low-rental housing, it actually drives up the cost of low-rental housing, and that makes it very difficult for seniors

to find affordable low-cost rental housing, for people with disabilities to find low-cost rental housing. So this form of housing is very worthwhile. Another \$175 million is going into the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, and again the focus is on people who are low-income who have disabilities, and low-income seniors. My constituents, for whom housing has been a high priority, find that a very exciting part of the budget.

One of the things that Bill 162 will do is an additional help for low-income families, and that is accelerating the payment of the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit, as you well know, is paid to children who live in low-income families. It doesn't matter why the family is low-income; it's simply a matter of looking at low income. We know that lots of children living in low-income families are in fact living in working-poor families, and we don't want to discriminate between people living on social assistance or people who are low-income working poor. We want to make sure that the children who are living with those benefits get some help.

The Ontario child benefit, which we introduced a few years ago, is currently set at \$650 per child for people with the lowest income and then, of course, is phased out as people have higher income. It wasn't going to hit the maximum of \$1,100 until 2011, but the people who work in United Way and in social assistance in Guelph are just absolutely thrilled that in this budget we are going to be raising the Ontario child benefit up to \$1,100 effective July 2009—this year. That increase is going to go from \$650 to \$1,100, almost doubling the Ontario child benefit in this budget, and that's very important to my constituents.

Another one of the things that's quite important to my constituents is the whole issue around pensions, and it's one of the things that I've heard a lot of comments about because, of course, most people have pensions. The most common form of pension is a defined contribution pension. I've had a lot of people come to me over the last few years and say, "The rules around how you can access that pot of money that you've contributed to are far too restrictive. I, as a pensioner, contributed to this money. Why are you, as a government, restricting our access to that money?" So one of the things we've done is that we listened to those people, and we will be freeing up the rules on how that can be accessed.

One of the reforms we are proposing in this budget is that Ontario pensioners who have chosen to put money into LIFs, life income funds, would be able to unlock up to 50%. That's doubling the amount that they can unlock at one time over the current rules. In addition, there is a financial hardship clause in that particular pension legislation. We're providing a two-year waiver of fees for financial hardship, because we understand that in this economic climate there are many pensioners who have been struggling.

Another area that has been of particular concern in my riding is the whole issue of defined benefit pension plans and what happens when there is an issue with their

solvency. Under the pension rules as they currently exist, the company is required to top up the fund to make sure that it is fully solvent. Of course, as you can imagine, in my community one of the biggest defined benefit pension funds is the University of Guelph pension fund. According to the pension rules, it is not fully solvent, and the people who are members of that pension know that. The University of Guelph is being required to top up the pension fund to bring it up to full solvency. Again, in these economic times, because their investments have gone down—not surprisingly; just as everyone else's have—they're finding it a great hardship to try to meet that solvency, full-funding requirement in the five-year period which the current legislation prescribes.

The legislation that we are proposing around this budget will actually extend the period for the solvency top-up from five years to 10 years, provided that two thirds of the members of that fund agree to the extension of the top-up. They'll need to be given full information about the health of the fund, the financial situation. These are both the active contributing members and also the retirees, who in this instance are treated as members. If two thirds of those people agree, then it can be extended. I know from talking to the union representatives at the University of Guelph and the representative of the retirees' association at the University of Guelph that they're both quite supportive and, in fact, have been asking us to extend from the five-year period to the 10-year period. So that is quite good news for my constituents who are concerned about what's going to happen with the funding of their pension fund.

In addition to that, we are also looking at some other initiatives around the general area of pensions, looking at simplifying and clarifying pension rules related to marriage breakdown, permitting plans to offer phased retirement and establishing a pension reform advisory council. I know that a number of the members who have spoken this afternoon have talked about the fact that one of the things that we do need to do is to have a look at how we are going to manage pensions, which are obviously of concern during this economic time to a lot of people. We will be looking at doing that.

#### 1700

I must note, as many other speakers have in one way or another, that one of the things in the budget is a very comprehensive tax reform package that would move Ontario to the same situation as, I believe, 130 other countries and about four other provinces that have already moved to a harmonized GST/PST. We will be, with the budget approval, moving to phasing in a harmonized single sales tax.

I think it's important for us to understand that, when you move from the current provincial sales tax model to the federal GST model, one of the advantages for businesses is that they get a rebate on the tax they pay on their inputs. The significance of this is, of course, that that makes the cost of doing business in Ontario lower than it is right now. That's really important because we understand that we're in a recession. We understand that

what we need to get out of that recession as the world economy turns around, which it eventually will, is to attract international investment to create new jobs in Ontario. If we're going to do that, we need to have investors attracted to Ontario. In order to do that, we are moving to a single sales tax. We're also reducing our business taxes in addition to just the harmonizing of the tax.

We know that means, because we're moving to a different tax structure, that things that are not currently taxable will become taxable. We understand that. This is not something that's necessarily a politically popular move; it's something that's necessary in this economic climate.

We also know that it's necessary to help the individuals who are going to be dealing with this new sales tax, so we have done three things to help individual Ontarians. Number one, we've introduced a permanent cut in personal income tax from which people at the lowest end of the income scale will reap the greatest benefit. About 93% of Ontarians will see a cut in their personal income tax. We've also introduced a permanent sales tax credit, which people in low- and middle-income-tax-bracket families will benefit from. At the highest end, every man, woman and child in a low-income family will get a \$260 tax credit. So if you had mom, dad and two kids, you would have over a \$1,000 tax credit. That's permanent. There's also a transitional credit in the year in which we introduce that single sales tax so that all families making under \$160,000 will receive a \$1,000 credit in that transition year, and all singles making under \$80,000 will receive a \$300 tax benefit.

