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of Debates
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 21 April 2009

Mardi 21 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Tuesday 21 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 8, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and to make consequential amendments to two amending acts / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant le Code de la route et apportant des modifications corrélatives à deux lois modificatives.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to say a few words about Bill 126, the Road Safety Act. First, I'd like to talk a little bit about the proposed regulation under Bill 126 to extend the length of the G1 and the G2 period for new drivers. According to the bill, the length of the G1 will go from one year to one and a half years. If drivers are registered in an approved driving education course, the length of their G1 will go from eight months to a year. It's the same with the G2. The G2, according to this bill, will go from one year to a year and a half.

This is the kind of measure that the New Democrats support. We believe that more driver education and public awareness is key to lowering accidents, lowering impaired driving and dangerous driving rates in the long run, but we have some concerns: concerns with the quality of driver education programs that are provided in Ontario. While we support the longer G1 and G2 period so novice drivers can absorb the education they receive, we're not convinced that the driver programs provided throughout our province right now are adequate. To support this, I quote from the report of the Auditor General, Mr. Jim McCarter, who found that 55% of first-time drivers enrolled in the program crashed their car about 62% more often.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Something is wrong with that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Something is wrong with that. In other words, there was a significantly higher collision rate for motorists who signed up for the driver education

program compared to those who did not. But even more worrisome is the fact that this number has gone up 24% since the year 2000. The Ministry of Transportation does not have an explanation for these statistics.

The Auditor General said that the province didn't investigate the finding or take a critical look at its accreditative driving school. Although terrible things were happening on our roads, nobody bothered to check. Here's what the Auditor General had to say at the time. He said, "They had done very little work at all to see why this is happening. Our question to the ministry is, this is pretty significant. Surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you could take appropriate action" to fix it.

The Auditor General then went on to say that there is evidence to suggest that some driving schools are selling graduating certificates without the required training. There are two possible explanations for this: first, systematically bad driving education courses; or second, some type of fraud, that is, requesting more certificates than you really have graduates for. There is evidence that this type of fraudulent practice is going on right here in Ontario. Even after complaints were launched against some driving schools for allegedly selling driver education certificates—so you don't have to wait as long for your G1, period, and so that you can get a discounted insurance rate—the Auditor General said, "The province didn't even threaten to revoke government accreditation." So we know that this is going on, the auditor has investigated it, but yet the Ministry of Transportation and the government do nothing. That does not bode well for confidence in that bill. What's the point of expanding G1 and G2 if somebody can go, buy a certificate and cut it in two anyway?

Basically, either explanation, whether it's bad courses altogether or fraudulent players, points to a real problem with our driving education courses—not to mention the finding that driving instructors were also more likely than average Ontarians to accumulate demerit points. According to the Auditor General, there are about 360 instructors in Ontario. Of those, 6.5% collected demerit points for speeding, for not wearing a seat belt and for disobeying traffic lights. They're being caught on the very basis of what they're trying to teach the young drivers, not following their own recommendations. This does not bode well. Not only are they being caught, but they are being caught at a higher rate than the average driver. Something's wrong with this. We certainly hope that the Auditor General follows up on this issue and the government acts upon it.

Last April, the ministry brought forward a new curriculum for driver's ed. We called on the Ministry of Transportation to comprehensively examine whether the curriculum is working and whether they have tackled the fraud in the system. New Democrats think that Ontario should consider revamping its driver education program and look at other provinces that have taken the lead in this.

I'd like to talk a little bit about what they do in Manitoba. Manitoba teaches their driver education in high school classrooms. Students, or more than likely their families, are charged \$50 and the public insurance system picks up the tab for the remaining cost. In Manitoba every high school student gets 34 hours of in-class instruction and about 16 hours of in-car experience for \$50. We think that this is reasonable, affordable and fair. It's certainly way more teaching than what any driver's education program offers in Ontario and way more in-car experience than any driver's education program we have in Ontario, at a fraction of the cost, and it is offered in school. So in Manitoba, every driver receives the same quality instruction, and given the fact that it is a public system, there is no possibility of fraud. They are doing innovative things to involve parents in the education process. For example, parents have to fill out a log to demonstrate their young driver has been on the road with a supervisor for at least 25 hours. Of course, that means the parents or guardians of the youth taking the course.

0910

On the other hand, in Ontario, young drivers and their families pay upwards of \$1,000, sometimes \$1,400, depending on the package they take. The \$1,000 package gets students 25 hours of in-class, rather than the 34 in Manitoba, and 10 hours on the road rather than the 16 hours of in-car. But it doesn't include things like night driving or snow driving, because if you want that, you have to pay more. There are countless fly-by-night operations that charge much less but don't provide good driver education. In Ontario, more money gets Ontario drivers less instruction. It doesn't seem like a good deal to me. It's time to re-evaluate our more-for-less models of driver's ed. Maybe we should follow Manitoba's lead and put a publicly subsidized driver's ed program directly into our high schools.

Not only is our driver's ed system broken, so too is the driver testing. This fact was substantiated in a recent Toronto Star investigation into driver testing operations. They found that failure rates would vary substantially from community to community. Here's what was reported: "Between 2006 and the first three weeks of 2008"—that's last year—"failure rates were highest in Brampton, at 48%, and the lowest in Sault Ste. Marie, Espanola and Kapuskasing." Those all had failure rates below 10%.

Let me give you an example from my riding. Espanola is just on the west boundary of Nickel Belt, and it doesn't take very long for the kids in my riding to all know that if you take your driver's testing in Sudbury, the chances of failure are reasonable, but if you take it in Espanola,

which is only a 25-minute drive from where I live—if you follow the speed limit—the failure rates are way lower.

I will take this kid that I know very well; her name is Ashley. Ashley was ready to go to college. There is no public transportation where I live, so if she wants to go to college in Sudbury she has to drive or find a ride. There was a hard time finding a ride as none of her friends, who were also graduating, had a driver's licence, so her parents enrolled her in driver's ed. When she was finished driver's ed, her educator, her instructor, told her, "You better go take your test in Espanola, because I don't think you're going to pass if you go to Sudbury."

So her dad drove her to Espanola. He had her practise parking, because she was not really up to par, and then said, "Well, good luck to you," but he stayed in his car and waited while she took her driver's test, thinking, "She's not ready." They came back. She had to do parallel parking, which she is unable to do; she managed to squeeze the car between two other cars in the parking lot, and guess what? She passed. It was kind of a mixed blessing—a blessing that she had her driver's licence, so at least she would be able to drive herself to college, but her dad knew that she was not ready. This kid did not know how to parallel park. This kid was not a good driver.

He had the good sense to continue to practise with her all summer long, so that when September came along they bought her a little Sunfire and she was able to drive herself to school. But if it wasn't for the good sense of her dad, who continued to practise with her all summer long so that she would become a safe driver, I wonder what would have happened. Not only do a lot of the kids in Sudbury know that if you think you're going to fail, go to Espanola, because they're going to pass you; lots of the driver instructors also know this and recommend this to the students they don't think are ready. There is something fundamentally wrong there. If you don't think your student is ready, you should make sure that they get the practice to be ready, rather than send a young driver out on the road when really they don't know how to drive.

I pointed to that example because this is a serious loophole. For the story I told you about, just to let you know, she's been in college for three years, never had an accident and is doing just fine. She's also one of the kids who carools a lot of the kids in our neighbourhood.

As I mentioned, in Walden, where I live, there is no public transportation, so once the kid is finished high school, as soon as they go to college or Laurentian University, most of them have to drive themselves. You see them gather at the Tim Hortons, and everybody carools. It's a good distance; it's a good 35- or 40-minute drive, depending on how fast you drive, to go to either Cambrian College or Laurentian University from Walden. It could even be over an hour if you live further down, in Whitefish or Beaver Lake or any of the western part of my riding.

So the kids all meet together, and they carpool to college. We're certainly pleased that the McGuinty Lib-

erals have agreed to reverse the restrictions on young drivers' daytime passengers, because in our riding, for kids going to school, it would have been really, really problematic.

But coming back to the driver's ed, I have given you one example of a loophole. It opens the door to people driving to other communities to pass tests that they should not have passed had they gone to another location. The reason behind this is the result of years of privatization of driver testing facilities. Enforceable, province-wide standards went out the window with the privatization effort. If we want to have more control over driving tests in Ontario, if we want to strengthen Ontario-wide standards and actively motivate them, then we have to rethink those private driver-testing facilities. There is an obvious draw for a private testing facility to attract as many young drivers as possible, and this does not foster an environment that encourages quality. The story I've just told you certainly is an example of that.

New Democrats also want to know what the impact of tougher legislation and regulation will be on young and novice driver insurance rates. On top of paying through the roof for driver's ed, drivers are paying unaffordable rates of insurance. We want to know what impact the legislation and regulations have on insurance rates.

Right now, we know that if a young driver is caught going 10 kilometres over, they will have a 30-day suspension. But what we want to know is what impact that will have on their insurance rates. As I said, there are many parts in northern and rural Ontario where public transit is not an option. For young people to go to school, they need to drive, and often they need to drive long distances. In order to do this, of course, they need car insurance to do it in a safe way. The car insurance is often in the thousands of dollars. When my own children started to drive, we were looking at close to \$4,000 for the boys and about \$2,000 for our daughter to insure them on the family car. This is a lot of money.

0920

I'm afraid that, although those rates are already out of reach for a lot of families, they would become even more out of reach with this new law because once the young driver has a 30-day suspension for driving 10 kilometres over the speed limit—the basis of it is teaching them a good lesson, that they should not speed. We don't want the insurance company to use those proactive measures to make car insurance even more out of reach to more young people in Ontario. We'd like to see the balance there and we would like to see some assurance in the bill so that costs of insurance for young drivers don't go skyrocketing high.

The bill, as I said, when it was first introduced, talked about young drivers' daytime passenger restrictions. This provision of the bill led to an outpouring of thoughts, opposition and arguments. Many of the opponents, those who knew first-hand—and there were a lot of them in my riding, let me tell you—that this restriction would not work, used the medium they were most comfortable with. They used Facebook. The number of messages I got on

Facebook was unprecedented. The number of new friends who wanted to become friends with me was unprecedented. They were all young kids from my riding and they all had a very strong message. They were carpooling to Laurentian, to Cambrian, to Collège Boréal, and they needed to be able to continue to do this. When kids graduate from high school, with the new condensed high school program, some of them are very young. You can graduate from high school at 16 and 17. This is considered—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Some of my colleagues are having a little conversation here, but go ahead, guys.

So they knew first-hand that the restriction didn't work. It was on Facebook that 150,000 people registered their opposition. The fact that so many people were engaged in this public debate is a healthy sign of democracy. It is unfortunate that not too often the public engage, especially young people, but with this bill moving through the Legislature, they were motivated. They came out in droves; 150,000 people belong to the Facebook group that opposed this legislation. This is huge. This is young people who don't usually pay too much attention to politics, are not really always as engaged as we would like them to be, but they got engaged, they got educated and they spoke out loud. It is perhaps also unfortunate that most of them only take notice when something they feel is wrong catches their eye, but it was nevertheless an engagement in the democratic process and for New Democrats this is a good thing. There's never anything bad about people being engaged in the democratic process. This is what a democracy is all about. This is a good thing.

With the sizable outcry that came from this restriction, a restriction that, frankly, made no sense when it came to communities like mine—rural communities, northern communities—and really a bill that treated young people unfairly, thankfully, it was eventually taken out of the bill, and New Democrats are happy that this is the case.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you for that.

The lesson one should draw from this reversal is that government must demonstrate concretely that a regulation or policy will or is likely to work. In this case, no evidence was presented to show that the move would prevent the death or injury of young drivers. We know and acknowledge that young drivers disproportionately represent those killed and injured in drunk driving incidents. What we weren't convinced of, however, is whether extending the passenger restriction already in place—because there is passenger restriction in place during the night from midnight to 5 a.m.—was going to do anything.

New Democrats will now support Bill 126. We support the stronger stance on alcohol, for example, which was a long time in coming, but it basically brings us up to speed with other provinces. In fact, we believe that provinces and the federal government should examine zero tolerance blood alcohol rules for all drivers, not just for

those under 21. In many respects, the 21 cut-off is artificial. Let's not kid ourselves: Alcohol affects each and every one of us, no matter how old we are.

However, we are disappointed that the government chose not to listen to the concerns of many other groups and particularly cyclist groups. I will let my colleague Rosario Marchese talk a little bit more about our opposition to what this bill contains about cycling, because he is an avid cyclist who comes to Queen's Park on his bicycle, in quite a charming way, I must say. He has a nice little beret and a very nice bicycle, and he looks very distinguished. So I will let him talk to you a little bit more about this.

In closing, because I have to leave some time on the clock for my colleague, I wanted to talk a little bit about motor vehicle accidents. We've talked about young people, having a high proportion of young drivers in fatal accidents and in motor vehicle accidents. But here again, I want to give an example from my riding. There are a lot of accidents happening on Highway 69. There is a stretch on Highway 69 coming out of Sudbury, into my riding and going south, where the passing lane is so short that it is almost impossible to use it to pass. But once you've engaged in passing, the 300-metre sign happens right away, and then you're stuck with the oncoming traffic coming at you.

There have been numerous accidents on this particular stretch of Highway 69, yet when a motor vehicle accident happens, there is no mandatory requirement for an investigation; there is no mandatory requirement for a coroner's inquest. When somebody dies in a mine or on a construction site, by law, there has to be an inquest. You find out what happened, you put in measures to prevent, and you learn from your mistakes so that other tragedies don't happen.

Unfortunately, when somebody—and I can give you the example of Cathy Snow. Cathy Snow was a home care nurse who worked in my riding. She was driving down Highway 69 and got into a collision and died. She died on the job. Her job was to drive from house to house. But because she was in a motor vehicle accident, there was no inquiry, although, had there been an inquiry, we feel that some structural changes to our highway would have been done.

I gave the example of this passing lane just coming out of Sudbury that is way too short. Car after car, person after person, have accidents on that stretch of highway, but nothing is done. We need to have tougher regulations that would mandate investigation and coroner inquiry in motor vehicle accidents so that first, you can bring closure to the family who have lost loved ones, but second, you learn from their mistake. Sure, there are lots of times when it is driver error, but here again, driver error, if it's the same mistake that is made over and over, can be corrected.

But very seldom do we go back and look at the engineering and design of the roads that we drive on: "Did that contribute to that fatality? Did that contribute to that motor vehicle accident?" This is not done. I believe that a

lot could be learned from this so that young drivers and older, experienced drivers drive on roads that are safer, so that once we find that a design is flawed, we correct it and we do not repeat it someplace else.

0930

I'm running out of time. I was pleased to be able to say a few words about this bill and will leave time on the clock for my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My colleague from Nickel Belt has covered so much. I'm going to find a way to make some comments on the bill that I hope are very useful and practical.

One of the things that the member from Nickel Belt talked about was the elimination of one of the aspects of the bill that the government had introduced that caused so much furor: that young people were not allowed to carry more than one passenger in their vehicle. Over 150,000 young people responded in Facebook with outrage. I say to myself, I wonder whether the Liberals had intended to do this as a way of getting young people to be actively involved, because it worked.

There's really no easy way to get young people involved in politics, and I thought, the Liberals are so clever. They must have said to themselves, "How do we get young people involved?" They weren't that serious about restricting the number of passengers that young people could fit into their cars; I don't think it was intentional on the part of the government. It was intended to make sure young people get involved; I am convinced of it. I think the Liberals should do more of this on a regular basis, because we know that we should do a better job in our civics courses in our high school curricula to get young people involved—we know that. The Liberals haven't done that yet, and maybe they will some day, but what a clever thing you did; that's so very clever. You should take credit for that. You should stand up and say, "We knew all along. We knew what we were doing because we don't have the means by which we get young people to be politically involved and we had to find a way for them to respond with anger"—legitimate anger, but knowing it was legitimate. You understood they would be angry, and that was good. You wanted to test them out. You wanted to actually see whether young people would take notice and get angry and, in fact, write their messages on Facebook.

You guys are so good; you Liberals are so amazing at it, but you've got to learn from it. I'm just saying, you can't just do it one time and then be done; you've got to do it more frequently, because otherwise, if you only just do it once and young people go back into their homes and their books and Facebook and play other games, you've lost the effect of that great strategy. Don't give it up; keep practising and keep doing it, because you want to be tight with young people. How else do we do it? That was very clever. I don't know what the member from Nickel Belt has to say about this, but it was really neat. Whether it was intended or not, it was a brilliant strategy and I

give you credit. I just look forward to more and more bills that have that ability and capacity to get young people actively engaged.

The other thing the member from Nickel Belt talked about was the Auditor General's report, the report that found that 55% of the first-time drivers enrolled in the program crashed their cars about 62% more often. I thought that was very interesting. In other words, there was a significantly higher collision rate for motorists who sign up for the driver's education program. I thought, this is curious. You sign up, you take lessons, you drive better and you crash more: That's an interesting thing. I think the idea of going to a driver's testing place was that they teach you how to drive so that you have fewer accidents. Yet the auditor report said that it's quite the opposite.

What's puzzling and curious is that the minister had so very little to say. I think to myself, hmm, this is a very curious finding. The Auditor General said you've got to do something—oh, here's what the auditor said: "They had done very little work at all to see why this is happening."

This is pretty significant. Surely you should have investigated this and determined why this is happening so you could take appropriate action.

The Auditor General then suggested that "there is evidence to suggest some driving schools are selling graduation certificates without the required training." Did you get that? Maybe you missed it. The Auditor General said, "There is evidence to suggest some driving schools are selling graduation certificates...." If that is true, it's a serious problemo, don't you think? The minister hasn't done anything yet that I'm aware of. I could be wrong. Maybe the minister is working hard at this, in terms of solving it. But the Auditor General is about to release another report, and I suspect he's going to condemn somebody again. He might be condemning the driving schools and he might be condemning—not directly, you understand—the minister, who has done so very little to deal with this particular issue.

If there is fraud, there's criminality involved, and we should be dealing with it. And if the minister has solved the potential fraudulence, we should have heard from the minister by now.

So my question is, where are you, Minister, on this? What have you done and what have you said? Are you, by the way, anticipating another Auditor General's report that might be, in a short, little while, condemning you again? If that happens, it's not going to look too pretty on the minister or this government.

I just thought I'd raise it. I don't know; I'm just worried about you guys. I'm worried about the Liberal Party, in terms of its ability to be able to deal with tough questions like this.

The Auditor General, God bless him. They're tough; and they should be, because that's their job. Their job is to be able to make every government accountable. They held us accountable, they held the Tories accountable, and they're trying to hold you accountable as well. I suspect the Auditor General is going to have a whole lot to say in a very short, little while.

What's interesting is that in Manitoba, the driving schools are public—they're not private—which leads me to the whole issue of public auto insurance. I have to tell you, I was such a strong supporter of public auto—I was. And I made my intentions and ideas very, very clear on this during the Rae government. It was sad to have the former leader of the NDP, now turned Liberal, turn his back on public auto. He must have changed his mind four times, and I was so, so disappointed with that.

Public auto insurance works in Quebec, British Columbia and Manitoba. It works. And the rates are cheaper for people. They have a driving school that's public. Manitoba teaches their driver education in high school classrooms. Can you believe that? They do it publicly and they do it in public classrooms. Students and their families are charged 50 bucks, with their public insurance system picking up the tab for the remainder of the costs—about \$300—that includes 34 hours of in-class instruction and 16 hours—eight hours of actual driving—in-car experience. That's reasonable and it's affordable. It's a public system. Manitoba leads in so many areas, and we often refer to them. We often have questions of the Liberal government around so many different issues, around where Manitoba leads, and this is but one small part of how Manitoba leads in so many other areas.

I wanted to mention that because I have to tell you, the public insurance rates are so much cheaper in the provinces I mentioned that it's beyond me why we haven't moved faster on making the system public. And young people—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You made the decision.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sorry?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You guys came to the decision.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I was just speaking to this. You weren't listening, were you?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: No, I was reading the Farmer.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, you're reading the Farmer. I know. You see, the point I make is that I'm a big supporter of public auto, and I was trying to convince the then leader, Bob Rae, to stay on course and make auto insurance public. There was a tiny band of us that really, really felt strongly about keeping auto insurance public. We tried to persuade Bob. We weren't very successful. That's what I was trying to say, you understand.

0940

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I got you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I didn't know whether you—because you're, you know—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I can listen to you and read.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't know about that. Only some rare individuals can do two things at once—mostly women; I don't know about men. I can vouch for that.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about is, if there is an infraction by some young person, whatever it is, are the insurance rates going to go up? I suggest to you that they are. My colleague from Nickel Belt raises it as a question. If a young driver receives a 30-day suspension for driving 10 kilometres above the speed limit, will that

affect his insurance? Yes, you bet your life it will. Young people are paying incredible insurance rates to drive a car. I understand that some young people are sometimes reckless; I really do. We need driving schools that are going to teach young people a little more effectively. I support the Auditor General in making sure that we do a better job of that. But I've got to tell you that the insurance rates young people pay are astronomical. It's kind of nuts. I really don't understand it. I don't understand how young people, the very 150,000 young people who protested the restrictions on how many passengers they could have in their cars, are not fighting these incredibly outrageous, steep insurance rates they pay to drive a car. They pay anywhere from \$2,000 to \$6,000 for their insurance. Where do they find the money to drive? Maybe we don't want them to drive. Maybe we want them to ride bicycles. That's fine by me, but let's say that. How do we allow these insurance companies to charge these incredible rates? And where do they find the money? If rich mom and dad don't pay up, who's going to pay for those insurance rates? I've got to tell you, a whole lot of young people are driving without insurance because insurance rates are so incredibly high. That's why it should be made public. Shouldn't we give everybody an opportunity to drive in an affordable way? And we really have to get a handle on these driving schools. I can't wait for the next Auditor General report—I really can't. We've got to get a handle on the fact that these driving schools are not doing a great job, and where there is fraud, we've got to deal with them. We've got to be tough.

I am urging young people who may be watching to get on Facebook and talk about insurance rates. That would put a little fire under the seats of Liberal members, I can tell you. Imagine 150,000 or 250,000 young people actively involved, saying, "We can't afford these insurance rates. We won't take it anymore. We want you Liberals to change the law, otherwise we're going to bring you down." Wouldn't that be lovely? It would be lovely. I'd love to be behind that campaign—as a former teacher, just to be helpful, you understand; not to see the Liberals go down. That's not really my objective. My objective is to get young people actively engaged. There's a thing you could do, right?

I pointed out how clever you were to impose restrictions on young people in terms of their ability to drive more than one passenger, or not to drive more than one passenger, and how successful you were to get young people involved.

Here's another idea that I give to you: Put the idea out that you want to get the insurance rates down because they're unaffordable, and see how many hits you get on Facebook. I can tell you, you're going to get a whole lot. That's the way to get young people involved. Think about it. I'm just trying to help you.

I can see that they're busy reading. They're not really interested. Nobody's really interacting with me. You've got to interact with me, otherwise it's a monologue here. All of you are reading. I don't know what you're reading.

It can't be a one-man show. We need to engage each other. Come on, wake up. Engage me. Say something funny. Come on. I'm trying to keep you awake, and all of you are just pretending you're working. Come on, I know you're not working. I know you're listening to what I have to say. You've got to engage me. I know you were told by the whip, "Don't engage Marchese. Just pretend you're not listening. Pretend you're reading. Pretend you're busy." I know he told you that, but don't do that. That's not helpful. Engage me. That way, we can carry on the discussion.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There you go. You see? Thank you, whip.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member for Trinity–Spadina should stick to the bill before us and not try to entice the members of the government into unparliamentary interruptions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate your drawing that matter to my attention and would remind all members of the House it's important to engage the Chair as well as the members on the other side. I appreciate that and I return to the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I always try to engage you as well because I like to engage everyone through the Speaker, and everyone else. I thank the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for engaging me in that way. That was very helpful. That's what I was talking about, right? The idea is to pay attention and to have a dialogue, because that's what this assembly is about—dialogue. It's about talking to each other. So I say something and you say something back and we carry on this discussion.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about is these scooters that you included in this bill. I have a letter from someone who wrote me about the issue of these scooters:

"Bill 126, the Road Safety Act, which includes the re-definition of 'bicycle' to include power-assisted bicycles," he said, is of concern to him. "It contains a far too broad and easily abused definition of 'power-assisted bicycle.' Indeed, the current legislation is actually going to push back the limited progress we have seen in building our cycling infrastructure.

"These motorized scooters are not bicycles and will prove to be a hazard to bicycles if the legislation is enacted. We need specific, clear and strict regulations to govern this new breed of electric vehicle/motor scooter.

"I know that we are at third reading, but please, I implore you to prevent this legislation from passing as it is currently configured."

This is Matthew Church who wrote me this letter. He's obviously concerned. It's for that reason that my colleague Gilles Bisson raised this particular issue—the member for Thunder–James Bay, I wanted to say. He raised this issue in committee when they were doing the hearings. Clearly, it didn't pass. I'm not quite—

Interjection: Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Timmins–James Bay. What did I say? Thunder Bay?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thunder–Timmins.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From Thunder–Timmins with a thunderous kind of connection to that particular area.

He raised this issue in committee. As far as I know, it didn't get any support from the Liberal members, but we know that there are a lot of cyclists who are concerned about this, for the very reasons that Matthew Church stated in his letter ever so briefly. These scooters are heavier and potentially a little more dangerous to share the same cycling infrastructure that is very limited at the moment, which should be built in a much better way, and more of it across Ontario. We haven't seen enough of that, and when you include scooters in that particular cycling infrastructure, it's going to create problems. He raised a good point. Gilles Bisson, our colleague, raised that in committee and got very little support from the Liberal members.

I wanted to raise this point because I know that I'm not the only one who shares this concern. There are many cyclists who obviously share this particular concern. We hope at some point that the Liberal members are going to review this legislation again with a view to making it easier on all cyclists.

These are the points I wanted to raise. My colleague raised many of them and I wanted to raise a couple of these issues. We look forward to the two-minute responses from the Liberal members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I really enjoyed the discussion this morning on Bill 126. The member for Nickel Belt and the member for Trinity–Spadina have made this a very engaging and entertaining conversation, although we did talk about many things that had nothing to do with the bill. There were many issues raised in this act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. One of the issues was the zero blood alcohol level; one was the roadside vehicle impoundment expansion; another issue was strengthening the penalties for certain highway traffic acts. I'm glad to hear that the members of the New Democratic Party are supporting this legislation, because I think it is a good piece of legislation. We've listened to a lot of our stakeholders; they made a lot of recommendations which we did follow.

0950

I would say that one of the most surprising responses we got in the course of our hearings was the level of interest on the e-bikes. Certainly the member from Trinity–Spadina has raised some of those issues, but I would say that I was really pleasantly surprised by the number of individuals who came forward and wanted to speak on this issue. They were very knowledgeable, they gave some very practical suggestions, and it's certainly an area that the Ministry of Transportation looked at very seriously. So we have looked at pilot projects before and we are proposing to add a definition of “power-assisted bicycle” to the legislation, and the regulations require that an evaluation be completed before the end of the program which was part of the pilot program.

I think we heard a lot of very constructive dialogue from our stakeholders, and there are a lot of decisions that are still ongoing that the minister said he's going to look at making. Certainly no decision has been made on the scooter-style e-bikes, which should make the member from Trinity–Spadina feel a little more comforted. We're listening and we heard some good suggestions and we're going to be following them. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to make a few comments on the comments made by the NDP in their leadoff. I think these debates on highway safety and the safety of the operation of vehicles are critical in our Legislature and in our committee hearings. I understand that this bill has been fairly well received in a lot of areas and there's been a lot of good debate on it as well. But let's face it, we as politicians are here to make changes that have an impact and make our roads and highways safer, particularly for our young people. I think that successive governments have made some pretty positive strides in that way. However, the bulk of the accidents today, as you are aware, are still with young people on our roads. Anything we can do—whether it's the training of young people in our schools, in driver education programs, whatever it may be—has to have a positive influence. No matter what happens, one life saved in any particular area is worth a tremendous amount. I know we've had cases that were brought forward last year, with the accident that happened up in Muskoka that brought a lot of attention to it; even in the case of our own colleague Julie Kwiecinski as well, whose nephew was lost in a serious accident on Highway 400. That brought a lot of attention right in our own caucus room to the fact that young people are on the highways. Through no fault of his own, he lost his life.

I think these debates are important and that we move forward with the bill. There will always be times when bills need to be amended and there will be further changes required. But in the end, we are trying to save lives, and I compliment anyone who is taking a positive approach to this bill.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened carefully to both members, from Nickel Belt and Trinity–Spadina, when they spoke about their support, first, for this bill. It's very important to get the support of the opposition. I know that the member from Nickel Belt mentioned many different elements and she agreed with us that drivers under 21 are sometimes subject to drink and cause a lot of collisions and accidents. But I didn't agree with the special training for young drivers because I know, and many people in this place know, very well that young students, young drivers, the young people, drive better than their parents and they have a lot of ability to drive. The issue is not about driving; the issue is about drinking and driving. The issue is about attitude and behaviour while you are

driving. Young people these days are subject to many different tools and equipment and they train themselves very well. But the most important thing, I guess, is to focus on attitude and behaviour while you're driving.

Talking about a very important issue, I'm from the city of London, and if you go to get yourself tested in the city of London and you fail, you can go to a small town nearby and get a pass. This is, I guess, a flaw in the system. Do you know why? When the Harris government privatized testing stations across the province of Ontario, it created some divisions in the system. I wish our government, in the future, when the contract expires, will go to the public system because it's very important to make sure that every station and every testing place do the same things.

Also, I think, if this bill passes, it will help to lower students' fees. It's very important. When the insurance companies know we have strict regulations and rules, I think that the fee will be lower rather than higher.

To end, I want to compliment both members for speaking in support and focusing on so many different elements that benefit us and the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have a chance to add some comments to the speeches by the members for Nickel Belt and Trinity–Spadina on Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Certainly, as the member for Nickel Belt pointed out, many young people were engaged with this bill, particularly on Facebook: 150,000 young people. I'd like to thank the many young people from Parry Sound–Muskoka who e-mailed me protesting the restrictions that were going to be put on the number of young people who could ride in a car—those under 22, I believe it was. They pointed out that this just didn't make sense for carpooling and designated drivers, and particularly for rural and northern communities.

I would suggest that if the government wanted to create more feedback from young people, they could discuss the cost of insurance for young drivers as well. That would probably also stimulate feedback from young people.

There are still some aspects of this bill that make me wonder if they're necessary. I see greatly increased fines, for example, for not wearing a seat belt, which goes from \$60 to \$500. The fine for careless driving goes from \$200 to \$1,000. That seems excessive to me. I wonder if it's just another tax grab on the part of the government. It seems to me that if you are charged and convicted of careless driving, your penalty is really the huge increase that you're going to face in terms of your insurance costs that you're going to have to deal with going forward.

I would also like to protest the fact that the government is time-allocating its budget, Bill 162, but we're getting time to debate Bill 126. This is a drivers' bill. They are bringing in a draconian—cutting off debate on the budget bill, which deals with so many more issues, just this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member for Brampton–Springdale. That was news to us, that no decisions have been made regarding scooters. We are certainly open to e-bikes that are assisted, but still human-powered. In our minds, a human-powered bike belongs in the bike lane, but a scooter does not. We're happy to see that the government is looking at a definition that makes a difference between an e-bike and a scooter. This is something that we would support.

To the member for Simcoe North, the New Democrats certainly support bills that make our roads and our driving safer. I come from 25 years in health care. For years and years after every long weekend, you would go back to work and find multitraumatization from a motor vehicle accident. It happens way too often and it has horrendous consequences on the people involved in those motor vehicle accidents. Anything we can do to prevent that is worth it because the suffering that comes after a polytraumatization from a multi-vehicle accident is just horrendous and should be prevented.

To the member for London–Fanshawe, I'm happy that the government recognized that the privatization of the testing of young drivers was not a good idea and that it should be a public system that tests the drivers to see if they deserve a driver's license. It would bring stability to the system, and this is something we support. I was happy to hear him speak to this.

And to the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, certainly this bill has seen an engagement of young people that we have rarely seen, and I too want to thank all young people who got involved. Keep it up.

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

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 126, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote is automatically deferred, according to the standing orders, until the time appropriated for deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business this morning.

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

The House recessed from 1001 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery, we have Carol Heck, mother of new page Kenzie Murray from the great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Minister of Tourism and page Myriam Faucher, I would

like to welcome her father, Guy Faucher, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the House to allow the pages to take their positions so we can formally introduce them to all the members.

I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament:

Eric Bryce, Mississauga South; Michael Bzovsky, Etobicoke Centre; Adelina Cozma, Richmond Hill; Nicola Craig, Eglinton–Lawrence; Zachary Crichton, Bramalea–Gore–Malton; Robyn Currie, Dufferin–Caledon; Corey Davidson, Huron–Bruce; Lindsay Eenkooren, Kitchener–Conestoga; Myriam Faucher, Nipissing; Rabeb Haouas, Toronto Centre; Alexis Harquail, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; Cameron Hoey, Guelph; Grace Lee, Scarborough–Agincourt; Kenzie Murray, Oak Ridges–Markham; Emily Sellner, Thunder Bay–Atikokan; Timothy Swampillai, Scarborough–Rouge River; Cameron Tomlinson, Sarnia–Lambton; Cooper Toogood, Newmarket–Aurora; Lara Watson, Parkdale–High Park; and Michael Webster, York Centre.

Welcome to the pages. Please reassume your positions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for Canada's newest welfare Premier. Premier, we can all see the economic tailspin that you and your deputies have created for this province, but it wasn't long ago when, in fact, this province was the best place to be. We had six- and seven-figure job growth and we had balanced budgets. We had an explosive industry investment, red tape reduction and we were paying our way in Confederation. Due to your lack of leadership, we now have six-figure job losses, deficit budgets and industry is fleeing, and now, we're on the dole. Officially, we're a have-not province.

Do you think that implementing your new blended sales tax will fix the damage you've done over six years?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say to the honourable member that I think that there's much in the question, by the tone of the question and in the rhetoric of the question, that most members of this Legislature—and I dare say, quite a few members of that member's own party—might want to disassociate themselves from. At its fundamental heart, that question speaks of an Ontario that's very different than the one that we see and that we think most of the people of the province see. As an example, he said he'd like to see an Ontario that was

paying our way in Confederation. Through transfers to the government of Canada, Ontario continues to be the single biggest contributor to Confederation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Deputy: Last week, the Premier was in Ottawa picking up Ontario's first welfare cheque. What a proud moment for Ontario. I did notice something a little bit out of character, though. There were no lights, there were no cameras and there was no big photo op with his cheque and adoring fans. It was almost like it didn't happen, but it did, and it's embarrassing that Canada's economic engine is now on the dole. You've taken us from first place to last place in Confederation, and with this latest blended tax grab, it's clear that you can't even steer a course for economic recovery.

Deputy Premier, Ontario's now on welfare. Why are you further crippling our recovery with this new BS tax?

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, I want to use the beginning point of this answer to develop even further the contrast that exists in our spirit, in our sense of the people of the province of Ontario, and that honourable member and perhaps that party in which he sits.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: I hear one or two perking up, like the one from Halton who has previously expressed this view: that we should be embarrassed to be people in Ontario. Instead, we see our place in the history of our country as a privileged role, an important role. We continue to be depended upon to support the services in the government of Canada. Ontario continues to be the largest single contributor to the net proceeds that the government of Canada distributes elsewhere in our country. This is a role that we have always played.

These are challenging times in Ontario, and that's why our budget makes the biggest single investments in the history of our province related to infrastructure and why we protect essential public services in these challenging economic times.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Deputy, you can't continue to squeeze productivity out of people and increase the cost of public administration. You continue to expand public sector jobs while sticking it to hard-working people and businesses who create the wealth you spend so freely. On this side we know that you need to sell this blended sales tax somewhere else. People know it's just another Liberal BST tax. Deputy Premier, did you give Ontario workers a second thought before you brought the hammer down and put the screws to them for the finishing touch?

Hon. George Smitherman: The leader of that party himself said, with respect to this tax that the honourable member has just spoken about, that he supports it both in principle and in theory. We have many commentators who suggest that this initiative is the biggest single con-

tribution that can be made to enhancing the competitiveness of our jurisdiction, which is about getting people in opportunities for employment to prosper in our society.

In terms of public services, we know the history of that party. We had in our budget a commitment to reduce the Ontario public service by 5%, but we make no apology for the fact that in the last five years, under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty, there are more nurses working in Ontario. We will not apologize that there are more police officers on duty in Ontario, and we will not apologize that people inspect labour sites and opportunities where the environment is to be protected. These are all additional public servants under the McGuinty government, and we do not apologize for that.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For 140 years, Ontario has contributed to Confederation. We helped those provinces that envied our prosperity. Under your direction, that role has been reversed. You have not only let Ontario down, you have let Canada down. Your government is failing all Canadians. I know that timing is everything in politics, and you fellas have the worst timing I've ever seen. Why, at this time of economic upheaval, have you chosen to pick the pockets of taxpayers and small businesses with this blended sales tax?

1040

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, we challenge members of that party who believe, as that member just said, that Ontario does not contribute to Confederation, to stand in their place and say, "We support these outrageous statements coming from the occasional visitor from the back bench."

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

Hon. George Smitherman: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

I want to pay appropriate attention and I want to acknowledge that it's leadership day, and from the back bench of that party comes the idea that Ontario does not contribute to Confederation. If you believe in that, then stand with him, and if you do not, then disassociate yourself from it.

And the honourable member talks about small businesses. The benefit to small businesses is half a billion dollars in reduced costs as a result of not having to fill out two identical streams of paperwork. This is one example of benefits to the tune of half a billion dollars to small businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We all know that this government likes to work in the shadows. They even kept the BST secret from their own caucus.

In another shadowy operation, their government filed a motion to close debate on the budget, a budget that is putting Ontario deeper into the red hole of Liberalism. On this side we are proposing an amendment that would allow the constituents of your members, like Mrs. Sandals and Mrs. Mitchell, to be heard on this BST.

Minister, will you allow members in those communities—or are your members being silenced and told to obey? Why won't you allow the people to speak to your new BST?

Hon. George Smitherman: I believe that some would argue that the constituents of a particular riding have more likelihood of their voices being heard by members who show up in this place and participate in the debate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just reminded the honourable member, in a previous answer, regarding his reference to the attendance of the member. I would just ask him to refrain from making references to attendance of members in the House. I would ask that he withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do withdraw. Were I given the full opportunity, I was paying compliment to the extent to which those two members—it is out of order to name members by name as he did in his question—to whom he referred are hard-working members and make strong representations on behalf of their constituencies in this Legislature every single day.