I think this is a very good budget, and I am very pleased to support it. I will be sharing my time with the member from Brant.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Brant.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I can explain the entire thing in two minutes. No.

I do want to make a couple of points that I don't think have been brought up since this time, and that is the state Ontario was in when the first retail sales tax was implemented in 1961. In 1961, we were almost a closed economy, meaning that most of the economic development was done inside of the province of Ontario. Subsequent to that time, we've seen an extreme explosion of exports and a world market. Between 1961 and now, we have to understand that there has to be and had to be an evolution of the retail sales tax.

In between that time, we also saw the introduction of the GST. When you see the introduction of the GST, exports and the economy changing, and also the chain of how the product gets to market and to the retail position, it was an extremely changed way in which the economy was running. We still relied on the RST, as it was called back in 1961, so that the provincial sales tax and the GST in harmony, which 130 countries have gone to, makes an awful lot of sense to convert to to prepare us for the exit.

One of the things that we need to talk about here is the balance that needs to be applied to the discussions that we're having. Everybody else has been able to pick one piece and say, "That's the awful thing that's happened with this budget and we are going to go down the tubes because of it." Quite frankly, if we're not preparing ourselves to exit the recession, once we start moving up into the competitive edge piece, we are going to be doing things that are not setting the table for the improvements that are going to happen as a result of moving from a tax system that was established in 1961 to using it in the 21st century. I'm very much in support of a harmonized tax system to prepare us for the exit, once we get out of this mess and are being competitive on the world market. So I just wanted to add that to the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** The previous speaker said he could talk about the budget in two minutes. I can give him two words: tax hike.

I'm going to read into the record several pieces of correspondence from the people of Nepean-Carleton.

"As a husband and father of a family of three who has been laid off twice in four years, I cannot stress enough how out of touch and senseless the tax strategy of Dalton McGuinty is for the majority of Ontarians."

Another: "Although touted as a benefit to business, it is unlikely to have that effect. Although it will reduce the required paperwork, sales are sure to decline."

Another: "The planned McGuinty tax grab of combined PST/GST is disgusting given the financial constraints already being endured by taxpayers due to the recession."

"Dear Lisa MacLeod....

"I am writing to strongly object to the proposed implementation of the Ontario harmonized sales tax."

"Sir,

"I have hardly enough money to pay for my basic needs now. How is raising taxes going to help me and the rest of the province who are struggling now? No to HST. Keep your \$1,000 bribes. The McGuinty Liberals are abusing their majority and not listening to the citizens of Ontario. Overwhelmingly, we do not want this. Shame on you, McGuinty, to add more burden to hard-working Ontarians in this toughest economic time."

Another: "I am writing this note to voice my opposition to your plan to harmonize the PST and GST. Over the years, we seniors have paid our share of taxes."

Another: "I hope that I am contacting the correct person to help me fight the proposed harmonized tax....

"We do not buy daily coffees.

"We do not eat out regularly.

"My heat in the house sits at 18 for the majority of the winter. I do not use my dryer. All appliances are energy-efficient. I do not use my dishwasher. My light bulbs are all low-wattage. I carpool to work and back. If you can figure out a way to find me more living monies, I would welcome your suggestions."

“We would like to add our voices to already very strong and determined opposition”—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member from Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I have just witnessed one of the most incredible abuses of parliamentary power that has taken place in the 21 years that I’ve been around here. The government has just served on us notices of motion indicating that it’s going to stop debate on this bill; that it’s going to allow only one day, but a few hours, of public hearings; and that it’s going to force clause-by-clause to be completed in yet another few hours on the second day of committee hearings. People will not be allowed to publicly comment on this bill in the hearing process. The government will hand-pick the people who attend at that committee. Then, third reading, on a bill that is as controversial as any that has hit the floor of this House and that affects every single Ontarian, will be restricted to but one hour: 20 minutes per caucus, and maybe five minutes if the independent member wants to join in.

This is a disgusting demonstration of the tyranny of the majority. Shame on every one of you Liberal backbenchers who haven’t got the guts or the gonads or the backbone to stand up and simply tell their Premier that this is wrong; it’s wrong; it’s wrong. Don’t tell me that this is why you entered political life. Don’t tell me that this is why you’re proud to be here in this Parliament, because you’re part of a government that’s imposing some of the most detested legislation on the people of Ontario and denying parliamentarians their obligation to debate it fully. Shame on you.

1710

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Let me tell you some of the reasons that I entered public life, some of those reasons that resonate in this budget. This is a budget that’s going to provide low- and middle-income families with up to \$1,100 annually per child, starting this summer, almost doubling the \$600 that they receive now. That’s going to expand eligibility to more than 115,000 more families in the city that I come from, in Mississauga, where our fastest-growing demographic is seniors. The Ontario senior homeowners’ property tax grant—this is a thing that’s going to help seniors who may be on fixed incomes, living on pensions, stay in their homes longer. That’s the thing that they want to do. That’s the thing that we want them to do. That’s going to increase to more than \$500 in support for their property taxes starting in 2010, and it’s going to help more than 600,000 more seniors in the next five years.