But where we have quarrel with the honourable member and with those who support him in that party is the idea that our Ontario does not contribute to Confederation. Yes, we have challenges, and we seek to address those with unprecedented investments in infrastructure and supporting the public services that people depend upon. He says that we spend too much and later on in question period other members of that party will stand and say, "Please spend more."

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Deputy Premier is one silver-tongued bugger, I must admit. Rather than—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Withdraw. The Deputy Premier is one silver-tongued devil, I must admit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Look, this is not helpful in trying to maintain some decorum in the House by delivering personal attacks—on both sides, I would like to add. I just ask the honourable member to be more cautious in his choice of words.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Rather than scrap two regulations for every new one, as they promised, thousands of new regulations have been put on the books. The Red Tape Commission has been scrapped, and two red tape reduction acts by this side of the House have been squashed or ignored. They're adding to the regulatory burden, they are hiding their budget from the public and they're bringing in the biggest BST grab. If timing is everything, why are you ramming through this BST and hiding the budget from those who are most affected?

Hon. George Smitherman: We've heard similar language from people in that party, only then they were on this side when they talked about regulation, but they forgot what the implication of that was in the context of Walkerton.

We think that there are opportunities, of course, to reduce regulatory burdens. The burden of the protection of our people also lands on the responsibility of government. Much of that regulation is inclined to be able to do that.

I want to say to the honourable member, on the issue of the associated tax benefits, that 93% of the people in the province of Ontario will get a tax cut as a result of measures associated with our budget on the first \$38,000 of income. An average family with \$80,000 of income will see a 10% tax cut, and the first \$36,000 of income will see a 17% tax cut. Ninety thousand people will no longer pay taxes in the province of Ontario. These are part and parcel of a package which also dramatically enhances—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Leader of the third party.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. New Democrats are outraged with this government for stifling debate on one of the most controversial budgets that we have seen in decades. You will only give Ontarians one day of hearings, one day to express their views on your budget—a single day. We wonder what this government is afraid of. Maybe it's afraid that Ontarians will ask why they're forking over \$4 billion to corporations who don't need it, while tens of thousands of good-paying jobs disappear every month in this province. Why is the McGuinty government afraid to hear what Ontarians have to say about their own budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's noteworthy, isn't it, that in addressing the subject of the budget and how quickly we want to move to implement, that the honourable member doesn't bother to mention that this is the budget that nearly doubles the amount of supports enjoyed in the Ontario child benefit, something that everyone points to as a step in progress towards eliminating child poverty in the province of Ontario. The honourable member doesn't talk about the 725,000 people in the province of Ontario who will enjoy a reduction in taxes. The honourable member does not talk and say that in these difficult and challenging times, this budget seeks to preserve the gains that we've made with respect to important public services, and invests in an unprecedented level of infrastructure that will see substantial employment and help us to build a foundation for a stronger economy. Just as this measure related to the tax does, this is the largest single issue that we can initiate, the largest single thing that we can do to enhance the competitiveness of the province of Ontario and to get more of our people working.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the reason this government is so impatient with democracy these days is because of the sorry state of the Ontario economy after five years of Liberal government: some 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost, double-digit unemployment in many communities and a government with no answers—no

answers on the auto crisis, no answers on the forestry crisis, no answers on the steel crisis, no answers, period.

I ask again, why is this government railroading democracy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, we know that most of the people in the province of Ontario do not operate in a mindset where they think that the economic challenges which we face are germane only to our jurisdiction. This is the honourable member's fantasy land that decides that these situations, as an example, with the steel industry are germane only to the challenges here in Ontario and are not to be found elsewhere. Why does the honourable member reject people like Pat Capponi for the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction? She said, "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

At the heart of it, this budget is about moving Ontario forward in challenging times, investing in our public services, rebuilding our infrastructure and getting Ontario's economy in shape to enhance our competitiveness and get more of our people working.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the Premier wants to shut down debate because after five years of Liberal government, northern Ontario's economy is devastated. Almost 5,000 workers are out of work in Sudbury, as Vale Inco and Xstrata idle their operations, and Abitibi-Bowater files for bankruptcy. Maybe the Premier wants to shut down the debate in this province because the jobs and pensions of thousands and thousands of auto workers are at risk, and he simply has no answers.

1050

Why is this government using the jackboots of time allocation to close down this crucial debate at this very serious economic time?

Hon. George Smitherman: Our government acknowledges that there are challenges associated with the economy in northern Ontario. That's why, in a variety of ways—for the forest industry, subsidization on electricity rates, direct investments with those kinds of companies, through our work in the northern growth plan, through working closely with the mining sector—we're looking to enhance all of those opportunities.

But the honourable member cannot pretend that Ontario's resource-based economy is Ontario's alone, that these challenges don't occur in other jurisdictions that offer the same services. These are challenging times, and that's why our budget stands behind people. It provides support in the form of nearly doubling the Ontario child benefit. It preserves the gains that we've made in core public services like health care and education and post-secondary education. It makes unprecedented investments in infrastructure at levels never seen before, and it moves us forward to enhance our competitiveness with what many people have said has been the single biggest—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier: This recent budget has sparked a greater response from Ontarians than any budget in memory, and I have to tell you that, notwithstanding what the Acting Premier is saying, it has not been a positive response. I'm hearing from men and women across this province who believe strongly that this budget is actually going to harm them and their families. These women and men cannot understand why the McGuinty government is hitting them with an 8% tax hike when they're already struggling to make ends meet.

Is this why the McGuinty government is foreclosing democratic debate on this budget bill, because it simply doesn't want to face the anger and pain of thousands of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, as is the case very often with their party, is hung up on process, but won't speak about content. Over the course of the last month, substantial opportunities have been provided for discussion on these matters, but the honourable member in her very question demonstrates that she has not covered the content of the budget in and of itself.

She does not understand that 93% of the people in the province of Ontario gain permanent tax reduction associated with the initiatives that we're implementing, with a reduction on the first \$38,000 of income. That's especially impactful on average family income with \$80,000. Ninety thousand people will no longer pay personal tax, and 725,000 additional lower-income Ontarians would benefit from the Ontario tax reduction. A single parent with children who's benefiting from the Ontario child benefit will see that benefit nearly double. This is the content of the legislation. The honourable member talks only about process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality that this Acting Premier refuses to talk about is that the harmonized sales tax is going to create men and women across this province who are going to pay more on the basic essentials of living. That's what this budget talks about. They'll pay more for gasoline. They'll pay more for heating and coffee, vitamins, taxis, shoes and haircuts. Middle-income home purchasers are going to be laden with a tax of thousands and thousands of dollars.

Ontarians are very clear when it comes to this budget. As workers are losing their jobs at unprecedented rates in this province, you should not be adding a new tax on families, simply and clearly. Why won't the government allow Ontarians to voice their very serious concerns, their legitimate concerns, through full and democratic discussion on this budget bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: We're taking the steps forward to put shovels in the ground to rebuild the infrastructure of the province of Ontario, to get people back to work, to double the Ontario child benefit, to make important progress in terms of the quality of public service in the province of Ontario.

That honourable member, in her question, talked about tax increases, but why does that honourable member sit amongst a group of people over there in that party who called for an increase in the provincial sales tax quite recently? Why is it okay on some days, but not on others, for the honourable member to be in favour of increases in personal sales taxes?

This is the honourable member's party, this is the honourable member's position, and today she talks only about process. The content of the legislation is to enhance the circumstances for the people of Ontario, to get past the economic challenges that are there by rebuilding our province. We are ready to get shovels in the ground, and we want to get on with it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is a government's obligation to uphold democracy in the province of Ontario. Ontarians are rightfully concerned that the new HST is going to make it more difficult for them to make ends meet. But they're also opposed to it because it just doesn't seem fair. It doesn't seem fair to modest-income families that while their own significant tax burden is increasing, the McGuinty government is handing out \$4 billion to profitable corporations in this province. It doesn't seem fair that they are being hammered on every single purchase while large corporations and their million-dollar CEOs are getting massive tax breaks. Will the McGuinty government finally admit that this budget is unfair to modest-income Ontarians and allow Ontarians to express their outrage with full public hearings?

Hon. George Smitherman: We know that Ontarians have a high degree of emotional circumstance around economics. We know that there are many families that are hurting. That's why this budget moves forward in a fashion that gets them working again, that gets shovels in the ground and takes us forward in our province to make the biggest single initiative that is known possible to enhance the competitiveness in Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: Why does that party heckle so loudly against an overall reduction of \$10.6 billion in taxes for our people? Why are they so opposed to a tax cut for 93% of people on the first \$38,000 of income? Why do they yell and bang their desks so loudly in opposition to doubling the Ontario child benefit, to the benefit of children living in challenging circumstances with parents who don't make enough money? We are moving this budget forward, supporting Ontarians in challenging times and taking the steps to make us more competitive in the future.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, in Bill 162, the budget bill, the one for which you have introduced a closure motion, gives the finance minister the unilateral authority to cut a cheque of any size to the pension benefits guar-

antee fund. The 30% of Ontarians who are lucky enough to have a defined pension will benefit from this grant money. The other 70% of Ontarians, who will be paying 70% of the cheque and who aren't lucky enough to have any pension, and who have lost 30% to 40% of their RRSPs and their retirement income—my question to you, Deputy Premier, is, what assistance are you going to provide to this other 70% of Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: This is an incredibly sensitive matter. It dates back to the establishment of this fund in 1981. The conditions of the fund are clear: It's substantially underfunded and has a maximum of \$1,000 a month of protection for any worker that might gain benefit from it.

Very much the sentiment that your question addressed was part and parcel of the Premier's comments earlier this morning, an event that I attended along with him and Minister Wynne related to the retrofit of schools. We entirely understand that there are many expectations about accessing a fund that, as we all know, is substantially underfunded. The Premier was very, very clear this morning in cautioning folks in making assumptions about what will be possible in these challenging economic times. We understand the challenging circumstances for the majority of people who do not enjoy pensions being asked to pony up resources in a circumstance where they're already struggling with their own reductions, and the Premier and our government are extraordinarily mindful of that challenge.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I understand the comments of the Deputy Premier. But you're shutting down debate on Bill 162 and this very important part of that bill. If your finance minister decides to grant money to the pension benefits guarantee fund, an amount that could be as large as \$1 billion—you've already given them \$330 million in a loan in March 2004—the only time for debate in this Legislature will be a two-hour debate on the supply bill, with no hearings and no consideration for those who don't have a pension. We need a debate on this issue in full to provide protection for all Ontarians in their retirement—whether they have a defined benefit pension, or a pension or not a pension. Will you sever out this section of the bill so that pension reform can be fully considered by this Legislature, that there can be public hearings, that there—

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

1100

Hon. George Smitherman: At the heart of the matter, the honourable member asks for consideration, especially for those who may not be in the position of having a defined benefit pension. I have already—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: Like the majority of us, indeed.

That is why I said, in answer to the honourable member the first time around, that in comments this morning the Premier has reflected this very same cautionary tone.

However, I think the honourable member also knows that in these times, when the government of Ontario is a participant with the government of Canada in seeking to preserve the greatest proportion possible of the automotive sector, this matter is one piece of that puzzle, potentially. Accordingly, it's crucial that the government and the Minister of Finance have the latitude that may be necessary to address these circumstances going forward.

I give every assurance to the honourable member that our government's understanding about this circumstance and how it's so gnawing for so many people is first and foremost in our thinking.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Acting Premier: Here's another reason why the government may be closing down this crucial economic debate and allowing only one day of public hearings on a matter of such critical importance. In the fine print of the very budget bill that this government is ending debate on, refusing to have full public hearings on, are changes that leave a gaping hole in Ontario's pension protection legislation.

Is that what this government is afraid of, that Ontarians are going to know that their government is shredding the pension safety net just when pensioners and workers need it the most?

Hon. George Smitherman: I dare say, as one who has only been around this place for about a decade, that on the matter of pension circumstances in the province of Ontario, it's very difficult to find any political party that is absent for some of the responsibility.

The collective reality here, over many, many governments and over many, many decades, is that we have got a serious conundrum, a principle that seems to have been established of "too big to fail," which now affects organizations that are very possibly in that predicament.

I say to the honourable member, I agree that it's necessary for those of us in this Legislature to continue to focus on the efforts that can be made to stabilize the pension circumstance and to do our very best going forward to get past the kind of economic circumstances that have impaired so many families in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government has failed to protect pensions for the last five years in this province, and now workers are at risk of losing their pensions. We're talking about retirement monies that are owed to loyal workers in this province who have given their lifetime to their employers. And just when they need it the most, this government undermines the rules that are designed to protect Ontario pensions. Is that why this government is avoiding public hearings on their budget bill? Is it afraid that Ontarians are going to find out about its attack on their pension security?

Hon. George Smitherman: You'll notice, by way of a supplementary question, that the honourable member—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Hon. George Smitherman: —that the honourable member and her sidekicks—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Why is the government not holding public hearings?

Hon. George Smitherman: You'll note that the honourable member made no measure to more accurately—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Don't shut the door on the public.

Hon. George Smitherman: —to more accurately—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hold public hearings.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I note that the honourable member, in her supplementary question, did nothing to acknowledge that the challenges that we face today with respect to pension law are the making over decades in this Legislature of various governments. She chooses to pretend that they weren't a government. But the people of the province of Ontario know that the pension circumstances that we face today are substantially the making—and there are people in her caucus who were senior members of the government that led to those circumstances.

We also think it's critically important that the 70% of people in the province—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed for 10 minutes.

The House recessed from 1105 to 1115.

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, ensuring all Ontarians are able to go to work each day without fear of violence or harassment in their workplace is a—

Interjections.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Perhaps, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Kenora–Rainy River is not helping the situation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We shall recess the House for 10 minutes, and the clock will continue to run.

The House recessed from 1121 to 1131.

Mr. David Zimmer: Round three.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Willowdale is not helping the situation.

The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Ensuring all Ontarians are able to go to

work each day without fear of violence or harassment in their workplace is a matter of particular importance. It concerns me that members of the opposition don't care whether women go to work safely each day. Physical violence and harassment can have tremendously horrible consequences not only for workers but for their families and for society as a whole. It is something that I have previously proposed is appropriately guarded against in the Occupational Health And Safety Act, and I know that my constituents in Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all across the province do care whether women are safe and can go to work.

Minister, I know that you have brought in place policies and programs to address workplace violence and harassment and to keep women safe, and I would ask—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for her advocacy, for being a tremendous champion on this very important issue. I want to reassure the member and all Ontarians that our government takes this issue of workplace violence and harassment very seriously. We launched a consultation last fall—

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's unfortunate that members opposite do not take this issue seriously and continue to heckle when we're talking about something that is very important to all hard-working Ontarians, the issue of violence and harassment in the workplace.

What this legislation will do, if passed, is require employers to put in place policies and procedures to address workplace violence and harassment. All Ontarians should be able to go to work every day and feel that they are in a healthy and safe environment. This legislation, if passed, would—

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: To the same minister: I'm glad to hear that our government is listening to the concerns of Ontario workers all across this province when it comes to harassment and violence in the workplace. Would you kindly inform the House and the public what else is proposed within this bill that will assist those workers here in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for being a great campaigner on this, for helping to create the climate—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What the member is doing is helping to create a climate in the workplace that we want to see where we say that violence and harassment will not be tolerated and will be dealt with. This proposed legislation would bring forward a number of issues that were discussed in our consultation. One of the things we'll allow is that now, if a worker feels he or she is in imminent danger of violence—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Deputy Premier, and you can obviously tell by the uproar in this House from the opposition parties—I suspect that if you had freethinking, free-acting backbenchers in the Liberal Party, you'd also hear the same uproar. If you'd allow public hearings—you're bringing in a closure motion this afternoon that allows one day on a budget that brings in the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario; one day of committee hearings on a budget that doubles the province's debt; one day for public hearings on the highest deficit in Ontario's history.

I listened to your members speak on this bill, particularly the other day the member from Guelph. I don't think she actually represented her constituents, because during the last week, constituency week, I heard about the McGuinty sales tax. We don't hear about that from your government members when they speak. You should go to places like Guelph and hold public hearings to hear from the people on what they really have to say about your budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that it's great to know that—

Mr. Peter Kormos: —if the public can't hear you?

Interjection: Sure. Why hold public hearings?

Mr. Peter Kormos: You got pushbacks the day you read—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Welland will come to order, please. Deputy.

Hon. George Smitherman: I make the following points: He talked about free thinking. We wonder where the free thinking was when he was a member of a government that had a budget outside of this place and never had committee hearings associated with any initiative. He said that there's only one day of hearings. In fact, there are two. It shows the misinformation that the honourable member offers. At the heart of it, we think it's important to get on with making the investments that people need to get back to work, like an unprecedented level of investments in the form of infrastructure. That's what this budget is about and that's—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: The honourable member likes to rewrite history. At least we had a budget that we weren't afraid to take out of the Legislature and go to the people of Ontario and hear what the people of Ontario had to say about it. We did have hearings. You're a democratic—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Government members are not helping the situation either. Please continue.

1140

Mr. Jim Wilson: We heard from the people of Ontario. We tabled our budget, we went out and we heard from the people of Ontario and we covered, many, many public hearings across this province, so the honourable

member is factually incorrect. I don't know why, when you're having such unprecedented moves—the tax grab that you said you wouldn't do, the broken promises, the unprecedented disgrace—you would ignore the people of Ontario. We're going to ask you in an amendment this afternoon—and I ask the Liberal backbenchers to consider the amendment—for the committee to go to places like Guelph and to government-held ridings.

Why don't you want your constituents to hear what you're going to vote on in this House? They have every right. It's a fundamental right of democracy—

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

Hon. George Smitherman: We have to thank the honourable member for that doozer of a quote: "At least we had a budget that we weren't afraid to take out of the Legislature." They were held in contempt for the way that they presented their budget this year and that honourable member is still defending it.

As to taking a budget on the road as government members, having the opportunity to engage with constituents and the local media, I went to Red Lake, Thunder Bay, Timmins, North Bay, Kingston and Ottawa. Other members in their own ridings elsewhere travelled across the breadth of the province of Ontario. We have no challenge with going out there and making ourselves available. That's what members of this government do, and they tell people about the things that are embedded in this bill that you stand in opposition to. You don't want to move forward. The shovel's in the ground with unprecedented levels of infrastructure. You oppose the doubling of the Ontario child benefit and you will not acknowledge that 93% of Ontarians enjoy—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The McGuinty budget failed on almost every single anti-poverty front: It had nothing on the \$10 minimum wage; there's no real social assistance rate increase until November; there's no healthy food supplement; there are no welfare roll changes; there's no child care; and there is no housing for anyone except seniors. Now the government is shutting down poor people's opportunity to respond to this budget by limiting hearings and amendments to one day. This government has already limited hearings on the poverty plan to six hours.

Why won't the McGuinty government allow low-income people to voice their concerns about this budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: On the day of the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy Premier.

Hon. George Smitherman: This budget takes action on the poverty agenda. I quote again from Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction: "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits, and

child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians.”

Why is it that the members of that party—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member from Kenora–Rainy River to have some respect within this chamber, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: It’s a budget that Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 poverty network said “has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits, and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians.” It doubles the Ontario child benefit, it increases social assistance rates and it gets us back in the business of making investments in fundamental infrastructure like housing. Today, on the floor of the Legislature, they bring their process of opposition to initiatives that are designed to get dollars out there and make a difference in the lives of people in the province of Ontario.

What is at stake here is action. What are they interested in? Animation. They’re talking about process, and the budget that we proudly present in this Legislature is about making essential investments in the people of Ontario. The largest single investments in infrastructure, doubling the Ontario child—

Interjections.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

ROAD SAFETY ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Murdoch, Bill
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Oraziotti, David
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Ramal, Khalil
Broten, Laurel C.	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Shurman, Peter
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique

Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Carroll, Aileen	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Fonseca, Peter	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 65; the nays are zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as it’s named.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2010, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Dated Toronto, April 21, 2009.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Peter Shurman: April 19 marked the 66th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and yesterday I attended the 2009 Yom Hashoah V’Hagvurah Holocaust Remembrance Community Commemoration.

The central theme of this year’s commemoration was remembering the approximately 1.5 million Jewish children who were murdered by the Nazis. The chilling, rainy weather last night provided an appropriate backdrop for a sombre ceremony, during which children of the past who never had a future were honoured by children of that future who have learned from the past.

As survivors of the Holocaust honoured the victims by lighting candles, we also gathered to honour those righteous among the nations who didn’t fall prey to fear or indifference and who sheltered and saved Jewish families and children, risking their own lives and the lives of their families to do so.

Wladyslaw and Petronela Ziolo of Poland, along with their son Tadeusz, and the family of Catharina Develing of the Netherlands were honoured at last night’s ceremony as gentiles who defied the hatred, cruelty and fear that propelled the Nazi killing machine which terrorized

Europe. At one of the darkest times of human history, people like Wladyslaw, Petronela, Tadeusz and Catharina were rays of light and examples of the best that humanity has to offer.

Remembering our past is the only way to ensure that tragedies like the Holocaust are never again permitted to take place and that hatred will not again be the propeller of human activity. It is up to us to carry the memory of the tragedy of the Holocaust and other genocides and their victims forward and pass it on to future generations, and it is up to us to ensure that they never take place again.

QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today in the House to pay tribute, on behalf of all members and indeed all Ontarians, on the 83rd birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada and 14 other independent states that make up the modern British Commonwealth.

Her Majesty was born Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor on April 21, 1926. Her Majesty presides over a number of dependencies with a combined population of over 129 million citizens. Her Majesty ascended to the throne as Queen following the death of her father, King George VI, on February 6, 1952. The title of "Queen of Canada" was conferred on her in 1953 under the Royal Style and Titles Act. As our head of state, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth is represented by Her Excellency the Governor General.

In 1957, she was the first monarch at the opening of the Parliament of Canada. She inaugurated the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 with President Eisenhower. In 1961, she placed the inaugural call on the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable to Prime Minister John Diefenbaker from Buckingham Palace, asking, "Are you there, Mr. Prime Minister?" In 1967, she took part in the centennial of Confederation celebrations and was the sovereign of the newly created Order of Canada.

Queen Elizabeth II has always maintained strong and historic ties with our country, and wherever she goes on visits she is warmly received with love and grace by all of our citizens. She has made 30 visits to various parts of our country. We have inherited a great institution in the Westminster-style democracy, and our ties across the Atlantic remain as strong as they were a century ago.

On behalf of everyone here today, I want to wish her a very happy 83rd birthday and many more birthdays to come.

VILLAGE OF MANOTICK

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Our village of Manotick celebrates its 150th birthday this year, but right now many residents in Manotick are not celebrating. That's because one unelected bureaucrat at the OMB overturned a decision by our democratically elected city council which would have prevented doubling our village by adding 1,400 new homes.

Hundreds of my constituents have e-mailed or called me in protest of the OMB's unilateral decision for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it contradicts the secondary plan of our village. Another major concern is the unsustainable traffic levels in the village, especially without the support for building the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

I look forward to meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, along with Councillor Glenn Brooks, this week to discuss all legislative options this chamber has to either overturn the OMB decision or to amend elements of it. I look forward to meeting with him to discuss the tools that he has. Under the previous Conservative administration, former cabinet ministers, from Carleton-Mississippi Mills and our current Leader of the Opposition, successfully overturned or varied OMB decisions. It is a cabinet prerogative; there are precedents set.

We will also be urging him to support the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge. With the addition of 1,400 new homes in our community, this bridge will be critical for Manotick, Barrhaven and Riverside South.

NISKA NORTH MILL

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Last Wednesday, people from Wawa, Manitowadge, White River, Dubreuilville and Hornepayne gathered in Chapleau to celebrate provincial support for Niska North. Niska North is a mill utilizing cedar logs that up until now have been making their way to Quebec. These logs will now be utilized by Niska North to provide value-added products.

Niska North was a dream of Wade Cachagee and his partner, Kevin Lindquist. The mill is situated in a building that was once part of the Domtar mill. The mill is a state-of-the-art facility which will grow to employ up to 40 people—40 good jobs.

In 2007, the McGuinty government invested \$320,000 in the project through the forest prosperity fund. Our great friend, the Honourable Michael Gravelle, Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I were pleased that the Premier, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, attended the event to announce an additional \$1.5 million to support this locally owned and managed initiative.

Most people in attendance also remember the \$2-million prosperity fund investment in the neighbouring Tembec sawmill, making it more competitive and efficient, supporting a three-shift operation.

Yesterday, I was therefore extraordinarily surprised by the uninformed attack by the naysaying leader of the NDP, the third party. Surely the member for Hamilton Centre will rise and apologize to the people of Chapleau and the rural north for mocking their future.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This government has embarked on a campaign to dismantle our health care system. Rather than attack waste in government, they choose to attack the health care system. I stand again to question this government's plan for Cambridge Memorial

Hospital, St. Mary's hospital and Grand River Hospital. When will you implement a fair funding formula not only for Cambridge hospital, but for all hospitals across the province that are struggling with inadequate funding levels?

On April 29, busloads of my constituents will travel here to the Ontario Legislature to voice their concerns about the future of our hospital, a hospital they are very passionate about preserving. They will not let this government dismantle their hospital. Buses will leave from the Cambridge Newfoundland Club at 10 a.m. Seats are still available and can be reserved by calling my office.

This government has committed to helping fund a long-awaited expansion at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital. Again, I ask, when will you keep your promise and allow this expansion to proceed? My riding is part of Waterloo region, which now has the second-highest unemployment rate in Ontario. With a jobless rate of 9.6%, why doesn't this government rise to the occasion and help the people of Waterloo region? Allow the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital to go ahead and put some of our many unemployed citizens back to work.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This week there were two fascinating articles in the Toronto Star about energy. Today, the headline read, "Now Province Pays to Give Away Electricity." That should have been a front page story, not a story in the business pages. Tyler Hamilton reported that Ontario had to pay customers to take power.

In Mississauga South, the residents are fighting against a peaker plant proposed by this Liberal government. I don't know how the government can go forward with that plant knowing that they are going to have to pay people—customers—to take power.

In northern York region, in the Holland Marsh, people are fighting against a peaker plant. Again, they know that Ontario has to pay people money to take power.

This government is headed down a blind alley, down a dead end on power. It is committed to nuclear, and because of that commitment, it is going to be in a position of either overproduction or making sure that investment in conservation and green power are pushed to the side.

Interestingly, the other article Tyler Hamilton wrote this week about the Green Energy Act says that in fact, because green energy producers wouldn't be able to sell continuously—there was no guarantee of market—far fewer would be interested in investing in Ontario because they didn't know if they would be able to sell their power.

This direction of the Liberal government, their nuclear direction, is a disaster.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yesterday morning I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new emergency mental health unit at the Guelph General Hospital. In

2007, our government announced funding to renovate a section of the hospital to provide a secure place to assess and treat patients with mental illness.

Prior to this investment, Guelph General Hospital did not have mental health programming, emergency psychiatric assessment or treatment capacity. Patients with a mental illness who presented to the hospital in extreme distress were at times handcuffed to a bed and supervised by police. We know that patients with a mental illness deserve better than that.

The new secure emergency mental health unit has four observation rooms, two interview rooms, a meeting room, a washroom, a shower, two offices and a new nurses' observation station. Renovation will also provide the main emergency department with additional examination rooms for other patients. The emergency mental health unit will be jointly staffed by Guelph General and the Homewood psychiatric hospital. Trellis, our local community mental health clinic, will provide support for patients who can be released after emergency treatment.

Our local health care providers have worked very hard on building this unique partnership. On behalf of the people of Guelph, I would like to thank them for creating a safe and caring space for our mental health patients.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr. Dave Levac: It's indeed a pleasure to rise today in the House to offer a warm welcome to the representatives of the Ontario Chiropractic Association who are with us in the Legislature today. It might be of interest to you to know that the OCA represents approximately 2,800 of the province's practising chiropractors. As accomplished health professionals who deliver care for over 1.2 million patients, including myself, in this province, chiropractors provide diagnosis, treatment and preventative care for disorders related to the spine, pelvis, nervous system and the joints. The OCA members are committed to educating patients and the public about their health while empowering them to make informed decisions about treatment options and their overall wellness.

This is the first Queen's Park Day that the OCA has held. Groups of chiropractors will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about some of the major issues affecting the profession in Ontario today, and to share experiences from our various constituencies.

Of course, it would not be a Queen's Park Day without the OCA's reception for all MPPs. A number of the OCA members have travelled from ridings all across the province to be here today to let us know how they are making a difference in our communities. I encourage each and every member of this House to attend the reception that the Ontario Chiropractic Association is hosting this evening here in the legislative dining room from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., so that you can meet the OCA representatives from your area. I was pleased to sponsor this event and I encourage and hope to see you all there this evening.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. David Zimmer: Today the Jewish lunar calendar marks Yom Hashoah, in recognition of the systemic persecution and murder of European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. The Jewish community mourns the tremendous loss of talent, knowledge, potential, and ultimately, the loss of human life. Elie Wiesel said, "To remain silent and indifferent is the greatest sin of all."

In this spirit, let us renew our commitment to fighting moral injustice and ensure that the six million who perished in the Holocaust did not die in vain. We must not remain silent on issues of discrimination and intolerance. We must speak out against crimes against humanity and genocide.

I am proud that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in North America to officially commemorate the Holocaust. Ontario has a large community of Holocaust survivors who have made enduring and invaluable contributions to our province.

On behalf of the Premier of Ontario and the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem, I urge my colleagues to attend a special Holocaust memorial ceremony in the Legislature next Thursday at 12 noon.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (FIREFIGHTERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (POMPIERS)

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to firefighters / Projet de loi 169, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui a trait aux pompiers.

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 member for a short statement?

Mr. Ted Arnott: This being volunteer week, I think it's timely to introduce this bill, which amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. Section 15.1 of the act contains presumptions that if a worker who is prescribed by the regulations made under the act sustains an injury to the heart or is impaired by a disease, the injury or disease is presumed to have arisen out of the worker's employment as a firefighter or a fire investigator. At present, under the regulations, the presumptions apply only to full-time firefighters. The bill would make the presumptions applicable to all firefighters, including volunteer firefighters, without the need to make a regulation.

A regulation can still make the presumptions applied to fire investigators or other workers and/or still impose conditions and restrictions on the presumptions. I would encourage all members of this House to support this bill.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Chan: April 19 to 25 is National Volunteer Week. We set aside this week every year to pay tribute to the millions of Ontarians who volunteer and make a difference in their communities.

Right now in Hamilton, a volunteer is driving a dialysis patient for treatment. Earlier this morning in Sudbury, volunteers served a nutritious meal at a school breakfast program. And this weekend, groups all over Ontario will get together to help build homes.

Every hour, every day and in every part of Ontario, volunteers generously give their time and skills to make this province a better place for all of us. For several years, we have celebrated their contributions through awards and ceremonies. We also have some exciting programs to help sustain and build volunteerism by including young people and newcomers in this fine tradition.

Our showcase event this year is the 2009 ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge, which we launched as a pilot project in 2008. Once again, we are partnering with the Ontario Volunteer Centre Network and 19 of its volunteer centres with the goal of getting 10,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 18 to volunteer during National Volunteer Week.

There are lots of opportunities all over Ontario, such as participating in a community clean-up in Belleville or a sing-song at a seniors' home in Thunder Bay or helping to clear a trail in Guelph. I urge young people to find out about volunteer events in their community and volunteer some of their time to these worthy causes.

Several weeks ago, I told members of this House about the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, our province's annual recognition of volunteers. Later this week, 20 fine Ontarians will receive the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. Yesterday morning, eight young Ontarians were invested with the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

Ontario's volunteers give both their time and their hearts. We are privileged to have such a tradition of volunteerism in this province. National Volunteer Week is our opportunity to show them how much they are appreciated.

1520

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING SUBVENTIONS POUR LES ARTS ET LA CULTURE

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Strengthening the impact of our creative sector as a major economic driver is a key

priority for this government. In order to succeed and effectively compete in the global economy, our government is enhancing the growth and success of our creative industries.

Nous savons qu'un secteur des arts actif et florissant permet de créer des collectivités dynamiques qui attirent des investisseurs et les travailleurs du secteur du savoir les plus talentueux.

We know that an active and thriving arts sector creates vibrant, dynamic communities that attract investors and the most talented knowledge workers. They also make our communities better places in which to live.

I'm delighted to advise the Legislature this afternoon that the McGuinty government is providing a \$5-million increase in annual base funding to the Ontario Arts Council this year. This investment is part of the \$20-million enhancement to the council's base funding which was announced in 2007-08. This investment brings the council's annual budget to almost \$60 million this year. That represents a 140% increase since 2003.

This investment in the Ontario Arts Council reflects our government's recognition that artists and arts organizations are essential players in the creative economy. The Ontario Arts Council builds that creative economy from the ground up by developing and promoting our province's significant pool of talented artists. In 2007-08, the council funded 1,300 individual artists and 874 organizations in 252 communities across Ontario.

One of these organizations is Sunfest, a popular world music festival in London, Ontario, which features artists and musicians from right across the province and, indeed, from all around the world. It's so popular, in fact, that attendance has exploded from 10,000 people in the first year to 200,000 last year—that's a 20-fold increase—making Sunfest a major cultural tourism attraction. By attracting thousands of visitors from across Ontario and the US, Sunfest also helps fill hotel rooms and restaurants, and feeds, of course, into all of the job creation activities of those enterprises in the community. The festival is just one of the many success stories that Ontario is proud to support through the Ontario Arts Council.

En mettant en vedette les arts et la culture au Canada et à l'étranger, nous renforçons non seulement l'industrie, mais nous stimulons aussi la création d'emplois et nous assurons la prospérité de nos collectivités.

Showcasing our arts and culture at home and abroad not only strengthens the industry, but it also stimulates job creation and brings prosperity to our communities. Between 1999 and 2007, Ontario's entertainment and creative cluster created almost 80,000 new jobs in Ontario. That is an increase of almost 40%, compared with 17% in the overall Ontario economy.

Our increased support to the Ontario Arts Council builds on this government's investment of \$47 million in its seven cultural attraction agencies, which was announced earlier this month. For the first time in more than a decade, all of our cultural attractions received a

boost in annual operating grants that will allow them to offer more of the world-class programs and collections that attract millions of visitors each year.

These investments in Ontario's growing creative sector are part of this government's plan to strengthen our economy and compete very successfully indeed on the world stage.

En investissant dans les industries des arts et de la culture en Ontario, nous améliorons la qualité de vie de nos collectivités et nous assurons un avenir plus radieux à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

Indeed, by investing in Ontario's arts and cultural industries, we are improving the quality of life in our communities and creating a brighter future for all Ontarians.

Merci. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to commend the Minister of Citizenship for his kind words in celebration of the volunteer community. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to also recognize National Volunteer Week and all the great work that volunteers do throughout our society here in the province of Ontario.

Over five million Ontarians volunteer yearly, contributing over 800 million annual volunteer hours. When I took a look at that statistic, I decided to do the math. That is the equivalent of 20 million 40-hour employee weeks, or 400,000 full-time jobs.

The volunteer rate in Ontario of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is 63%. That is remarkable when you consider that people of that age tend to be otherwise occupied. Those numbers have actually doubled since the year 2000.

Events are being held across Ontario and Canada, celebrating volunteers. Volunteers help in every facet of our society, working in areas from schools, hospitals, police and fire services, churches, synagogues, mosques and temples, to Scouts, Girl Guides and athletic clubs.

I myself have been part of a number of volunteer organizations, and I know the commitment needed to have everything run as smoothly as possible. I know that every member of this Legislative Assembly does as well.

Our society could not exist as we know it without the contribution of volunteers. In fact, last Saturday evening, I had the pleasure of awarding \$37,000 from Trillium to the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan. That did come from Trillium, which, I might remind members, was founded in 1982 by Premier Bill Davis and bumped up dramatically in 1995 by the Harris government.

There is no amount of money that could replace the commitment and hours that these individuals give. Like the minister, I look forward each year to assisting in recognizing worthy Ontarians with our province's volunteer service awards. I relish this opportunity to offer my small thanks for their hard work and dedication.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mrs. Julia Munro: On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm very pleased to offer comments in regard to the minister's presentation.

In our caucus, we recognize the importance of the arts. We recognize that the arts are really the mirror that we put in front of ourselves to reflect who we are. Art helps us to dream, and dreaming helps foster creativity. It is that, then, which is the impetus behind seeing the arts as a stimulation to innovation.

However, the minister needs to go beyond re-announcements, as this is, and take action. As the former government, we introduced Learning Through the Arts to be able to provide children in this province with the opportunity to derive the best that they can from learning through the arts.

We also supported the passage of the amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act, but have not yet seen the minister take action—as she is able to, in terms of declaring any of the sites that are on that very slippery slope of demolition, or frankly, destruction—that she can take as part of the Heritage Act.

I also wonder, when the minister in her own remarks talks about the creative economy and the creative industries, if those industries have recognized at the same time the 8% tax increase that is going to follow the artists and the artistic events. Every time someone goes to a movie theatre, it will be 8% more. The new tax is a tax on Ontario's filmmakers and all the industries that support them. Actors, directors, set designers and others will all be hurt by this tax. Every theatre performance will cost 8% more. Every visit to a museum or an art gallery will cost 8% more. Then we're faced with the fact now that you're going to shut down the debate on the budget bill. The government wants to put an 8% tax on our culture but is not willing to debate it in this House. It is time for the minister to stand up for Ontario's artists, culture and heritage and tell the Premier and the finance minister that an 8% tax on culture is wrong.

1530

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and talk about our incredible volunteers in the province. We've heard how many there are. We've heard how much they give. I'm well aware of that in Parkdale-High Park; I'm sure we are in all of our ridings. However, there's a problem here, because it used to be that volunteers volunteered their time, energy and their money because they wanted to. Now, across Ontario they volunteer because they have to. That is a result of the McGuinty government and what it has not done in terms of meeting the basic needs of Ontarians. Hence, we have people volunteering in food banks. They are there not because they want to see food banks but because they have to be there. Those men and women who are working in low-wage jobs who can't

afford to pay the rent and feed their children have to use food banks. Volunteers have to work in them.

They volunteer in hospitals because the McGuinty government won't hire enough health care staff to keep every patient getting the care they need and that they require. So family and friends have to spend the time looking after their loved ones at the worst possible time of that loved one's life because there's not enough staff in place to do the job.

If you look at our schools, you'll see places where volunteers raise about \$600 million every year simply to keep the system going. Do they do that because they want to? No, they do it because they have to. If they didn't do it, they wouldn't have playgrounds, they wouldn't have extracurricular activities, and their children would not get the education they deserve and need.

We as Ontarians have the right, under the Canadian charter, to life, liberty and security. We also have the right, under the UN charters, to homes, food, clothing, education and quality health care. It is the job of government to provide those services; it is not the job of volunteers. So if this government really wants to honour its volunteers, what it will do is take up the task and the responsibility that is its alone, and that is to look after its citizenry so that many who are already overtaxed—we heard why with this BST—who are already overburdened, who are already underemployed don't have to volunteer under the McGuinty Liberal government.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the remarks of the Minister of Culture. There's no question that in our party we've long recognized that artists and the arts community are essential to creating vibrant communities and, frankly, are an essential part of the economy of this province. They could be a much bigger part of this province with the right kind of support.