The Ontario property and sales tax credits ensure that senior couples who receive the guaranteed minimum level of income from governments will receive the full benefit from all of these credits. Seniors and other Ontarians are going to have more flexibility in accessing the funds in their locked-in accounts by increasing those limits.

A lot of the debate here is focused on the move to a single sales tax. Some people have called this, to use their own expression, “a tax grab,” but it’s not. If it were a tax grab, Ontario would be getting more money through the implementation of a single sales tax, but it’s not. The province is actually going to lose money on it. So by definition, how can this be a tax grab? This is nonsense. It’s fascinating to hear some of the Ontario PCs who are at odds with the present finance minister, at odds with the former finance minister and at odds with their own former leader. This is a good budget; let’s pass it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments.

**Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette:** There are a couple of things that I want to mention. First of all, to hear that the closure motion is coming in is rather concerning. This is a major tax restructuring in the province of Ontario. To go back to the member from Brant’s discussion about 1961, the RST at that time, this is a major movement and I think there needs to be a full debate on it. I am disappointed to hear that we would bring in closure on it with only one day of hearings and not have an ability to talk about the impact.

The one thing I wanted to say about this is that part of it is I don’t think the spin doctors—they’ve done a good job, to some sense. There’s a lot of people in opposition to it. But the reality from what I’m seeing is that we’re moving from a manufacturing-based economy in the province of Ontario. When you move from that, it’s great to make it sound like we’re giving tax concessions, or perceived tax concessions, in those areas, but if you don’t have that base to draw from, the income from that is lost substantially. As we move to a service-based economy, you have to recoup those funds that are going to be lost in that, and that’s what the HST taps into—those other service-based activities that are out there which will generate funds in the province in the long term. I think, from my perspective, what’s happening here in the province of Ontario is that we’re moving from the manufacturing-based economy whereby the income was generated in the form of taxation to the government of the day to a service-based economy, and there will be a substantial amount of loss in revenues to the province of Ontario. Once fully implemented, acting and moving forward—what’s taking place is that they’re more or less, in my opinion, almost saying, “Yeah, we’re not going to have a manufacturing base; we’re going to a service-based to economy.”

But if it’s such a saving, what’s happening and why wasn’t there a reduction in the actual amount, 8% and 5% to 13%—why wasn’t there a reduced amount if there’s going to be such a savings? On that note, they talk about the loss; what’s going to happen with the employees that handle the PST—guess where? Right in Oshawa. We have hundreds of those individuals working in Oshawa taking care of those accounts on a regular basis. In this economy and tax structure, what’s happening in our community of Oshawa? We get another hit again.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Guelph has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mrs. Liz Sandals:** Thank you to my colleague from Brant, who wrapped up so eloquently talking about the fact that what we really need to make sure of, as we come out of this recession, as we exit, is that we have a competitive economy, and that's the reason for this tax reform package.

I must point out, the member from Nepean–Carleton, who tried to characterize this as a tax hike: In fact, that's not our projection at all. When we look at the cuts in corporate income tax and the fact that we're no longer double-taxing a number of manufactured goods and that we're cutting personal income taxes as well, what we expect when this all nets out and is fully implemented is that we will have a net revenue loss of \$2.3 billion a year. We are not doing this so that the Ontario government will have more tax revenue. We are doing it so more Ontarians can have jobs.

A lot of the budget is focused on ways to help people in poverty because one of our primary agendas has been how to address poverty. I would just like to go over a number of things that will help people at the low end of the income scale. We're raising the Ontario child benefit to \$1,100 immediately, if we can get this bill passed—and it's this bill that we need to get passed to raise the Ontario child benefit. We are investing in affordable social housing. We're lowering the personal income tax permanently. We are creating a permanent sales tax credit. There are additional property tax credits for seniors. There are a number of initiatives here which will help the low-income folks of Ontario.

I am very proud of this budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I rise today to speak on Bill 162 and, more generally, on the 2009 provincial budget.

Ontario has long been known as the economic engine of Canada. Ontario was a place of prosperity, a place of vast employment opportunities, and a unique environment to raise our family. Then on April 1, 2009, the Liberals handed us a terrible April Fool's joke: The Ontario that we have known officially became a have-not province. Ontario now stands in line to receive handouts from Ottawa. No longer are we the economic engine of Canada; we are now the caboose. What a terrible joke.

In 2004, Ontario was Canada's leading manufacturing province, accounting for 52% of the total national manufacturing shipments. Now we wake up to daily newspaper reports that yet another manufacturer is going out of business, more layoffs are imminent, and more families are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Ontario has lost almost 120,000 jobs this year alone and almost 240,000 since Premier McGuinty and the Liberals came to power.

This province needs a plan to bring Ontario back to prosperity, and I can tell you, it is not in Bill 162.

With three weeks to go before bringing down their budget, the McGuinty Liberals announced that they would put Ontario into an \$18-billion hole. What makes the two-year, \$18-billion deficit so extraordinary is not

the amount or the fact that Ontario is going into deficit at all; it's that while in office, Dalton McGuinty hiked Ontarians' taxes and went on a spending spree—a \$27-billion spending spree, to be exact. In six years, the McGuinty Liberals spent \$27 billion, and now they're going to spend \$18 billion more. That will be \$45 billion Dalton McGuinty will have spent over the course of eight years. To put \$45 billion into perspective, it is enough to give every man, woman and child an extra \$75 every week for a year. Think of what you could do with that money. You could put it toward the higher cost of your groceries, or perhaps you could use it to pay for your rising property taxes. The McGuinty Liberals did not save any of this \$45 billion for a rainy day or, in this case, a recession. Instead they spent and they spent and they spent.