The NDP supports the investment in the Ontario Arts Council. We welcome the announcement and we thank the artists who I know have lobbied tirelessly to increase the funding available to the arts sector in this province. That said, New Democrats are concerned that the McGuinty Liberals have failed to understand the need for comprehensive support for Ontario's artists by dealing with laws regarding their labour status. There's no question that investing in the Ontario Arts Council is essential, but the efforts with regard to the arts have to go beyond the Ontario Arts Council.

Just yesterday, members were here in this chamber from ACTRA, talking about the three steps that need to be taken to protect the arts community in Ontario to enhance their situation: Implement a collective bargaining process for the arts sector, amend the Employment Standards Act to include artists, and institute legally binding regulations that can protect child actors.

We know that these changes are needed. It was acknowledged by the Minister of Culture's own advisory council in 2006 that the average annual earnings of

Ontario artists are around \$26,800 per year, almost a quarter less than the overall labour force in Ontario. Artists in many Ontario cities earn less than \$20,000, despite the fact that the percentage of artists with post-secondary qualifications is nearly double that of the overall workforce.

Ontario's artists deserve a commitment to move forward on the issues of collective bargaining, employment standards and protection for child actors. It's matters like these that will determine whether people will come into the arts and contribute their talent and creativity to building this sector. Ontario has got to move forward on this. New Democrats call on the McGuinty government to follow through on their promise to Ontario's artists to bring forward these needed changes.

On Thursday, this government will have a chance to vote in favour of my bill, Bill 165, which will address the matter of employment standards for artists, and I call on them to support it.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present this to Corey, one of the new pages here in the Legislature.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased today to bring forward a petition from my friend Stan Maclean, who lives in Galesburg in beautiful Lakefield, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

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

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

I agree with the petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to page Cooper.

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the last 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law or medicine pay as much ... as \$20,000 per year; and

"Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

"Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college and university; and

"Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government's Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

"(1) Reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students.

"(2) Converts a portion of every student loan into a grant.

"(3) Increases per student funding above the national average."

I appreciate having been sent this petition and I will sign it.

1540

ONTARIO BUDGET

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with this and affix my signature to it and give it to page Cameron who's here with me today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"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.

PROPERTY TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas 2009 is a reassessment year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the assessments will be phased in over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012; and

"Whereas the assessed values for current value assessments collected as at January 1, 2008, were obtained during years of high real estate activity in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the downturn in the current global economic climate has greatly affected the real estate market, and subsequently, the assessed values in the province of Ontario;

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

"That the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario roll back assessed values to the base year of January 1, 2005."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Cooper.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource—our people."

I agree with the petition, so I put my signature on it as well.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: I've got several hundred names here on petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The title is: Nichols Gravel Ltd., Petition for Justice and MNR Compliance to OMB and ARA Legislation.

“Whereas officials of MNR Aylmer district illegally imposed on licence 103717 without legislative or delegated authority pre-conditions to be completed prior to operation of the quarry which in fact were impossible to complete without quarry operations, and then used ARA legislation to revoke the licence for non-compliance, when to this date no ‘operational licence’ has yet been delivered to Nichols Gravel Ltd. under direction of OMB order 1194;

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

“For an order to the Ministry of Natural Resources to cease all illegal enforcement and to comply with legislation of the OMB Act s 86(1) Cayuga file 148/07 Superior Court judgment order, OMB order 1194 and the Aggregate Resources Act, and reinstate Nichols quarry lic. 103717, illegally revoked September 30, 2004, based upon MNR enforcement of 23 specific pre-operational conditions not identified or directed in OMB decision order 1194 or the licence signed by the minister March 25, 2003.”

The reference is www.injusticecanada.com.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from my good friend John Sheehan who lives on Homewood Avenue in Peterborough.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting and preserving the remains of our ancestors undisturbed in their final resting places is a sacred trust and a foundation stone of civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic, original heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

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

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

I affix my signature to it and give it to page Cooper.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas residents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound 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 have signed this.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m presenting a petition on behalf of a number of people in the trucking business: Laura O’Neill and Joanne Ritchie and Jim Park; there’s a number of people. I’ll read the petition. It’s on the speed limiter issue, connected with the long continuous vehicle, the LCV.

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign in support and present this to Cameron, one of the new pages.

1550

LUPUS

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of my seatmate, the hard-working member for Niagara Falls, I’d like to read this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and thank the Lupus Foundation of Ontario for having sent it. 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 ... 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The member for Simcoe–Grey.

SALES TAX

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

“Whereas potential automobile customers in North America are having trouble accessing credit and loans; and

“Whereas the automotive industry is having difficulty selling vehicles;

“We, the undersigned, petition provincial, federal and state governments to implement a sales tax holiday on the purchase of new and used cars and trucks.”

I agree with the petition, and I’ve signed it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 162, An Act respecting the budget matters and other matters, when the bill is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That—

Mr. Howard Hampton: What are you trying to hide?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Perhaps the member could take his seat if he’s going to object?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask all members of the House to allow the government House leader to read the motion. I need to hear what she’s saying, and I return to the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of the second reading vote shall be permitted; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, May 7, 2009, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on Thursday, May 14, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Monday, May 11, 2009. At 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2009, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 25, 2009. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That, on the day the order for third reading of the bill is called, 65 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 20 minutes apportioned to each of the recognized parties and five minutes to any independent member. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I am pleased to lead off the debate today, and I will be sharing my time with a number of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I tried to get in just before the member started her debate, because this is when I should—what I’m asking, on a point of order, is if I could have unanimous consent to have two minutes to

speak on this motion before the rotation starts. I'm asking for unanimous consent to allow me two minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to speak for two minutes—immediately after the government House leader, I gather? Is it agreed? Agreed.

I return to the government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Huron–Bruce and a couple of my other colleagues.

I'm pleased today to speak to motion 116, moving forward the debate on our budget bill, Bill 162. I think it's a very important debate that we've been having in this Legislature. I think there has been a lot of good input, and I think it's time to move forward with the budget bill. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I appreciate the House allowing me just a couple of minutes to speak on this motion.

A couple of weeks ago, I spoke on a similar one—it was a closure bill—and I mentioned to the House that it would be nice if they would recognize the independent members. There may be more than me at some time, and there may not be.

I am pleased to stand here today and thank the member from North Bay for listening to me. I appreciate the fact that they added the independents into this motion. It certainly shows that you are trying to get along with us.

This motion may not go over well with everybody, because it is a closure motion. I've been here for some time. These things happen, and all parties do it from time to time. It's unfortunate; I wish we could have a House where we didn't need to do this.

But I do want to acknowledge the fact that you have included the independents in there, so that when the budget bill does come back, I will have some time to speak on it, whereas in the past, if there were independents here—and there have been; in my 18 years here, there have been independents in the House—they weren't given that chance to speak on it. So I really appreciate that. Hopefully, we don't have a whole lot more like this, that you have to do that.

I think it's a bit of a historical moment. I may be the independent, but I don't believe this has been done before in this House. Maybe somebody can show me a time allocation motion that says they recognize the independents, but in my 18 years, I don't remember one coming in, so I think it's a bit of a historical moment.

I'm pleased to stand here and thank you for doing that. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaking to this closure motion, I can say that we're somewhat shocked. First of all, the government, during House leaders', really gave no notice that they were going to do this on their budget. If they're

so proud of the budget, then why are they bringing in a closure motion, or a time allocation motion, to close down debate? Should not the government be taking an opportunity, through the Standing Committee on Finance, to go out to the people of Ontario, to travel with their budget bill, to explain the largest tax grab in Ontario's history to date?

Dalton McGuinty was elected in the 2003 election, and he said he wouldn't raise our taxes. Then, of course, we got the record, at that time, the highest single tax increase in the history of Ontario, called the health premium or health tax. Then again, in the 2007 election, after spending a lot of time before the election, and in TV ads and marketing during the election campaign, saying that he wouldn't raise our taxes again—he also said he wouldn't lower them, but he wouldn't raise them.

Though not technically in the budget bill, certainly that was the major plank in the finance minister's speech to this Legislature about the budget. The most hype around the budget has been about Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

As we said today during question period, it's a time that families are hit very, very hard in this province—unprecedented in my lifetime and unprecedented, really, since the Great Depression—and the government decides to pick their pockets, very deeply. People probably don't realize, or may not realize, that their electricity is going to go up 8% beginning Canada Day next year. Gasoline will go up 32 cents a gallon, for people who remember gallons. That is just unprecedented—up overnight. When it goes up one or two cents a litre now, people go crazy. Gasoline alone will certainly go up about 7 or 8 cents per litre overnight.

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Cable, train fares, vitamins, newspapers and magazines, haircuts, postage stamps, home renovations, dry cleaning, car washes and veterinary care: The list is pages and pages long, and these are just some of the examples of things that you don't pay the 8% provincial sales tax on now, but will in the future. Bringing your kids to school, picking them up at school and getting your morning coffee are all going to cost you more money. Meals under \$4, which are currently exempt from the provincial sales tax, will cost you more money, 8% more beginning, as I said, July 1.

I remember when Dalton McGuinty, after the 2003 election—Greg Sorbara was the finance minister, and he tried to bring in the provincial sales tax on meals \$4 and under. Tim Hortons and McDonald's and the opposition parties were successful in getting the public motivated to challenge the government on that and they backed down.

Just in conclusion, people ask me, because I have an online petition at www.jimwilsonmpp.com, "Is it any good signing the petition?" I can tell you that there has got to be a number of Liberal backbenchers and cabinet ministers who are hearing the same things that we are, as we go throughout our ridings and throughout Ontario, that people are shocked and they don't like this new tax. They say to me, "Well, if you want to give a break to

manufacturers that's fine. But why are you dragging all consumers into this?" This has been studied by other governments. It was recently studied by Saskatchewan, and they came to the conclusion that it would cost their economy and their consumers too much money, so they didn't introduce it. Of course, governments of all stripes have looked at bringing in a harmonized sales tax in this province and the cost to consumers is too great.

So, as we said in question period today, on behalf of the PC caucus I'd like to introduce the following amendment to the government's closure motion:

That the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet as follows:

- "—on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, in Toronto; and
- "—on Thursday, April 30, 2009, in Toronto; and
- "—on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Peterborough; and
- "—on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Belleville; and
- "—on Thursday, May 7, 2009, in Cornwall; and
- "—on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Ottawa; and
- "—on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, in Guelph; and
- "—on Thursday, May 14, 2009, in London; and
- "—on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, in Windsor; and
- "—on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Goderich; and
- "—on Thursday May 21, 2009, in North Bay

"for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on May 25 and 26, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and" and

In the fourth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 11, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, May 20, 2009" and by deleting "Thursday, May 14, 2009" and replacing it with "Thursday, May 28, 2009"; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 25, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, June 3, 2009"; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting "65 minutes" and replacing it with "10 hours."

That's the end of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved that the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

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In the fourth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 11, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, May 20, 2009" and by deleting "Thursday, May 14, 2009" and replacing it with "Thursday, May 28, 2009"; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting "Monday, May 25, 2009" and replacing it with "Wednesday, June 3, 2009"; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting "65 minutes" and replacing it with "10 hours."

I'll return to the member for Simcoe–Grey if he wishes to speak to his motion.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just to remind people, what the government has done this afternoon is they have limited the debate on a \$108-billion budget with the largest tax increases in Ontario's history, doubling the debt throughout this budget period in the province of Ontario to almost \$200 million. Our interest payments on that debt will be over \$11 billion, or \$1 million per hour, every hour of every day, 365 days a year. We will simply pay that out in interest, mainly to New York bondholders, as a result of this government's budget. I think they should go out to the people of Ontario and not limit the debate on such an important matter.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I usually start by saying it is my pleasure to talk, but today I don't think it is a pleasure, because this has to do with a time allocation motion. Basically, what a time allocation motion does is it shuts down debate on the budget at a time when Ontario is facing a recession, when people are worried, when they are looking to their government for help and also to be heard. The government has answered back, "We don't want to hear from you. We know you're suffering, and we feel for you, but we don't want to hear you."

I can't believe that we are doing that to the people of Ontario. People have the right to be heard, and they have the right to be heard on motions that are as important as the budget. Everybody looks to the budget to see what the government is going to do. This is how the government translates their actions—by how they distribute their budget.

Last week, I was in my riding and I had the opportunity to visit my constituents in Foleyet. Foleyet is a tiny little community in the north end of my riding, not too far from Chapleau, actually. They depend mainly on the forestry industry. You won't be surprised that there is a very high level of unemployment in Foleyet. There are now 120 households left in Foleyet, as everybody who has lost their job has moved on. Well, the expenses in

Foley are not going down. They have a water plant with a contract that costs us \$100,000 a year to maintain so that they have safe drinking water, like everybody else in Ontario, of course. When there are only 120 households left to pay the local services board, that's not a whole lot of money. They also have to pay taxes for a roads board to maintain their roads. Again, those expenses don't go down a whole lot when the number of people able to pay goes down. Those people were looking at the budget, and they would like to see a forestry strategy that would help them gain employment. Unfortunately, they won't have an opportunity to tell the government what they want, because the government has put forward a time allocation motion that will prevent them from being heard.

From Foley, I went to Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami is a beautiful First Nation built on the side of a lake. The lake was still frozen and people were still ice fishing when I was there. It was a beautiful day.

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But that's pretty well all that was beautiful, because there's a 70% unemployment rate in Mattagami. That's a lot of people unemployed. They used to work in the forestry industry. There are no forestry jobs left for them. A lot of people came to see me to talk about their hydro bill and a lot of them are not going to be able to pay their hydro bill for many months to come, because there is no income coming in but the bills keep coming in. They wanted to talk to me about this but they also wanted to talk to me about the blended sales tax. They are worried about this and they want to be heard. They don't want any part of this and they came and told their MPP what they certainly would like to tell the government.

That was Mattagami. I then went to Gogama. Gogama is a lovely little community, also in my riding, just off Highway 144, between Sudbury and Timmins. The people in Gogama have also depended on the forestry industry to make a living. On one little street in Gogama there are 10 houses. Six of them had a "For Sale" sign and one was abandoned because the people didn't have a hope of selling their house.

When the school opened and we went and visited it, there were only four kids left in the English-language school because everybody else has moved out. There are no jobs left in Gogama. Again, the people of Gogama depend on the forestry industry. They would like to tell their government that they have ideas as to how we can help, a good strategy that would help to give those people jobs in forestry, but they won't have an opportunity to be heard.

When you go to Gogama, the first thing you see is Le Vagabond. It used to be a big restaurant. It is closed, and the sign is now hanging upside down. It looks pretty bad. The one and only gas station is now closed down. You cannot buy gas in Gogama anymore. You have to prepare ahead and bring jerry cans with you because, if you live in Gogama and you need gas, you need to go to the Watershed, which is about a 25-minute drive out of there, or hopefully you have enough gas to make it to Timmins, which is about an hour and a half, an hour and three quarters north of where they are.

There's very little left in Gogama, but they took the time to come and talk to their MPP, to talk to me, because they have ideas for forestry that would help them get jobs. They also would like to be heard, but the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion, which means that the good people of Gogama won't have a chance to be heard.

They wanted to talk to me about the blended sales tax. They don't want anything to do with this. They don't want it. It is a tax that they feel is unfair and that comes at a bad time. They see it as an 8% tax grab from their government at a time when they're having a really tough time. Yet those people won't have an opportunity to be heard either.

From Gogama, I went more to the east end of my riding to a community called Skead. Skead is also a beautiful community. It is built on the shore of Lake Wahnapiatae. Lake Wahnapiatae is a beautiful lake. It's a great, big soup bowl about eight miles around, very, very deep and just beautiful. Anybody who's ever flown to Sudbury would have seen Lake Wahnapiatae because the airport was built just beside it. It was built near Skead.

The people of Skead also wanted to talk to me. A lot of them came and talked to me about MPAC, how their taxes had gone up and their wages didn't go up. Lots of people in Skead worked at the Xstrata Nickel mine, which has laid off people. So you're looking at people who have lost their jobs and seen, through MPAC, that their municipal taxes have gone up tremendously, but they also came to tell me that they oppose the blended sales tax. It is the wrong tax at the wrong time. They don't want anything to do with it. But here again, the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion. Those people won't have an opportunity to come and be heard by their government, to feel that their government listens to their concerns and can act on their behalf, because the government is shutting down the opportunity for people to address this House.

From Skead, I went to Garson. Garson is another lovely community in my riding. In Garson I had the pleasure to meet with daycare operators, who decided to come and see me. The daycare operators were really disappointed that child care was not mentioned in the budget bill, because it is something that brings a lot of anxiety to their workers. Early childhood educators don't make a lot of money. A lot of their salary is top-up allocations, but they're not base salary increases. They would have liked to have seen something in the government budget that would help them, but they didn't.

In Garson I also had a nice visit. I have this 90-year-old constituent. Actually, she couldn't come to see me because she didn't have a ride, so I went to see her. She's as sharp as anything, and she follows politics. Anyway, she's very up to date on all the subjects of the day. She wanted to talk to me because she wanted to make sure that I knew that she opposed this blended sales tax. She's on a fixed income. She has been retired for a long time. Actually, she lives on her husband's pension, and her husband passed away many years ago.

She wanted to make sure that I knew that she opposed the harmonized sales tax, the blended sales tax. She doesn't want anything to do with it. She still goes out and shops and she's still shrewd about how she spends her money. She certainly thinks that it's the wrong tax at the wrong time. I don't think that this particular constituent would have been able to be heard by this government, but certainly I'm happy to bring her questions forward.

After going to Garson, I went to Onaping Falls. Onaping Falls and Levack are on the north edge of my riding, on the way toward Timmins and Gogama. There are many, many mines located there in Levack. Vale Inco, FNX and Xstrata Nickel all have mines in that area. As most of the people in this House would know, FNX has shut down, which means that there is no more mining going on, and a lot of the people in those communities have been laid off. These are tough times for people in Onaping Falls and Levack.

They came and saw me and wanted to talk about access to mental health services, because it doesn't take long, after the bad news settles in and you lose your job and money problems start, that people need access to services. Access to mental health services for the people of Onaping and Levack is very hard to come by. They were looking to the government to see if there was something in there to help them, but it certainly was not there.

They also wanted to talk to me about this blended sales tax. The people who have lost their jobs, the people who live in Onaping Falls and Levack, don't want this harmonized sales tax. They don't want anything to do with it.

A lot of them have lots of time now that they're unemployed and would have liked to be heard by this government and would have liked to explain how personally this is going to affect them. But, as I said when I started, we are now debating a time allocation motion, which would mean that all of the good people in Onaping and Levack who would like their government to hear them, hear their complaints and hear how this blended sales tax is going to affect their day-to-day lives, won't have an opportunity do this because a time allocation motion has been put forward by this government that will basically shut down debate and take away this opportunity for all of those good people to be heard.

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I then went on to Dowling. Dowling is not far away from Onaping Falls, Levack—for anybody who knows their Ontario geography—and talked with the people in my riding who live in Dowling. In Dowling, there were a lot of issues regarding access to crown land. A lot of bush roads in and around my riding have been closed. They're now off limits for the local people, and they have been reserved for big outfitters that basically fly the tourists in. People in my riding have been accessing crown land for a long time for recreational activities, whether hiking, blueberry picking, fishing or hunting etc. This is very much a way of life in my riding. Well, those

people were worried because, as I said, a lot of crown land in that part of my riding is now off limits. The roads have been closed, and the people can't access it.