The question is, how did they spend the money? Well, last year the Ministry of Education, under Kathleen Wynne, spent \$3.5 million on hotels across the province. That same year, the Liberals' Minister of Government Services spent over \$100,000 at the Royal York hotel, one of the most luxurious hotels in Canada. This sort of spending by the McGuinty Liberals only scratches the surface. Sadly, it's no coincidence. Ministers like Wynne have increased their spending on travelling and hotel rooms steadily over the past few years, even as the Progressive Conservative Party warned of the economic crisis.

**1720**

Three weeks after a projected deficit was announced, the Liberal government officially unveiled their economic plan for Ontario. Their plan includes a 13% sales tax grab for these vulnerable families who have lost their jobs, a 13% sales tax grab for seniors who struggle to get by on a limited income and a 13% sales tax grab for students paying tuition and living on their own: a 13% McGuinty sales tax grab for all of Ontario. This historic tax grab is hitting Ontario families at the worst time, when they can least afford it. Instead of focusing on creating new jobs and a new path for Ontario, Premier McGuinty and his government are focusing on creating new taxes for Ontarians. Now, when the wallets of Ontarians are being stretched thin, Premier McGuinty is asking to stretch them a bit further, to pay more for goods and services that otherwise would be PST exempt.

I want to share with you an excerpt from a commentary in the Ontario division of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's magazine:

"Mr. McGuinty has a terrible track record on taxes. He has promised not once but twice, without ambiguity, that he would not raise taxes. Taxpayers are understandably wary because, it has turned out, Mr. McGuinty has repeatedly lied to them....

"After his first 'no new taxes' election campaign promise, he proceeded to hike business taxes and impose a new so-called 'health tax'—the single largest tax hike in Ontario history.... Since his second election campaign, which also featured another 'no new taxes' promise, he has put in place a paint tax, an electronics tax and a new

tire tax. As well, his Green Energy Act has a new energy tax and a home-sale-audit fee. And there's more. The recently tabled budget raises taxes for the top two tax brackets by lowering the threshold on which they apply, amounting to a large tax grab" from middle Ontario.

"The economy is still struggling; people are worried about their jobs and are spending less. Now is the wrong time to add 8% to the costs of gasoline, diesel, propane, home heating fuel, home electricity, natural gas, home TV service, home Internet service, home phone service, cell phone charges, hair cuts, lawyers' fees, accountants' fees, mechanics' fees, ballet lessons, rink rental fees, tailoring, magazine subscriptions, mutual fund fees, massage, chiropractic, audiology, train fares, plane fares, taxi fares, bus fares, vitamins, dry-cleaning, grass cutting, snow removal, camping fees, firewood, meals under \$4, new homes over \$500,000, gym fees, home renovation labour and real Christmas trees.

"These newly taxed services will importantly increase the cost of living for individuals and families in Ontario. Mr. McGuinty will pay families \$1,000 to offset the new costs. There will also be a new low-income tax credit created. The 'McGuinty Bucks' \$1,000 cash is one-time, likely won't cover the tax hikes and appears politically motivated...."

That could not have expressed more clearly the sentiments of families across Ontario. Residents of Ontario have come out hard and strong against the McGuinty tax grab. I've had the opportunity to speak to many of my constituents and have received hundreds of e-mails from citizens across Ontario who are outraged at this blatant tax grab. One resident said, "If there was ever a bad time, this is probably the worst. People are struggling to make ends meet. And you know, there's a realization that things aren't going to get better for quite a while and nickel-and-diming people to death, so to speak, isn't a very respectful way to deal with your constituents."

Premier McGuinty claims this tax grab will benefit businesses across the province. I'd like to share an e-mail I received from a business owner in my riding:

"I am a small business owner here in Orangeville. People need to know the huge amount of cash that our Premier is asking for with this tax change.

"At present, as a 'reseller,' we are PST exempt under Ontario tax law. This will no longer be the case with the Premier's proposal. Therefore, the product that we supply to our customer will accumulate the following provincial tax: The manufacturer will pay 8% PST on materials, our company will pay 8% PST to the manufacturer, and our customer will pay 8% PST to us. Our Premier will have collected 24% additional tax on this item."

Premier McGuinty is raising taxes on essential items for Ontarians. Families still need to put gas in their cars, heat their homes, power their appliances, use the telephone, get haircuts, and eventually, they will need a funeral service. Families are finding it unfathomable that the Premier would saddle them with an 8% increase in taxes during this troubled economy.

What about the activities parents enjoy providing for their children? The government has been advocating for a

healthier lifestyle for men, women and children, yet they are going to impose their tax grab on groups like the minor hockey associations. I received an e-mail from the representative within the Orangeville Minor Hockey Association located in my riding. It says:

"I wanted to make sure you were aware of the severe impact that the new harmonized sales tax will have on the operations of Orangeville minor hockey. Orangeville minor hockey has a total operating budget of about \$850,000. Of this, \$500,000 is the expense of renting ice. Presently, this expense is only subject to the 5% GST, but once the HST is in place a further 8% will be added for a total tax rate of 13%."

This means that Orangeville minor hockey will have to collect from parents or fundraise in the community, all for a McGuinty sales tax hike of \$40,000.

"Orangeville minor hockey is a volunteer organization that provides a healthy and constructive environment for over 1,200 local youth. It seems unwise to so significantly impact an organization like this. The federal government recently introduced the child fitness tax credit to help promote an active lifestyle for youth. The province never matched this tax credit. Instead"—the McGuinty Liberals appear—"to be moving in the opposite direction by making youth sports even less affordable and accessible for families."

This is not the only activity or part of the province where parents will see their kids' athletic activities suffer because of the McGuinty tax grab. Families in Windsor will pay \$31 more for co-ed hockey; a family swimming pass in Oakville will cost \$76 more; to join the rowing program in Guelph will cost an extra \$52; and for girls to play hockey in North Bay, that will cost them \$55 more.

So not only will the cost of these activities go up; the fuel to put into your car to get them there will go up as well. Travelling to games, practices and tournaments will become tougher and tougher for the lower- to middle-class families who will be most affected by the tax grab.

Even adults who want to keep in shape will fall victim to this tax grab as well, as gym memberships will now be subjected to the blended tax. One of my constituents wrote me, saying, "Aren't we supposed to be trying to battle childhood obesity? Does McGuinty not care about the health of future generations or the social fabric that binds communities and therefore our province?"

And what about some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens? The blind will suffer at the hand of Dalton McGuinty as their audio books will now be subjected to the sales tax grab.

The last thing seniors need is an additional tax burden, especially where a lot of them exist on fixed incomes.

An analysis by Wernham Wealth Management found "that the impact of this Liberal budget will be more costly for Ontario seniors than anyone has reported." The new cost to seniors of the McGuinty sales tax grab is estimated at more than \$1,500 a year; \$1,500 is a hefty sum of money for any Ontarian, especially seniors living on a fixed income.

The analysis looked at what new costs would be incurred by the typical retired couple receiving an after-

tax income of \$41,400 a year with Dalton McGuinty's new tax grab. By looking at the added costs on daily items, such as heating oil, Internet services, haircuts and Tim Hortons coffee, the net increased tax hit on this couple would be over \$1,500 each year.

What about the dead? Well, Premier McGuinty has found a way to tax them too. The McGuinty Liberals have found the way to do the unthinkable, the unimaginable and the inconceivable by taxing funeral services. Starting Canada Day 2010, when you arrange a funeral for your loved one, you will pay 13% tax. A funeral service and burial here in Ontario runs around \$10,000, and now the Liberal government is asking the deceased and their grieving families to dig a little deeper when planning a final goodbye. Lawyer fees to administer last will and testaments will be subjected to the McGuinty tax. Families using accountants to settle the estates will also be subjected to the new McGuinty tax. This new tax will also be charged on floral arrangements, catering and other funeral-related costs. This McGuinty tax will affect seniors, students, families, low-income Ontarians. Everyone in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario will pay more. And now for the dead. How far will this Premier and his government go to tax the most vulnerable people in Ontario? Apparently, to the very end.

**1730**

But according to Premier McGuinty and his Liberal government, they're going to put the money back into the pockets of Ontarians. Yes, a financial bribe from the Liberal government. Families making less than \$160,000 per year will receive three equal payments totalling \$1,000, with the last payment ironically set to arrive in mailboxes across the province right before the next provincial election in 2011. Singles who make less than \$80,000 per year will receive three equal payments of—wait for it—\$300. But Ontarians are not blind. They know a bribe when they see one coming. They understand that this payment is for one time only. The McGuinty tax grab is forever.

Here's what some of my constituents have said about the Liberal government bribe: "Refunds for just about everyone in the province. What a waste. Collect more tax than you need and then pay it back. That's an inefficient way to run a government."

Another one: "I have hardly enough money to pay for my basic needs now. How is raising taxes going to help me and the rest of the province who are struggling now? No to HST! Keep your \$1,000 bribe. The McGuinty Liberals are abusing their majority and not listening to the citizens of Ontario. Overwhelmingly, we do not want this. Shame on you, McGuinty, to add more burden to hard-working Ontarians in this tough economic time."

Another one: "In an attempt to soften the blow of this tax, Mr. McGuinty's pledge to forward—in three payments—\$1,000 to households who earn less than \$160,000 annually is nothing but a bribe of one's own money, given the third and final cheque will go out just before the next provincial election in 2011. As Ontario taxpayers, we haven't forgotten about the \$900 we lose each and every year to the so-called health tax."

As you can see, my constituents oppose this. I would like to ask Premier McGuinty what his own constituents in Ottawa South think of his blatant tax grab, but the beauty of e-mail shows that I don't have to ask him. I can read from an e-mail that I received: "Please, don't tell me it's for my own good. Premier McGuinty has failed to make any specific case or compelling argument as to why a tax hike...."

Another quote: "Leave the money in my pocket! You plan to give some of us some of our money back in three one-time instalments?! Exempting diapers, baby food and tampons?! How noble!

"I literally have no disposable income left at the end of the month. And not because I don't make a decent wage or spend like crazy but because after paying mortgage, heat, hydro, condo fees, municipal taxes, a car payment, gas, insurance, phone, Internet, food and then I have to pay down my debt."

Premier McGuinty, what do you have to say to your own constituents who are against your government's budget?

As Ontarians tighten their belts and pinch their pennies, bloated government salaries continue to grow. It proves again that the McGuinty Liberals have no clue when it comes to the everyday challenges facing families and businesses in Ontario.