They came and talked to me about the blended sales tax. Like the people in Onaping Falls and Garson and Skead and Gogama and Mattagami and Foleyet, they think that it's the wrong thing to do at the wrong time.

Dowling also depends on mining. A lot of residents of Dowling worked or used to work for FNX, which is operating a mine in Levack. Well, they won't have an income coming in pretty soon when their employment insurance runs out, but some of the expenses will still be there. They won't have the money to pay for it. Not only will they not have the money to pay for it, but there will be an 8% tax added to those expenses. They think that it's the wrong tax at the wrong time, and they would like their government to listen to them. But here again, they won't have an opportunity to be heard, because the government put forward a time allocation motion that will shut down debate on the budget so that the good people in Ontario don't have an opportunity to be heard.

From Dowling, I went to Chelmsford. Chelmsford is getting closer and closer to—it is actually a part of the city of Greater Sudbury. It's a thriving community of about 18,000 or 19,000 people. The people there wanted to come and talk to their MPP. They talked to me about child care. A lot of the people there wanted to have access to child care. They're on a list of close to 2,000 people who are waiting to access child care in and around Sudbury, including the people of Chelmsford. They are worried that there was no money allocated to child care in the budget and wanted to talk to the government to let them know how important it is for them to have access to child care.

Some of them are registered with the Second Career program. Some of them are trying to get back to school, because, here again, in Chelmsford, a lot of people have been affected by the forestry layoffs and more recently by the mining layoffs. But they won't have an opportunity to be heard.

They wanted to talk to me about the insecurity of the early childhood educator who, here again, would have liked to see a little bit of stability in their life through something in the budget that would have been pertinent to them, but there was nothing. Those good people won't have an opportunity to be heard in this Legislature. They won't have an opportunity to come to committee, because the government decided to put forward a time allocation motion which will limit debate.

From Chelmsford, I went to Azilda. Azilda is another little community, very much francophone. It's part of the city of Greater Sudbury, but it's a little bit north of the downtown core. Here again, it's a beautiful community. Azilda is built on the shore of Whitewater Lake, and it's a very thriving, very active community. Lots of people wanted to come and meet with their MPP, and what they had to talk to me about was access to long-term care. There's good news on the horizon because there will be a new long-term-care home built close to Azilda, but in the

meantime, Sudbury and the people who depend on the hospital in Sudbury are having a hard time. Our hospital has over 120 people occupying beds that we call alternate level of care, which are basically people who are in the hospital right now but would be better cared for if they could be in a long-term-care bed or if they could be receiving home care.

The people of Azilda wanted this better care for their loved ones. They know that the hospital is not the best place for them. Some of them came and talked to me about their loved one being with them in their homes but being in need of more home care; the limited hours of home care that they could receive were not enough to meet their needs. Those were tough decisions for those families, to decide not to keep their loved ones at home anymore because they couldn't cope. But then, when they turned around and finally made this heart-wrenching decision to place their loved one in a long-term-care bed, they were told of a waiting list that is basically so long that if you're not an emergency case, then your chances of getting a long-term-care bed in Sudbury are next to nil. You have to wait until a crisis happens, until you're admitted into the hospital etc. They don't want their loved one to have to go through this, but unfortunately, they won't have a chance to be heard. They won't have a chance to come and participate in the debate because the government decided to put this time allocation motion forward.

The people of Azilda oppose the blended sales tax. It is the wrong tax at the wrong time. Like everywhere else in Sudbury, a lot of people in Azilda make a living working for the mines or for the industry that supports the mines. They all have heard the bad news last week that not only did Xstrata Nickel lay off 700 people and Vale Inco lay off 300 people, but now Vale Inco has announced a three-month shutdown of production, which means that 4,000 people will be without a job. A lot of those residents, a lot of those people affected, those workers who live in my riding, they see the blended sales tax, the harmonized sales tax, as something very hurtful, the wrong tax at the wrong time. They would like—

Mr. Jim Wilson: The hateful tax?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The hateful sales tax? Yes, maybe that's what the H stands for, "hateful." No, they didn't say this. They just said that it was a hateful tax, the wrong time to introduce this kind of hardship on people who are already having a tough time.

The next place I wanted to talk to you about is Estaire. Estaire is a little community that is in the south part of my riding coming out of Sudbury. You go down the infamous Highway 69 and you make it to Estaire.

In Estaire, the problem has been and continues to be access to a landfill site. When the government decided to do cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Minister of Natural Resources looked at his business and said that they were not in the landfill site business. Sounds good for that ministry to say this, but it doesn't seem that good for the people of Estaire, who had been relying on the landfill site of the MNR for as long as the community has been there. So the landfill site is now shut down. No

solution is in place as of yet, although we are working really, really hard on it, which means that right now those people have nowhere to bring their garbage. If you don't belong to the city of Greater Sudbury, you cannot use the landfill site in Sudbury, and if you don't belong to the municipality of French River, you cannot bring your garbage to that landfill site either. Those are the only two places where landfill sites are available, so those people are caught in the middle with garbage piling up in their backyards.

1630

I'm happy to say that I've seen my first bear. They are out in full force in northern Ontario right now. They are very skinny. They look like big dogs with fur coats on their backs because all of their fat has melted away and they're hungry. People in Estaire are really worried. They have no place to put their garbage but they have those bears that are waking up all over the place, looking for food. This is not a good combination. The hungry bears will be able to smell garbage. It doesn't matter if you put it in the shed; they'll go right through the window if they need to. They have sometimes come into the basements of people's homes, and the people of Estaire are worried about it. They looked at the budget, like everybody else, and saw that the Ministry of Natural Resources budget was basically flatlined, so they didn't see hope for them in there.

They oppose the blended sales tax. People in Estaire live in an unorganized area. Lots of them have precarious employment, and they are worried about an opportunity to be heard by their government and let them know what they thought about the harmonized or blended sales tax.

I realize that the time on the clock is running, and I wanted to leave a little bit of time for some of my colleagues, so those will be my remarks.

J'aimerais, avant de me taire, mentionner que la motion de limitation de la durée des débats qui a été mise de l'avant par le gouvernement est un affront aux gens de l'Ontario qui veulent être entendus par leur gouvernement. La nouvelle taxe de 8 % qui a été mise de l'avant par le gouvernement est quelque chose—je me suis promenée partout dans mon comté la semaine dernière, et partout où je suis allée, qu'on parle de Foleyet ou Mattagami, de Gogama, de Skead, de Garson, Onaping Falls, Dowling, Chelmsford, Azilda, les gens me parlaient de la nouvelle taxe. Ils n'en veulent pas, de cette taxe de 8 %, et ils pensent que c'est un mauvais moment pour introduire une nouvelle taxe. Ils auraient aimé être entendus. Ils auraient aimé que leur gouvernement prenne le temps de les entendre pour bien comprendre l'effet que cette nouvelle taxe va avoir sur leur vie à eux dans leurs circonstances à eux. Mais avec la motion de limitation de la durée des débats, ces gens-là n'auront pas une chance d'être entendus, et cela va à l'encontre de la démocratie.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate today.

You've heard from the opposite side of the House and you've heard quite a tale from over that side of the House, but let's just, for the record, set it straight today. I can tell you this: We did not have our budget at Magna. No, we didn't, not like the members from across the way. They forget that.

Now we see that there's an amendment on the table. What does that amendment say? "Why doesn't the finance committee travel throughout Ontario?" That's a really good idea. Do you know that in fact that has already happened? Do you know that the members from finance gave up a good part of their time to go to their constituencies just before Christmas? Those hard-working members went out there from community to community to hear the concerns of the people. They came back. They reported to the minister. That wasn't enough for the Minister of Finance. No, sir. He went out and he consulted with all the communities so he could hear the concerns. What we heard was, "It is time to transform." He understood that the day for business as usual is over.

We heard from the members from across the way, "You can't do it now; now's not a good time." I don't know when a good time is. But we heard the member from Nickel Belt. She gave us the opportunity to hear about a lot of her communities. The stories that she told—it hurts all of our members when we hear stories like that. But we understand from this side of the House that it's time we brought forward tax policy that reflects that we need to move Ontario forward with a very strong foundation. That's what this budget represents to me.

The Minister of Finance, the finance committee and also, as the member for Huron–Bruce, what I have done—I do this every year. My constituents can go on my website. They can provide information about what they would like to see in the budget. And they do that. Every year, they have the opportunity to do that. The people of Ontario have had their opportunity. What they told me was that it was time to make further investments. They understood that we needed to provide the stimulus. So we came forward with a package of \$32 billion. That represents jobs.

I say to the members from across the way, I find it absolutely fascinating to stand in this House to hear, when they talk about the health premium, "We're going to eliminate that"—a \$3-billion cut to health care, a \$3-billion cut.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It has been well known that that is inaccurate, and I would ask that the member withdraw that. There was never any intention—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That is not a point of order, but I appreciate the information. I return to the member for Huron–Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When we think about the health care that is needed in all of our communities, investments are required in order to ensure that it remain strong. We understand that. I know that the members from across the way also understand that because I've heard them ask questions about

when they're going to get this or when they're going to get that. So I know that they do. But I think they say one thing and do the opposite.

One of the opportunities that I have in my riding is agriculture. As you know, we are the breadbasket of Ontario when it comes to agriculture. My farmers ask, "What will the single tax do to me as a farmer?" I know that from across the way we're going to hear a different story than what Ontario Farmer has to say. And what does Ontario Farmer have to say about the single sales tax? I must say that I do have a comment. I don't think they're going to like this across the way, so get ready, because I think they're going to stand up. I want to speak to this specifically because I know there have been a number of press releases sent out by members from across the way.

This is John Parsons from Ontario Farmer. These are his comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Big John?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Yes. He says: "From a disingenuous press release:" The member for Oxford suggests that the "Minister of Agriculture is still trying to confirm the treatment of farm equipment. According to the release, 'there is a point of sale provincial retail exemption for farm equipment, farm tools and farm machinery that are to be used by a person engaged in the business of farming, as well as building supplies and materials used to build, repair or modernize structures exclusively for farm purposes. Farmers show their card'...."

So it was disingenuous that that wouldn't go forward. It's laid out in Ontario Farmer. The headline—and I know that we're not allowed to use props, but what does the headline say? "Farmers Aren't Losers Under HST."

I'll tell you, I had the opportunity to speak with one of my counties on Saturday for over four hours and we had the opportunity to talk about the single tax and what it means for the farming community. There were a number of questions about buying cars and if they pay tax on them. We all know the answer to that. They don't.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Exempt.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Exempt. And then there is a list.

So I say, when we go forward with the single tax, which is what we're debating today, there will be an understanding by the people as more information gets out. But I want to assure the people from my riding and the people who are listening today that 93% of the people will not be affected by moving towards the single tax. The federal government made an investment of \$4.3 billion in the province of Ontario. Those dollars were used to ensure that the people of Ontario would not be adversely affected by going forward and transforming our taxation system, which will allow for investments in our business community as well.

1640

One of the things that has always been a number-one ask from our business community is a harmonization of tax. We have come forward at this time because we know it's important to have a strong foundation when the

economy begins to turn around, so that Ontario will be able to grow, and grow at the rate that we expect of such a proud province.

I welcome the opportunity to enter the debate. I wouldn't be the member from Huron-Bruce if I didn't talk about the investment in infrastructure in this fiscal year in the riding of Huron-Bruce. That number was just over \$18 million from the last announcement, but this fiscal year, the past fiscal year alone, the Ontario portion for investment in infrastructure in the riding of Huron-Bruce is \$57 million.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Had I known this week when the member from Niagara Falls invited me to the Shaw Festival that Carol Mitchell, the member from Huron-Bruce, was actually going to be positioning herself to be the star performer there, I would have signed up for tickets, because that was quite a performance. That was quite a performance.

Let me tell you something. If she thinks talking about a budget that was deliberated on six years ago is relevant today, she's wrong, because since then Ontario has lost its economic standing in this nation—in this nation. We used to be the best economic performers in the country; we are not any more, sadly. We used to be the economic engine of the country. Do you want me to tell you how? Because 10 years ago this kid here came to this province to find a life—

Mr. David Zimmer: From where?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —from Nova Scotia, if my colleague opposite needs to know, a have-not province that also brought in something called the HST—because in Nova Scotia, when students graduate university, there aren't any jobs there. They used to come to Ontario because it was the land of opportunity, where they could create a life, so that they could have their own home, so that they could raise their own family, so that they could pay the bills.

I've watched this province go through a steady decline since Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals have taken office. We have seen them increase the deficit at unprecedented rates because public spending has become out of control. We've watched them double the debt. We have seen, in the short period of time that they've been elected, two of the most massive tax hikes this province has ever seen, including the health premium, which is actually a tax, and presently the HST.

I had a 20-minute speech that I wanted to deliver on the budget, on the impacts it would have on the constituents I represent, on the concerns they have been sharing with me since they learned that their taxes were going to be increased, since they learned that since their neighbour has lost a job, it's going to be that much more difficult for them to raise their families, pay the bills and do what they like to do on the weekend.

There are restaurants in my riding, like the Cock'n Bull over in Bells Corners, that have recession-buster menu items—sales. They're all doing these things be-

cause—and it's all restaurants. I want to ask the Liberals, have you seen your companies going out of business? Have you not had people in your communities—and I admit, Ottawa is more insulated from this recession than other places, but that hasn't stopped people from calling, asking me about tax amnesties for their severances. It hasn't stopped the Nortel employees from calling me, telling me they don't know what they're going to do. It hasn't stopped the people on ODSP who are saying, "I can't afford 8% more."

And you're over there, the Liberals, looking at us, talking about a Magna budget. Who cares? You know who cares? You do, and your people over there, your spin doctors, who are writing your speaking points and telling you what to say. Get a backbone.

There are people losing their jobs. Since you've taken office, over 300,000 people have lost their jobs. That's 300,000 moms and dads, 300,000 breadwinners, 300,000 people who are trying to pay a mortgage or send their kids to school or put food on the table. All you can talk about is the past? Get with the program. And the fact that you are rushing this through, through time allocation—you should be ashamed of yourselves.

These are unprecedented times. When you look at the United States, and you look at the era of hope that they had actually hoped that they would usher in, with Barack Obama talking to the folks on the other side of the aisle—when we look at what's happening in our federal Parliament, and what we went through as a nation when we were gripped with whether there was going to be a coalition or not—this is not the time to subvert democracy.

There are rules in this place that were established to prevent the tyranny of the majority from running roughshod over the minority. We have seen, in recent times, many of our colleagues in press gallery either leaving on reassignment or losing their jobs. This is not the time to subvert democracy and hide the province's finances from the very people that we have been sent here to represent.

I'm really ashamed of the Liberals right now. I know that, in this place, what we can do from time to time is talk about how we don't like your policies, and we can offer criticisms. But at this particular time—I really want you to see this, guys—I'm very disappointed, because there are people in my constituency who deserve better. There are people in all of your constituencies who deserve better.

You're getting the same e-mails that we are on the HST, on the Second Career strategy. You're getting the same e-mails that I am on your new tax and power grab that Minister Smitherman is bringing in. You're getting the same e-mails that I am. And it's a shame, because you're sticking the very people that we're sent here to protect with tax increases, with less friendly business environments to create jobs, and you're just sitting there, doing nothing about it.

You know what? You'll stand up here and you're going to tell us, I'm sure, with seven more speakers, how time allocation is a great thing. I just want to congratulate you for that, if you think so.

I think that today—in fact, I think it was yesterday—when you brought this time allocation in, will be the day that we all remember years from now as the one when this Liberal government let this province slip away, and when the Liberal Party will remember that they let their own government slip away.

I will mark those words in three years, when we come back into this chamber. You will be defeated. The province will not stand for it.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate today, if only to remind members of the McGuinty Liberal government about some of the things they used to talk about. Some of us actually do have memories of the promises made, although I suggest that the Liberals want to forget them all.

I remember when the Premier used to wax eloquent, talking about democracy and transparency and talking about wanting everything to be open to the people of Ontario. I want people to know: What the McGuinty Liberals are up to here today is they want to avoid democracy. They want to shut down democracy. They want to shut down debate on their own budget.

It is the antithesis of democracy that the McGuinty Liberals want to practise today. It is a government that doesn't want the people of Ontario to know what is in this budget. It's a government that is afraid to go out and face the people of Ontario and hold public hearings across this province on its budget. And do you know why? I think people at home deserve to know why.

1650

First of all—and forgive me, Speaker, if you've heard this rhetoric before—if you look at this budget, what is happening on the one side is that the McGuinty Liberals are going to cut corporate taxes, when you add it all up, to the tune of over \$3 billion. At the same time, people who've lost their jobs, people who are in danger of losing their pensions, people who have less income than ever before are going to be hit with a sales tax that is going to hit them over and over and over again on a daily basis, for many things that are essential for daily life. So here it is: Corporations, banks, insurance companies and oil companies that don't need a tax cut are going to get a very substantial tax cut from the McGuinty government. Meanwhile, people who are struggling just to pay the hydro bill now, people who are struggling to pay the heating bill, people who don't know if they're going to be able to hang onto their very homes are going to be hit with yet another tax.

We've seen this before. I remember Ronald Reagan, who said, "Cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes and we'll lead the United States to the promised land." Well, it didn't lead the United States to the promised land. Then there was George Bush, who has said over and over again for the last eight years, "Cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes, cut corporate taxes," and it would lead the United States to the promised land.

I say to members of the McGuinty Liberals: Go down to the United States and ask Americans if they feel like they're in the promised land today after all those corporate tax cuts.

But it's even closer to home. I remember when McGuinty Liberals used to castigate the very ground that Mike Harris walked upon, when Liberals used to say that when Mike Harris talked about cutting corporate taxes, cutting corporate taxes, cutting corporate taxes, this was going to lead Ontario into an economic disaster. Yet what do we see today? We see the McGuinty Liberals adopting Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Mike Harris right up to the eye levels. Mike Harris is rolling over laughing at the McGuinty Liberals because they have adopted his agenda hook, line and sinker.

But you know what? At least Mike Harris was honest about what he was doing. He would come right out and say it. The McGuinty Liberals want to pretend that somehow low-income people, modest-income people, middle-income people are going to get a tax cut out of this. Not a shred of truth to that, no matter how hard they try to announce it, no matter how hard they try to spin it, no matter how much they reannounce it. The fact of the matter is, this is a huge tax reduction for corporations, banks, insurance companies and oil companies that don't need it at the expense of ordinary people, many of whom still have a job but many of whom don't have a job anymore. This is a huge tax transfer, but this government doesn't even have the honesty to admit that, so therefore they're going to impose closure, ram it through the House and hope that unsuspecting Ontarians don't notice what's happening. Well, a little bit of social and economic history from Ontario: It didn't work for Mike Harris and it ain't gonna work for you, either. This is going to come back to bite you and bite you and bite you, time and time again.

I talked about how at least Mike Harris was honest. This outfit is going to try to mail out cheques just before this tax transfer going after the lowest- and modest-income people happens, and then they're going to mail out another cheque, hoping to cover it up. I don't know if you've ever had this happen, but you know these door-to-door electricity marketers who come around? The people who lie to you all the time but say, "If you'll sign this contract, I'll give you a \$50 cheque," and people sadly get sucked in by this. They sign the contract, they get the \$50 cheque and then they find out their hydro bill has tripled. Well, those door-to-door electricity marketers have nothing on the McGuinty Liberals. The McGuinty Liberals are going to send out three cheques to try to fool people, but at the end of the day, lower-income people, modest-income people, middle-income families, who are going to have less money, are going to end up paying more taxes under the McGuinty government.