As Premier McGuinty promised in this budget, public sector hiring will decrease. Yes, we see that last year over 53,000 government employees earned over \$100,000 per year. Meanwhile, 300,000 Ontarians have lost their manufacturing jobs in the private sector, with 134,000 more manufacturing job losses expected this year. With many Ontarians losing their jobs in 2008, Premier McGuinty's office was still hiring. The number of Premier's office staff grew during the 2008 calendar year from 55 to 73 staffers, a 33% increase. This includes a record staff of 15 communications officers to act as the Premier's spin doctors.

Speaking of raises, Premier McGuinty has also awarded Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. executives with healthy bonuses and pay raises even though they've been under extreme fire as of late. This is an agency that has been called on the carpet for insider fraud and spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on a marketing exercise to remove one letter from their logo. Since Dalton McGuinty took office, salaries and bonuses at the OLG have nearly doubled. Is this what we call accountability?

This is the wrong budget at the wrong time for Ontario. Regrettably, we see that this Premier is out of touch with the needs of Ontario families. His latest tax grab will hurt students, seniors, families, low-income Ontarians, small businesses, the unemployed and Ontarians on a fixed income.

Dalton McGuinty has broken promise after promise to not raise taxes in Ontario. The only thing Dalton McGuinty has always delivered on is higher taxes, and this is one item from the budget that you know he will keep.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I want to say how much of a pleasure it is to every now and then find some common ground with the Tories.

**Hon. Leona Dombrowsky:** You always do.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** That's not true. Every now and then we find common ground with the Tories, and the common ground is our attack on this government vis-à-vis their desire to harmonize the GST and PST. Do you know what we also have in common? We, together, are fighting Ignatieff at the federal level—your learned federal Liberal leader. We're attacking him as well, aren't we? We're also attacking Harper together with the Tories. We are so close on this because for quite some time the Tories and the NDP were going after Flaherty and Harper on a regular, consistent, hard basis because they did this behind the scenes. They colluded together on the quiet, colluded together with strong bonds—federal, provincial Liberals, federal Tories, with the provincial Liberals together, and we found common ground. I love that. It is so beautiful when we work together to attack the Liberals on something that is going to affect young men, older men, young women, old women and old men. Everyone is going to be affected and whacked until they die with a harmonized tax that they're never going to be able to escape, not even in death, because when you go to the funeral home, you're going to get taxed and whacked again.

You've got to understand how the Liberals work. They don't even let those who die have some peace. They've got to get taxed even then. The Liberals go after everyone, alive and dead. It's just not right.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from York West.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** It's very hard to follow my colleague Rosario Marchese.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Try.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Even if I tried, I couldn't do it, Rosario.

Sylvia Jones, the member from Dufferin-Caledon, comes from the wealthiest area and the safest area in Canada—or is it Ontario?—and I have to congratulate the member from Dufferin-Caledon. The budget is so wide and so deep that picking on one particular issue does not make justice, with all due respect. In the minute and a half that I have, let me just say a couple of very important points because these are people from throughout Ontario, all ridings—my riding, her riding and everybody else's riding.

Just with the last budget, the child benefit program—just one particular item—goes from \$600 to \$1,100 a year per child. We didn't have this before.

We have renovated 50,000 social housing units in the last couple of years, and more are coming. This is part of the budget. Building another 4,500 units of assisted housing: This is part of \$1.2 billion which we are sharing with the feds. Over the last three years as well, and part of this particular budget, are \$350 million for repairing and making housing more efficient as well. It's all because of the last budget.

My seniors will be happy. They are getting \$250, and \$500 next year, and I don't think I have too many seniors who make more than \$35,000 a year. I don't think I have very many.

We have created the permanent rent bank now to assist some 15,500 renters in our area.

These are all—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

1740

**Mr. Norm Miller:** It's a pleasure to make some comments on the speech by the member from Dufferin-Caledon.

The member from York West was just speaking, highlighting some aspects of the budget. One of the positive aspects is the planned reduction in corporate and small business taxes. However, I do question the timing and the fact that those reductions won't actually happen within this financial year. They're going to be in next year's budget, so why they are even featured when they don't happen now, when we need them, when we're in the midst of a recession, is a good question for the government members.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon was highlighting the McGuinty sales tax and talking about all the feedback she's had on that. I've had a lot as well. This tax is now going to apply to hamburgers, haircuts and heating oil. For a rural area like Parry Sound-Muskoka, the concern is that it will also apply to gasoline. Of course, we all rely on automobiles in rural Ontario.

The week after Easter, back in the riding, I had the pleasure of attending a public meeting to do with reliability of hydro. One of the questions that came out of that meeting was, would this new McGuinty sales tax apply to electricity? The answer is yes, it will. I think a lot of people aren't aware that it's going to apply to basic things like electricity. Your heating bill, whether it's oil or electricity or both, will be up 8% when this comes into effect.

The member from Dufferin-Caledon was talking about sports and reading some e-mails. Just last week I met with Fyonna Vanderwerf and Kim Ball from Bracebridge sports and recreation. They were coming to see me because they're trying to encourage the government to bring in some tax credits to encourage participation and a healthier lifestyle in this province. They asked me whether this new tax was going to apply to the fees on things that the town operates, and the answer, of course, is yes, it will. So it's going to be working the other way and making it more expensive to participate in sports in town.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member from Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I'm still concerned about the fact that the government is going to kill debate on this important piece of legislation. It's important because it affects so many people in so many different ways. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of people who were expecting to be able to participate in the public hearings. The door has been slammed in their face.