I don't know, maybe the McGuinty Liberals have been hiding in their offices at Queen's Park. Maybe they don't know what's happening out there. But I can tell you what's happening. People can't even pay their hydro bills now, never mind add 8%. Many people can't pay their

heating bills now, never mind 8%. Many people are having a hard time paying at the pumps when they gas up their vehicle to go to work, never mind another 8%. A lot of people who just want to go have a cup of coffee and a muffin, to meet with their friends, to commiserate, can't afford the further 8%.

But you know who can afford it? I read what the banks are saying. They're saying, "Hey, it's been a tough year. We didn't rack up \$2 billion in profits this year. We only racked up \$1 billion." The corporate executives are saying, "Oh, gee, I didn't get my \$5-million bonus this year. I only got a \$3-million bonus." Gee, the head of Torstar just lost his job, and what did I see? He's going to get a \$4-million, \$5-million golden handshake? Under this government, these corporations, these characters, will be paying less taxes, but ordinary folks, many of whom are struggling right now, struggling to pay the hydro bill, struggling to pay the heating bill, struggling to put food on the table for their families—the McGuinty government is going to go after them with a vengeance, and they will pay every day. They will pay on the hydro bill. They will pay on the heating bill. They'll pay when they have to go to the gas pumps. They'll pay when they even want that cup of coffee. They'll pay when they take their kids to child care—over and over and over again.

I thought it was quite revealing: A former Minister of Finance, referring to 25 years ago when he looked at this kind of expansion of a sales tax, said that he turned away from it because it would be the most regressive and unfair expansion of taxation at the expense of low-, modest- and middle-income families ever. So he turned away from it. The McGuinty Liberals have endorsed it. Not only have they endorsed it, but they're going to use every trick they can, including mailing out some cheques to try to fool people; using closure here today to shut down debate, to confuse and hide from people what's really happening.

I have to tell you, it's not going to work, because we all know what's happening in Ontario. The layoffs have just started. There are going to be more layoffs in the auto sector. Because this government doesn't have a strategy for the forest sector, there are going to be more layoffs in the forest sector. There are going to be more layoffs in the steel sector. There are going to be more layoffs generally in the manufacturing sector. This is going to ripple and ripple through the economy. Economists are already saying that this is going to be even tougher a year from now. So at the very moment that you want to impose this unfair, regressive tax on low-, modest- and middle-income people, people will be facing more difficult circumstances than ever.

I'd merely say this: What's really wrong is that you're prepared today to trample on democracy to hide your tracks. You're prepared to deny democracy to hide your tracks. You're prepared to shut down democratic debate, which is what this Legislature is supposed to be about, in order to hide your tracks. You want to run and hide from the very people that you're going to tax and impose economic hardship on, and for that, you should all be

ashamed of yourselves, grossly ashamed of yourselves. If you're going to do this, you should at least face the people. You should at least have the courage to go out there and hold public hearings. If you think this is the right thing to do, then you should have the courage to say it to people. You should have the courage to say to a mother who is already struggling to pay for child care that she can afford to pay 8% more for child care. And to those pensioners who are trying to pay the heating bill and the hydro bill and maybe put gasoline in their cars, you should say that you believe that adding 8% to everything they have to do is fair and just in your minds. But you're not prepared to do that.

1700

I will make a prediction. Each and every one of you is going to regret this day and regret what you're doing here more than anything else the McGuinty Liberals have done. Not only is this the wrong thing to do—not only is it wrong to give corporate tax cuts to corporations who don't need them, not only is it wrong to then go after low-, modest- and middle-income families—but this is absolutely the wrong time to do it. Everyone knows that in a recession the private sector cuts back; private individuals cut back. They're afraid of losing their jobs, they're afraid of losing their pensions, they're afraid they might not be able to pay their mortgage, so they start cutting back. This is absolutely the wrong time to go after ordinary folks with a tax increase.

You know, I can't help but contrast what the Premier was saying only a few months ago. When hit with news of the recession, he said, "Everyone should go out and go shopping. That way you keep the economy moving." Tell me, how is it going to help people to keep the economy moving when you're going to hit them with another 8% tax, take 8% more out of their pockets every time they turn around? That is where you're caught. This is not going to help the economic recovery. This will make an economic recovery more difficult and more people will be hurt. This will come back to visit each and every one of you over and over again. You should be ashamed for imposing closure to try to hide from democracy and hide from the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to get a few words on the record this afternoon. I find it most interesting; I listened very carefully to the member from Kenora–Rainy River. I recall reading some of the columnists back in 1995, and it was always interesting to note that the Ontario Legislature virtually did not sit in 1995, which is really interesting. I just got a lecture about closure, about transparency, about the democratic process, and you know, every commentator would say that from 1990 to 1995, the member from Kenora–Rainy River was the number two man in that government. With every key issue, they went to the number two man in that government to give his stamp of approval. I'm sorry he didn't stay around to hear about his role as the number two man in that government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough I think knows full well that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of another member.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was just so—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I hope the same courtesy would be extended to him if he's absent. So I'll return to the member from Peterborough, having reminded him.

Mr. Jeff Leal: People talk about trying to rewrite history, and it always disturbs me when that attempt is made.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Talk about how he wanted to kill the subway.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, I could get on that. It was interesting too.

There's a letter floating around. I happen to have a copy of it. There was a suggestion by the third party that we actually raise the PST. That's kind of interesting too, because they railed against the whole notion of the concept of a consumption tax, but at that particular time—that was then, this is now—they were in favour of an increase in the PST. I also remember the great debate about the social contract, where every collective agreement in the public sector in the province of Ontario was ripped up, ripped to shreds. Were there any public hearings on the social contract? The answer is zero, none, nada, no public hearings on the social contract. I remember I was a city councillor in Peterborough at that time, and I talked to my friends in CUPE, which represented both the office workers and the public works workers at the city of Peterborough. They were most concerned that their contract was ripped to shreds. They wanted to have the opportunity to have public hearings in Peterborough so they could provide input to the government of the day—the number two man of the government of day—on why the social contract was wrong. But they never got that opportunity.

Now I want to fast-forward to 1997-98. I remember very well going to Ottawa for that famous AMO convention. There may be some members in this Legislature now who were at that famous meeting. Were you there, the member from Huron-Bruce?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Member from Sault Ste. Marie, were you at AMO?

Mr. David Oraziotti: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Sure. A lot of them were there.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I was there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Scarborough-Rouge River was there. That was a wonderful meeting. That was the meeting where we got the details of the Who Does What committee, that famous exercise. I always call it the "who got done in" committee. That was the greatest tax transfer to municipalities of the province of Ontario, and then ultimately to the property taxpayer of the province of Ontario. Were there public hearings on that little exercise?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I don't think so.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No—no public hearings at all. Holy smoke, no public hearings on the "who got done in" committee, which was an absolute travesty, because I recall there were many municipal politicians who would have gone to London for hearings, who would have gone to Wawa for hearings, who would have gone to Cobalt for hearings, who would have gone to Pembroke for hearings, who would have gone to Arnprior for hearings. But they never got that opportunity, because democracy wasn't in play at that particular time—no, no, no.

Last week was a wonderful week in the great constituency of Peterborough. I got a chance to talk to a lot of people. One of the questions I get asked is, "Why is the official opposition and why is the third party going to vote against accelerating the Ontario child benefit for those families that need it?" To fully implement that benefit in July of this year is going to be very, very important. I listened to the member from Nickel Belt. I've been to Garson, Ontario. I've got some friends in Garson, Ontario, and I can tell you that there are families in Garson, Ontario, that want the fully implemented Ontario child credit on July 1 of this year. I know they want it, they're looking forward to it, and they will put those dollars to great use.

I was also talking to my good friends at GE. Peterborough is the home of their nuclear products division. About 500 people are there, members of the Canadian Auto Workers: \$35 an hour plus benefits. They want to know why the third party won't support them to protect their jobs in the expansion of Darlington. They're asking that question, but they're also looking at provisions in this budget which lower GE's corporate tax, lower Quaker corporate tax to retain those export jobs that are so important in my riding of Peterborough.

I want to get on to this little one right here. It was Mr. Wilson who put forward this amendment. I look at all these tours: April 29 in Toronto, April 30 in Toronto, May 5—now that would be a good stop, because they're coming to Peterborough—May 6 in Belleville, May 7 to Cornwall, May 12 in Ottawa, May 13 in Guelph, May 14 in London, May 19 in Windsor, May 20 in beautiful Goderich, public hearings in North Bay. Well, I understand their leadership convention is towards the end of June, I believe. This, to me, looks like the leadership tour 2009. I can just imagine what members will be substituted on that committee as it's touring the province of Ontario. Now, I'm not a cynic, but I can tell you some of the names that will be on that committee as they go visit these wonderful and beautiful communities. I would guess that at some stage you'll see Mr. Hudak at one of those locations, and the next day you might see Mrs. Elliott at one of those locations, and the next day you might see Mr. Klees at one of those locations, and I know my good friend Mr. Hillier will be at at least four of those locations, because there's no question in my mind that he is the frontrunner over there and will be using taxpayers' dollars on committee to finance this leadership tour.

1710

I had a chance to participate in that recent by-election in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. What a wonderful

experience—the wonderful member Rick Johnson. Let's hear it for Rick coming in here.

What's really interesting, when I look at this House today—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What's Laurie doing now?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Laurie? Oh, she's doing a wonderful job in the Leader of the Opposition's office.

Wonderful parents. I knew her late father, Bill, very, very well. Her mother is still living in Kinmount, Ontario. They used to operate the grocery store, where I used to drop in every once in a while, in Kinmount—a wonderful family.

But let me tell you, I look across the aisle today—I didn't see too many of those members pounding on doors where I was in Apsley and Pontypool and all those great communities that make up that riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. Rick Johnson took the message to the people.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I didn't see that member at all on Main Street, Lindsay, when I was there, and I was there fairly frequently, because—well, I won't suggest any motives why they weren't there.

What I want to know is why, in a number of days, the opposition and third party will not be supporting \$4 billion in cash payments to 6.5 million Ontario families and individuals, why they won't support a new, permanent \$260 refundable sales tax credit for low- and middle-income adults and children, why they won't be here to support an enhanced refundable property tax credit to continue providing relief to low- and middle-income homeowners and tenants, and why they won't be here to support \$1.1 billion in personal income tax reductions.

I can tell that the research is very poor by the parties opposite because they haven't taken the time to look at this comprehensive budget. They're against spending \$32 billion on infrastructure renewal in Ontario. Every mayor, every reeve and every councillor I get a chance to chat with wants this money invested.

In fact, I want to get on the record that my good friend the federal member of Parliament for the riding of Peterborough, Mr. Del Mastro, sent out a press release about the Ontario budget, and what did he say? "This is a courageous budget that the Ontario government is bringing forward"—a "courageous budget." That's what Mr. Del Mastro said. He and I get along very well.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's right. We're looking at bringing that train to Peterborough together. We're starting with a GO bus this fall.

You have to look at the number of really progressive things that we're doing in this budget.

I had a chance to talk to a couple of seniors' groups last week, and they asked questions of me about the SST. They said, "We're hearing all about this SST." I said, "Just wait for a moment. Do you understand about the Ontario property tax credit that we're going to be providing?" "No; we haven't really heard about that part of the budget."

When you take the time to explain to our hard-working seniors in this province, the people who have built this province and who have built this democracy, and they're only hearing one side of the story, you take 10 or 15 minutes and sit down with this wonderful document, the Ontario budget, and explain to them how the permanent property tax credits are going to work to offset some of the downloading that was imposed on them in 1997-98, that under the direction of Minister Duncan and Minister Watson finally we're lifting that overwhelming burden that has been on municipalities since 1998 and we finally have a framework in place that is going to lift that, take those responsibilities away from municipalities and bring them back to the province where they belong and provide substantive relief to property taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say that it was pretty upsetting in this past hockey season that the Peterborough Petes didn't make the playoffs, but we're certainly looking forward to next season. Jeff Twohey, the general manager, will make some changes and make the team a little more competitive.

But I shouldn't get sidetracked from the budget. This is a comprehensive document, a kind of document that will put Ontario in a good position to start to grow as we move forward under the challenging economic circumstances we find ourselves in today.

It's interesting that the member from Whitby-Oshawa, a person I really like, who's running for the leadership of the official opposition, indicated in her opening statement that this isn't a recession that was brought about by the government of Ontario; that, indeed, this is a worldwide challenge we face. I think she was honest enough to recognize the particular economic challenges that we're facing.

It's fair to say that there will be a debate in this place about which policy directions we need to take and options we need to choose as we want to move forward and enhance growth. But I happen to think that this Ontario budget provides the foundation, on a go-forward basis, on how we can improve on Ontario's economy. I know that my businesses in Peterborough—GE, Quaker, Siemens, all the big companies—are really applauding us because we're going to take away some of those PST input costs that they were facing along the manufacturing process, to make their products more competitive, particularly in the export market that we need to develop to increase job opportunities here in Ontario.

I think I'm winding down here; I've got a few seconds left. I just wanted to give my thoughts on the bill today. This budget will put us in good shape.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the motion this afternoon.

I am quite amazed—I'm going to go back to the member for Huron-Bruce—that she brought up ancient history, as if that is relevant to the people of Ontario today, those who are losing their jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Then the member from Peterborough spoke at length and wanted to talk all about history and wanted to talk about the past. He didn't want to talk about today, and he didn't want to talk about the blended sales tax, because he's having some real problems in his own riding over that issue. He didn't want to talk about that, because he is one of those members of caucus who got blindsided.

While they were talking, and the Minister of Finance and the Premier are saying, "No, no, we're not really thinking about anything like that," the Minister of Finance is in Ottawa signing the papers on the blended sales tax, while the Liberal caucus was kept completely in the dark. The leadership of the party didn't even want their own members to know, because they were afraid of what the reaction would be. The reaction would have been, quite frankly, similar to what we're hearing across the province.

I'm going to get back to that blended McGuinty sales tax in a minute.

It's amazing how the Liberals can say one thing and then do a 180-degree turn, and somehow they get away with it. I don't know if it's because they have the complicity of the media or what.

I've got to give the member for Kenora–Rainy River a lot of credit, the former leader of the third party, and I certainly thank him for the contributions he's made to this Legislature over the years.

These guys over on the other side went on ad infinitum about how damaging tax cuts would be to Ontario's economy, because, you see, it didn't fit into their agenda of raising taxes. Dalton McGuinty came into power in 2003, promising that he would not raise taxes, and then he proceeded with the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history. So they kept going on continuously that tax cuts were bad, they were dangerous; in fact, they would inflict serious harm on Ontario's economy and send it into the tank.

We've been consistent. Our message has always been that if you leave more money in the hands of those who create wealth and employment in this province, that is exactly what will happen. They believe that only the government could deal with the issue of job creation and wealth creation. Well, they've been proven to be totally wrong, and now they've come around to our way of thinking.

But do they give us any credit for browbeating them over the course of almost six years in this House about how wrong they were? No. They chastise us for criticizing their budget, not because we're opposed to the tax cuts. In fact, you did that only because we pushed you.

1720

What we're against is when the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance stand up and say, "In our budget, 93% of Ontarians will have a tax reduction." I don't have the data, but I know, based on their record, that you can't believe it. But the one thing you can believe, and it is absolutely true, it is absolutely irrefutable, is that 100% of Ontarians will pay more tax under your Dalton McGuinty sales tax—100%. That's an absolute guarantee.

When I talk to people in my riding, they just shudder. They're almost begging, "Is there anything you can do to stop this?" I have said to them, "We are going to do everything we can between now and July 1, 2010, to get as much of this out and changed, because this government is not listening to the people." However, I have to also tell them that unless something completely historic and unprecedented goes on, these folks will still be the government in July 2010 and they will implement it and they will do as they wish because they have the majority and they don't care what it does to you.

Seniors are absolutely terrified of the effects that the McGuinty sales tax is going to have on them. If you live in your home and you heat with oil, natural gas or electricity, you can't turn off the heat. You can't be without the power. Do you know what? You can call up the cable company and you can say, "We can't afford the cable," but you can't be without those essentials, and in McGuinty's Ontario, you will be paying 8% more for every one of those absolutely necessary things. That is wrong when you're in an economy that has bled 300,000 jobs under your leadership and is expected to bleed more. What do you say to people who are losing their homes and in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario they'll pay 8% more for almost everything they consume?

Mr. Robert Bailey: And the government thinks it's okay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: And the government thinks it's okay. And yes, they talk about how some businesses are going to like it because there's an input tax credit and all of this kind of convoluted stuff that the average person on the street is not going to see. Is there an input tax credit for Ontario Hydro or the gas company or the gas you put in your trucks? I come from rural Ontario, as many of you people do, and 8% more is going to go into every tankful of gas that you absolutely need to get around in rural Ontario. You can't hop on the subway. The subway doesn't come by my door or anybody else's door in my riding, or most ridings in this province. They have to get into a vehicle of some kind and they have to burn gasoline, and that's going to be costing 8% more in McGuinty's Ontario.

Shamefully, if tragically or through natural causes or whatever you have to have a funeral in your family, you're going to pay 8% more for that funeral. Dalton McGuinty is going to get 8% out of you even if he has to take it out of the pockets of the last suit you ever put on. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, nothing is sacred.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Say it ain't so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That is absolutely right.

I haven't even got to the—I'm going to run out of time, my whip is telling me. I just want to read an e-mail from one of my local constituents. I'll have to put on my glasses here.

"Dear Mr. McGuinty:

"Please don't harmonize the PST with the GST. We cannot afford it! We are already stretched further than we can manage. I don't know how much more the Ontario taxpayer can bear. We have nothing left after all our bills

are paid. We don't live the 'high life.' After years of raising a handicapped child on a single income, it's really quite impossible to believe that now, taxes are going to be a whole lot higher. The \$1,000 bribe won't do much to help either.

"Please reconsider. It's tough out here in the real world."

I'm going to encourage each and every member of the Liberal caucus over there to get out to the real world and find out what's going on, because the people can't afford this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: It's a pleasure to speak to the motion this afternoon and have an opportunity to comment on the motion as well as the importance of this budget; probably the most important budget in the last six years, and it's time to get on with it. The opposition would like to sit here for days and days and days and debate stimulus funding, but we know that Ontarians are hurting and we need to move forward with this very important stimulus package. That's why we've taken a number of steps, and I know the opposition doesn't want to talk about that today. They don't want to talk about any of the contents of the budget and all of the benefits that are in the budget for Ontarians.

That's why we're also going to talk about what people are saying outside of the Ontario Legislature, because while members in this House will offer their opinions on it, I want to talk a little bit about what people are saying in the province of Ontario in the various communities, as well as what we're hearing in the media about the budget. It's obvious the opposition don't want to hear about that.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're getting the same e-mails we are.

Mr. David Oraziatti: We're not getting the same e-mails.

First of all, I think Ontarians are a bit confused about the position of the opposition, because quite frankly, we've heard individuals in the opposition say they support a single sales tax and a move to that tax, and we've also heard members say that the stimulus funding is too high. So I'd like to know what the opposition plan is. We haven't heard anything. We've heard a lot of blustering about the budget right now, but we've heard nothing in terms of what their plan is, what their option is. Let's make that clear, first of all.