This is not a responsible way for a majority government to take a bill through process. There are historic and valid reasons for having second and third reading debates. There are historic and valid reasons for having public hearings.

This bill is what public hearings were designed for. It's a bill that contains some very controversial proposals, including a new 8% tax on a whole lot of consumer goods. It fails to address the protection of pensions, and it fails to provide any real jobs strategy. I'm just so disappointed.

But there is yet one thing. I feel compelled—I have to correct my record. I was amazed when I checked with Hansard and discovered that when I was referring to initialisms, I had said “initialization,” in contrast to acronyms. And I tell you, the member—

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** —for Mississauga–Streetsville, who is a computer nerd, and I say that in a kind way, exposes—

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Oh, I'm not sure.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Well, he is; he's a computer nerd. He wouldn't deny it. He points out that initializing is like formatting a disc, and I don't want to know any more, right? I'm too young to be told any more about that nasty process, formatting discs and initializing.

So I correct the record. I researched acronyms and initialism, the subject, a couple of weeks ago, and, as I say, I checked with Hansard, because I couldn't believe that I said “initialization,” but I did. It was an inadvertent slip of the tongue.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Dufferin–Caledon has up to two minutes to respond.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'd like to thank the members for Trinity–Spadina, York West, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Welland for their feedback, most particularly Trinity–Spadina. I know that he was having some fun with the fact that we had found some common ground, but the reality is that the reason we have found some common ground is because we're actually listening to our constituents.

We've just spent a week back in the ridings—most of us, hopefully. I've had two home shows in the last month since this budget was introduced, and I can tell you, without a doubt, that the thing that is concerning the vast majority of people, the issue that people want to ask me questions on and figure out how they can get the government to respond and to listen to them on, is, “How do we get them to back off on the harmonization?” I know that I and many members of the Progressive Conservative Party have been getting signatures by the hundreds from residents, homeowners, businesspeople, seniors, all signing a petition opposed to the harmonized sales tax. They would like the government to respond. They would like the government to start actually consulting and listening to the residents of Ontario.

So my urge at this point, in closing the debate on this section of the provincial budget, is to say, let's actually

start doing what we're supposed to be doing here as legislators: go back to our ridings, listen to the people who are most affected by the legislation that we are passing, and react to it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 162, an Act respecting the budget measures and other matters.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** Madam Speaker, we'd like the debate to continue.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** There's a small little saying that's quite interesting. It says, “The only limits are, as always, those of vision.” It's James Broughton. “The only limits are, as always, those of vision.”

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** Who said that?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** James Broughton, who's an American playwright and author.

We have a budget with a vision, and I have a question, I guess, for the members of the opposition: What would you do if you were in power? What would you do if you could write the budget? What plans would you bring forward to try to make Ontario more competitive and survive through what has been, probably, the toughest recession or depression in the last 80 years? Would you do what the NDP did when they had a recession back in the early 1990s, and that is impose a social contract, fight with the unions and create all sorts of other problems—having Rae days, which didn't really resolve the problems of the day? Or would you do what the Conservatives did: fire 8,000 nurses and say that they were useless; close all sorts of hospitals—I believe it was 30 hospitals—and continue an ongoing battle, for the entire time that the Conservatives were in power, with teachers and with nurses and with the public service?

I don't think that's the way we want to go here, today, in 2009. Times have changed. We need to look forward. We are working, with this budget, with the federal government, but not just the federal government; we're also working with other governments—the United States, for example, where a lot of this started. They have admitted their mistakes, that their financial sector was not, perhaps, as regulated as it should have been. Everyone knows what Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are, and other people like Bernie Madoff and AIG. The list goes on and on. So they didn't have a very well regulated financial sector, and the roof fell in. When it did, the United States, with the world's largest economy, impacted other countries, whether it be in Europe, the Far East or just north of them, here in Canada.

We had a number of options when that happened. One of them, for sure, was to do nothing, and perhaps the opposition wanted that: just for us to sit back, do nothing and wait this thing out. But if we'd gone in that direction, we would have been in a deeper hole than ever. We had to find a way to change the way we do things here in Ontario so that people are able to get jobs, are able to

work, are able to put food on the table, are able to continue to live their lives the way that they have with as much normalcy as possible. In this budget, we do that.

**1750**

We can get into particulars, we can get into arguments, and talk about things and say, “This is really bad. We’re spending money here. We’re taxing those people there.” But in the end, if I’m not mistaken, 93% of Ontarians will receive a tax break. I don’t know how loudly I need to say that, because that seems to get drowned out by other things. So I’ll say it again: 93% of Ontarians will—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** And 93% of the people in Scarborough.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** And 93% of the people in Scarborough, 93% of the people in Mississauga, 93% of the people in York West—

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Everywhere.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** —in all parts of Ontario, will get a tax break; not a tax increase. People see the harmonization and they think taxes are going to go up. There are so many exemptions and money that’s being given back. The government is not making money from this.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** So why are you doing this?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** We are doing this to make small business more efficient. Small business is the backbone of Ontario’s economy. We’re not afraid to make these changes. Yes, it’s controversial. But now there are rumblings out in British Columbia, out in—

**Mr. Mike Colle:** Prince Edward Island.

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti:** —Prince Edward Island, to do the same thing, to harmonize their taxes. They know that the provinces on the east coast and elsewhere that have already done this have benefited and have improved, and they know that it is a good thing to do. We know that as well. We’re not stupid. We want to move forward, and we want to bring forward a modern tax system that will benefit as many Ontarians as possible. When you create successful small businesses, you hire people and you put them to work. When you have that opportunity, people don’t have to be unemployed. They have opportunities to work in different sectors once those sectors become available.

We do a lot in this budget—and it’s hard to sit and only talk for 10 or 15 minutes about it. We are working in co-operation with the federal government, in co-operation with the international community. We’re not doing this alone.

Look at the Chrysler situation and the auto situation. We are working together to solve the GM and the Chrysler situation. We’re on the same page as the federal government and Mr. Clement, and on the same page as President Obama. We know that GM is very, very important, especially here in Ontario. We don’t want to see GM go down. We don’t want to see Chrysler go down. So we’re working with them in this budget to ensure that they stay in business. The spinoffs from the auto industry in Ontario are enormous, and we know that

if we lose those jobs, the impact on all other sorts of businesses will be unprecedented. So we are working on that. You can look in tonight’s newspaper, you can look in tomorrow’s newspaper, and see that we are in contact with the people at Chrysler and GM, just like the federal government is and just like the United States government is, to create partnerships and new ways of doing business with them in the most successful and the least harmful way for all concerned.

We’ve also undertaken a massive infrastructure program, and I don’t know how someone can argue against that. The infrastructure in Toronto, in Ontario, needs to be repaired. By creating projects throughout Ontario which will create new roads, new transit systems, new bridges and all sorts of other new infrastructure, people end up working. This means we hire planners, we hire architects, we hire engineers and we hire all sorts of other specialists, right down to bricklayers and those who will be tunnelling the at least 11-kilometre hole that will house the new Eglinton rapid transit system from Laird Drive all the way westward to Keele. It requires a tremendous amount of work, and it’s actually partly a made-in-Canada project. I believe the machinery that’s being used is Canadian machinery.

We know that people will get jobs from this. In fact, it’s estimated that just the Eglinton line alone will create 46,000 jobs. That fits the Air Canada Centre almost three times, if you can imagine the Air Canada Centre or perhaps the SkyDome being almost full of people working instead of being unemployed, just from one project. That’s the Eglinton rapid transit line.

In my own riding of Scarborough Southwest, we’re rebuilding the light rapid transit line which runs from Kennedy station all the way up, presently, to the Scarborough Town Centre and just beyond it. In fact, the plan is to go north of the 401 and into the northeast part of Scarborough known as Malvern, which is in the riding of my good colleague Mr. Balkissoon.

It’s time to do this. For years, city politicians have clamoured here in Toronto and Scarborough, wanting money from the NDP government and the former Conservative government to fix this line. It breaks down a lot. Every winter, it breaks down. But the NDP didn’t do it, and neither did the Conservatives. We have committed in our budget right here to doing that as one of many other things. It’s not the only thing, but I’m being a little bit parochial here, talking about what’s happening in Scarborough Southwest and also in Scarborough Centre and in Malvern.

This will create thousands of jobs—jobs for engineers, jobs for people who will be building the new line, jobs for people who will be building the actual vehicles that will be transporting people. These are jobs that could be in Thunder Bay, could be in other parts of Ontario, but they will be built in Canada. We’re not going to ship in cars from, I’m sorry to say, China or somewhere else; we’re going to build them here, because this is where the best cars come from. Ontarians will be working on building these new vehicles that will work up and down, from Kennedy all the way up into Malvern, and also from

Kennedy all the way across to Eglinton—probably the biggest infrastructure project that I can think of—and link up with the airport here in Toronto. This is unprecedented. These are major changes that will bring about a tremendous amount of employment.

To sit there and say, “You Liberals are bad because you’re going to harmonize the tax,” is wrong. Look elsewhere. Look at the examples where it has been done and the benefits that are there. There’s \$1,000 that people get back as a refund on that, and even an additional cheque if your income is at a certain level. You’re getting money back from this. Yes, you will pay a little bit more for certain items, but you’re going to get that money back.

I cannot emphasize enough the fact that we’re not doing this to make money. We’re doing this to help small business and to help other businesses to be more efficient. So instead of having to keep one column for PST

and one column for GST, it’s combined. It’s going to be a lot easier for a lot of businesses to be able to work that way.

This is a vision. This is a well-thought-out vision, and it’s a vision of change. Whenever there is change, whether it be change at a personal level, at a family level, at a political level or at an international level, you’re always going to get resistance. Someone is going to say, “I don’t like that,” because it’s change.

I stand today and say that this budget is supportable and it’s a vision that makes a lot of sense. Thank you.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** It being 6 o’clock, I declare that this House is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o’clock.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

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	
<b>Arnott, Ted (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)</b>	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
<b>Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)</b>	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
<b>Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)</b>	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
<b>Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
<b>Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
<b>Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)</b>	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
<b>Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)</b>	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
<b>Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Crozier, Bruce (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)</b>	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)</b>	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)</b>	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
<b>Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)</b>	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
<b>Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
<b>Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)</b>	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
<b>McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)</b>	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
<b>Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
<b>Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)</b>	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)</b>	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
<b>Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)</b>	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)</b>	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
<b>Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)</b>	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
<b>Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)</b>	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
<b>Wilson, Jim (PC)</b>	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
<b>Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)</b>	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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, Howard Hampton  
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod  
Gerry Martiniuk, Julia Munro  
David Ramsay, Lou Rinaldi  
Liz Sandals  
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, France Gélinas  
Ernie Hardeman, 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





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