The NDP, we know, are going to vote against the budget as well, yet we'll hear members in the Legislature stand in this House and say, "Where's the funding for my project? Where's the funding for my community initiative?"—just as members in the Conservative Party will say. So while you don't support the budget and you don't support the stimulus initiatives, it will be another week or two before you're in the Legislature here talking about how important it is to get this stimulus funding out the door to your community for your project. I think it's fair that Ontarians understand the position of the opposition parties here in the Legislature, that they will

say time and time again that we are not spending enough money, and then on the other hand vote against the budget because it's too much spending or what have you.

We're not going to be passing anything like the social contract. This is not a Magna budget. We're doing the budget in the Ontario Legislature, just as we have done over the last number of years.

I want to talk a little bit about the benefits of the budget, because only the opposition party believes that the global recession began at Queen's Park. We know that it's our job during these challenging times to make the tough decisions to ensure that we protect important public services, to make decisions that support families and that also get our economy moving again. So let's spend a little bit of time talking about some of those things.

We're proposing to accelerate the Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100 annually. This means that an average family will see from \$50 to \$92 per month, an increase that the opposition is voting against. I'm very disappointed about that. We're also going to be investing \$1.9 billion in new money in our health care system and creating an additional 100 new medical school spaces, something that we're continuing to work toward. We have added a 23% increase in physician supply over the last number of years, something that both opposition parties had very, very poor records on.

And \$1.2 billion is being allocated to renovate 50,000 social housing units and build 4,500 new affordable housing units; \$5 million annually to ensure stable funding for municipal rent banks across Ontario that have, to date, prevented the eviction of about 15,000 people in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk a little bit about our seniors' property tax grant. The homeowners' property tax grant will be increased from \$250 to \$500. That's a \$1-billion increase over the next five years.

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As well, there will be \$900 million in increased funding to our education system, as well as increasing the social assistance rates by 2% and increasing the temporary assistance and assistance for children with severe disabilities, as well as those in long-term-care homes who receive an additional allowance. Since 2003, it has meant a 33% increase for a single parent with two children under the age of 18. That is a real difference and a real impact on Ontario families in this province, something that the opposition parties fail to recognize and fail to support.

As members know, in the House on March 31, we also increased the minimum wage to \$9.50. That's the sixth increase since 2003. In this sector of support, there are a variety of individuals in the public who have made very, very positive comments about it.

Pat Capponi, from the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, has said, "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

John Stapleton from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said, "This is a budget that favours low-

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

Gail Nyberg from the Daily Bread Food Bank said that if you're a low-income Ontarian, this is a positive budget. She said, “I congratulate the government on recognizing that you can fight poverty and stimulate the economic scene at the same time.”

This is something that the opposition parties fail to recognize. Again, I have yet to hear a plan on moving forward. They're the only individuals who believe the global recession began here at Queen's Park. But we have a plan: a plan to move forward for families, a plan to stimulate the economy, a plan to create investment in the province of Ontario.

Let's talk about the infrastructure stimulus funding that I know the opposition members will be interested to hear about. They'll be standing in the House, in the Legislature, asking where the funding is for this project and that project in their riding—“When is it coming? Why isn't it coming soon enough?”—after they vote against the budget.

We're going to be investing \$34 billion over the next two years to stimulate the economy—\$32.5 billion of that is in infrastructure spending; \$700 million for additional funding for skills training—and let's be clear that only \$5 billion of that is from the federal government. This is going to create 300,000 jobs over the next two years to support Ontario families and improve their range of skills and trades. These investments in infrastructure provide jobs in the short term and help build the foundations for tomorrow in the province of Ontario.

We're also going to be investing \$9 billion for transportation, including \$300 million for northern and rural infrastructure funding; \$7 billion, additionally, for health care; and \$2 billion to implement electronic patient records. The list is lengthy.

There's \$4 billion for education, including \$780 million to modernize infrastructure at our colleges and our universities. We know that investing in the skills and training of the people of Ontario is a very good investment in uncertain economic times. That funding is being matched by the federal government. As well, we're going to be investing \$90 million for the youth summer employment opportunities that will help to create 100,000 opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

There are many individuals in this sector of our economy who have made positive comments.

Paul Genest, president of the Council of Ontario Universities, said, “These investments in new construction and campus renewal will provide our students and faculty with many of the modern facilities needed for a high-quality learning experience and cutting-edge research.”

Jenn Howarth, president of the College Student Alliance, said, “Students applaud the provincial government for recognizing the needs and role of colleges in Ontario.”

The building trades council also provided very, very positive feedback.

When it comes to the green economy and innovation, we're also making a \$390-million investment to develop initiatives to assist in the implementation of the proposed Green Energy and Green Economy Act. We know that there are many jobs to be had in this sector as we move forward in the province of Ontario, and we would be remiss if we were not making investments in this sector—something, again, that I'll remind members of the House that the opposition parties will be voting against. This is not the kind of proactive approach that Ontarians would like to see in getting our economy moving and supporting families.

If passed, this is going to create thousands of new jobs in the future. We're also going to be investing \$250 million over the next five years for new, emerging technologies that will also assist in moving our economy forward.

Tax reform has been talked about by my colleagues. The investments that we're making, the fact that 93% of Ontarians will see a reduction in their tax, the fact that \$500 million in costs to our businesses in Ontario will be eliminated, simply a drag on the economy, by moving to a single filing of tax for the business sector, is going to be a tremendous benefit.

In my community, people have been responding very positively. The Sault Area Hospital CEO was very positive; Dr. Ross, the president of Algoma University; our mayor made positive comments; the CAO made positive comments as well.

The headlines in our paper were positive. The Sault Star headline following the budget was “Liberal Budget Gets Top Marks.” The chamber of commerce put out an article that said, “Harmonized Sales Tax—We Love It!” Take a look at other headlines across the province. In the Ottawa Citizen there was a headline that said, “Kudos for a Budget We Needed.”

Folks, this is a positive step forward. We need to support the budget, and I would encourage members on all sides of the House to support the budget.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have eight minutes because of the time allocation motion. Given that I don't have the time to really explore this as fully as I would have liked, I'd like to begin with a bit of a guessing game.

I'll ask members if they can identify the person I'm quoting. “Am I the only one here who wonders whether it's all worth it, whether with this government and the way they go on, with their closure and time allocations, the role of this place is being diminished to such a great extent that backbenchers and opposition members must really ask themselves what their role is?” Who said that? The answer is the current Deputy Premier, on December 21, 1999, in opposition. That's who. And if you—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: That was then and this is now.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That was then and this is now. That's correct, and that part hasn't changed. Don't you

complain about time allocation motions and don't you complain about the role of the government backbenchers, all of that stuff, and then take government and enforce this on us. This is a disgrace.

I was here this morning in question period, as were the government members. I watched question period as a backbencher myself. I listened as everybody on this side—and I'm sure that in their minds, some of the backbenchers themselves wondered what had happened to democracy.

As I said earlier, in response to a member's debate from the other side, it's quite remarkable, the queue of e-mails and letters that come into an MPP's office when constituents aren't happy. I wonder if the government members, particularly in the backbench, actually believe that negative e-mails, complaining about the DST, come only to Conservatives and NDP members. It can't be possible. The problem is that they've all drunk the Kool-Aid—no hearings, no consultations, no time to debate.

We hear about the global recession: "The global recession caused all this." It's like, "The devil made me do it." The global recession caused it. You know, there is a global recession. It has affected all of us; there is no doubt of that. But if anybody cares to check Hansard for a period of years—and I'm talking about years, going back to 2003, when that government got hold of this province—this side was telling you what would happen, was warning of gathering storm clouds, but you weren't listening. You weren't listening then, you're not listening now and you won't be listening after the global recession is gone and this province, this wonderful Ontario that all 107 of us in this chamber enjoy, is being torn asunder by the actions of that government.

True to form, in the shadows of the Legislature, the McGuinty Liberals are trying to shut down debate and public hearings on this year's budget. Why won't you take this to the people? Why won't you ask people what they believe?

I don't for a moment buy the fact that backbench members had a say in this. I don't for a moment buy the fact that backbench members don't know what they're going to face in 2011 as a result of this.

1740

This is Act I. We are here debating this today. We must remember that this budget addresses a number of things, and one of the things it addresses is an 8% additional tax on Ontarians that doesn't come into effect in this budget year. It only comes into effect next year. So act one comes to a close because of the time allocation motion, and this will go away for a while. Trust me, we'll keep it alive, and then next year, when the merged sales tax, the blended sales tax, the BST, the DST, whatever you want to call it, comes into force and people are forced to pay that on their heating oil, on their Tim Hortons, on their funerals, on that long list of things that it doesn't apply to now, this will come back and haunt you—Act II.

The government is trying to hide the damaging effects of its own economic policies on Ontario families, on

Ontario businesses, on Ontario seniors most of all, 22,000 of whom are sitting on wait lists for an average of about 110 days. Take a stick and poke their eye out, why don't you? How much more can you hurt them?

This government is allowing five hours' debate on a \$108-billion budget, and that debate is the only discussion under the aegis of this Legislative Assembly that will be held at all—only here, only in this chamber, only now, only in Toronto.

Our party is calling for an amendment that would allow additional hearings in communities around this province so that Ontarians can voice their concerns about Dalton's latest tax grab and other economic issues. Why are you so afraid of that? I hear the hooting on the other side. What scares you so much? Don't you want to hear from real Ontarians? Thirteen million out there are hurting right now—hurting—without any help from you, and now you impose this on them.

Will Liberal MPPs be permitted to vote freely and stand up for their constituents? For all the noise that I'm hearing coming from the other side, I am sure there are some silent members here today and not here now who, when this comes for a vote, will question their consciences but will wind up going along with the government because they've been told to do so, even though they know that the hundreds of interventions coming into their offices from their constituents are saying, "Please help us." You know, backbenchers. You know because you have the same e-mails and you have the same letters that I do.

I went into the budget lock-up myself on March 26 because I thought it would bring back my old days, the days when I went into lock-ups and made my own notes as a reporter, read the material. It's very interesting, when you go into the lock-up, you can't leave, so you eat the lousy lunch and you come to your own conclusions. And you know what? I did not have to be an ex-reporter or an opposition MPP to see that we are in a great deal of trouble—not the kind that I knew we were in, but the new kind that this budget would be creating. The budget did not adequately address reality. The McGuinty government is in trouble. It reflects the fact that Ontario is in trouble. Every single person in this province is in trouble as a result of what you people are going to pass, and you're going to pass it without giving them a chance.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to this motion.

I want to use my time to talk about the future. This budget is about building a strong future for the province of Ontario. This budget is about building a prosperous Ontario, an Ontario that is caring, that is compassionate and that is competitive. This budget is about making sure that when this global recession is over, Ontario is in front, that Ontario has the capacity—and when we're talking about Ontario, we're talking about people in Ontario. When we're talking about businesses in Ontario, we are really talking about people in Ontario. We are

talking about jobs for Ontarians. This budget is about making sure that we retain our global leadership; that we are a society, a community, which is envied by the world. That is why so many people want to choose Ontario as their home, and that's what this budget is trying to do. That is, I believe, what we all collectively want to do: to make sure that we create a strong Ontario, and that's why in this budget we have taken steps to make that happen.

That is why I support this budget. That is why I want to make sure that we pass this budget as soon as we can so we can start investing in our communities, so that we can start taking the \$32.5 billion assigned in this budget to create roads, bridges, community centres, hockey rinks, so that those monies flow to our communities and we can start building those real community hubs, so that we can start creating those jobs because people will be involved in building the infrastructure, these buildings.

In my community alone in Ottawa Centre, we want access to these funds to build a Chinatown gate at Somerset and Bronson. We need these funds to build a children's centre so that more families have access to quality child care. We need these funds to renovate the YMCA in my riding to ensure that families have a good place to go and get recreational services.

We need these funds to make sure that we can continue to invest in Carleton University in my riding of Ottawa Centre so that students continue to have a quality education. That is what this budget is about. That's what we need to invest in.

The \$1.2 billion that is being allocated in this budget for affordable housing is integral to my community in Ottawa Centre. When I'm out in my community, when I'm going to various buildings which are run by Ottawa Community Housing, when I'm talking to people who live in these buildings, one thing I get told again and again is that we need to invest more to increase the quality of these buildings. These are not the kinds of conditions people should be living in. I'm very proud that in this budget we are putting real dollars forward to make sure the elevators in those buildings are working, that the units in those buildings are good quality, that they're energy efficient. We are not only upgrading the existing affordable housing in Ottawa Centre; we're building new affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities.

This is what this budget is about. That is why we need to pass this budget, so that communities like mine in Ottawa can get the necessary funding to help real people who need that affordable living, to ensure that children in working families can see the increase in their Ontario child benefit from \$600 to \$1,100. I have talked to many parents in my community, in my riding, and they are very excited that they will see this increase as of this summer if this budget passes. That is going to make a real difference because it gives them that extra money that is necessary to spend on their children. That's what parents live for, to make sure their kids have a better life, and we have an opportunity to help those parents. By passing this budget, that's exactly what we're doing, because our

future lies in our children. We are trying to make sure that our children have a prosperous and vibrant future in this great province of ours.

That is why I urge all members to come together to make sure that this budget is passed so that all of our communities can get the benefit they deserve and that we grow in the future.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm of two minds speaking to this budget because it's unfortunate that we have to stand up and yet again talk about the insensitivity and disrespect that this government has for the people of Ontario.

Clearly, the McGuinty government has become worried—yes, worried—about the impact of this budget and what impact it may have on future successes. That's why this debate is being collapsed early, because we don't want to hear what the people of Ontario are saying. So if I sat on the McGuinty backbench, I would not be very pleased that my chance to represent my constituents was being taken away from me. Perhaps that's exactly why the Premier is doing this: so that they aren't forced to hear any dissenting opinions from their own ranks.

1750

Our Premier should be fairly accustomed to dealing with angry, disappointed taxpayers. Mr. McGuinty promised not to raise taxes, not one red cent more than when he took office, and he did that during the 2003 election campaign. As soon as he was installed as Premier, he levelled the single-largest tax increase in the province of Ontario, and he dared call it a health premium—a premium.

After levying that enormous tax and raking in the cash, you still went hat in hand to Ottawa and pleaded poverty. Where did that money go? Where did that \$12.2 billion you levied through the health tax go? Where is that money? I think that before you dig deeper into the pockets of overburdened taxpayers, before anybody gives you more money, they deserve to know how that money has been spent.

Inside your budget document is a telltale sign that all is not what it appears to be. The revenues you are expecting for 2009-10 are approximately \$96 billion—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry to interrupt the member for Burlington, but I can hardly hear her. I would ask the government members in particular to please come to order and allow the member for Burlington to make her comments.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Well, they don't want to hear it because it isn't information they want to know.

That figure jumps from \$96 billion in 2009-10 to \$104 billion in 2011-12. Well, you do the math.

So, let's get this straight: The McGuinty government needs to levy yet another oppressive tax on the people of this province because they need the money, and yet, in tough economic times, when we are losing manufactur-

ing jobs to more businesses in friendly provinces in Canada, the McGuinty government is expecting to see a 7% growth in revenue the year that the Dalton sales tax comes into effect—astounding. So not only are Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Duncan, in their infinite wisdom, saddling future generations with this astronomical debt load, they are projecting to reap in big bucks in—guess what?—an election year. What a shocker.

The people of Ontario don't want you to try to bribe them with their own money—and that's what you're doing. They want to be able to afford to live in this province till 2011.

What this cash injection tells me is that the McGuinty government is expecting to generate far more revenue through the Dalton sales tax than they are willing to let on.

The McGuinty government's recent budget fails to provide Ontario families and communities with the assistance they need to get through this crisis.

Businesses need help to be competitive. Ontario isn't losing jobs to China and Mexico; we're losing jobs to companies in Saskatchewan. Western provinces are holding job fairs in downtown Toronto. That's where companies that used to surround the GTA have gone: to Saskatchewan. Our staff is being hired away. The business community cannot take another blow. They need real action and real support.

We cut taxes when our party was in power. We invested in infrastructure when our party was in power. We paid down the debt when our party was in power. We reduced regulations when our party was in power—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll ask the government members to come to order, please, so that I can hear the member for Burlington.

The member for Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: —and we let Ontarians keep more of their money. We had record employment figures. We were leading the G7 nations in GDP growth, and we were proud to be the economic engine of Canada.

What do we see now? We see that Mr. McGuinty has managed to reverse all of those successes and bring this province to its knees. In fact, you have brought us back to where Bob Rae left Ontario's coffers when we took over the—

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Liberal Premier—when we took over the reins of government.

We are spending \$1 million an hour more than we're taking in. Let me put that into a household perspective. Imagine if your business or your family budget spent even \$10 more an hour than you take in; that's \$240 more a day. That's \$87,360 more a year that you would owe above your income. None of us could afford that. This province can't afford that.

I would like to remind the Deputy Premier, Minister Smitherman, of his previous support for travelling committees, because this government has decided not to travel. We don't want to hear what the people have to

say. We just want to vote and keep moving. The minister said, "I remember a different day, and I'm a reasonably young man, when I worked for a different Premier, one who used public hearings and committee meetings, where travel meant something, where members travelled, where they went around the province and sought input, where amendments were brought forward."

That was democracy. What's happening in this House now is not democracy.

There is nothing in this budget for families or seniors, and they can't even speak to you about it.

You are getting the same e-mails that this side of the House is getting because they're truncated, and we know who they're going to. They're going to all of you also. So to say that you don't know what ordinary Ontarians are saying is not forthright.

They have to find daycare spaces because full-day kindergarten is not in the budget as promised. That's yet another promise that's been broken. Families now have to find daycare spaces that have been given away because they have been planning on full-day kindergarten.

There is no consistency with this government. There never has been and there never will be.

No doubt members opposite are not interested in hearing from working families because then, perhaps, you may have to vote against the government budget. Perhaps that's why you're not having the hearings. That's why you don't want to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time allocated for debate on this motion has now expired.

We will first deal with the amendment to the motion that was moved by Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson moved that the motion moved by the government House leader on April 21, 2009, be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, by adding, "The bill shall be debated for a further eight hours, after which" after the phrase, "when the bill is next called as a government order;" and

By deleting the third paragraph and replacing it with, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet as follows:

"—on Wednesday, April 29, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009"—

Mr. Mike Colle: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Dispense? I heard a no.

"—on Thursday, April 30, 2009, in Toronto; and

"—on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, in Peterborough; and

"—on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, in Belleville; and

"—on Thursday, May 7, 2009, in Cornwall; and

"—on Tuesday, May 12, 2009, in Ottawa; and

"—on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, in Guelph; and

"—on Thursday, May 14, 2009, in London; and

"—on Tuesday, May 19, 2009, in Windsor; and

"—on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, in Goderich; and

"—on Thursday May 21, 2009, in North Bay

"for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and on May 25 and 26, 2009, during its regular meeting times for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and" and

In the fourth paragraph, by deleting “Monday, May 11, 2009” and replacing it with “Wednesday, May 20, 2009” and by deleting “Thursday, May 14, 2009” and replacing it with “Thursday, May 28, 2009”; and

In the fifth paragraph, by deleting “Monday, May 25, 2009” and replacing it with “Wednesday, June 3, 2009”; and

In the seventh paragraph, by deleting “65 minutes” and replacing it with “10 hours.”

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

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1800 to 1810.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Wilson has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 116.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Marchese, Rosario	Savoline, Joyce
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael	Yakabuski, John
MacLeod, Lisa	Runciman, Robert W.	

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

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoy, Pat	Moridi, Reza

Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Pendergast, Leeanna
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Pupatello, Sandra
Carroll, Aileen	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 44.

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

We will now deal with the main motion. Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 116. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

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

**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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