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Monday 4 May 2009

Lundi 4 mai 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 May 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mai 2009

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to introduce some special guests we have in the House today, some of the finest researchers in our province. We're joined today by Dr. Barry Saville, from Trent; Dr. Christian Burks, from the Ontario Genomics Institute; Dr. Lou Siminovich, from the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute; Dr. Janet Rossant, from Sick Kids; Dr. Mick Bhatia, from McMaster. We also have Dr. John Dick and Dr. Gordon Keller, from Toronto; as well as Dr. Steven Rothstein, from Guelph; Dr. Molly Shoichet, from U of T; and my deputy minister, George Ross. I hope all members would welcome them to the House.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House Paul Norris, who is from the township of Nipissing. His son Dr. Trevor Norris will be with us shortly. They are here in support of the Commanda Community Centre, and we appreciate their being here. We'll be having lunch today and a tour of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Huron-Bruce and page Corey Davidson, I'd like to welcome his mother, Tammy Davidson, his grandmother, Beatie Rau, and his grandfather, Mik Rau, sitting in the east members' gallery today. Welcome.

Hon. John Wilkinson: We've also been joined by Dr. Tom Hudson, who is the CEO and chief science officer of the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. Welcome, Tom.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Speaker: I ask unanimous consent for the members of the Legislature to wear the green ribbon denoting Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, which began yesterday.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. This morning we heard the real story confirming

what the Progressive Conservative caucus and working people of this province have been concerned about since the Minister of Finance leaked information prior to his record-breaking deficit budget. The new McGuinty sales tax is a revenue-grabbing, job-killing, middle-class-punishing tax.

"New Tax Threatens 21,000 Construction Jobs." That's the headline from the Building Industry and Land Development Association's press release this morning. Their report on the new McGuinty sales tax can be summed up by their view that it is "as unfair as it is contradictory."

Premier, is the report they brought forward wrong, and if not, what measures are you prepared to take to make sure that your massive tax hike isn't going to hurt consumers and hurt the housing industry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I have not had time to review the report. I look forward to taking a look at it; it obviously presents a very interesting perspective on this. We have a slightly different one.

Just to introduce more numbers into this without unduly confusing Ontarians, in 2008, 257,000 homes were sold in Ontario, and 3% of those, or 8,400, would have been subject to the full single sales tax in Ontario. Three per cent cost \$500,000 or more and were newly built. What we are doing is protecting 97% of Ontario home purchases. We think that's fair.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Well, the Premier should read that report, because it puts the lie to some of those statistics, especially in terms of the GTA.

This is a third-party report from an organization that is a leader in the building and renovation industry, as well as in consumer protection. They contend that your whopping sales tax increase "cannot avoid having negative repercussions on the demand for new homes..." The report points out that your new tax will "ultimately result in less new residential construction, less contractor renovation spending and a shift to renovations ... done through the underground economy." The report also indicates that even a slight decline in construction equates to as many as 21,200 lost construction jobs.

Premier, what guarantees can you give concerned Ontarians, going forward, that job losses will not result from your new sales tax?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's important to understand that we've chosen to help the 97% of families who buy either resale homes or new homes under half a million dollars.

I think it's important to take a look at the experience they had in the Atlantic provinces when they brought in their single sales tax: Nova Scotia saw a 16% increase in home sales over three years; New Brunswick saw a 12% increase in home sales over three years. We appreciate the great work that is done by our new home builders in the province of Ontario, but I think they understand, as do Ontarians, that the package of tax reforms that we put in place is absolutely essential and that we're being as fair as we possibly can as we move forward with that.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier cites other jurisdictions, but he himself says that Ontario is facing the greatest economic challenges it has faced in 80 years.

We have major leaders in the home building, renovation, sale and resale industries that are rightfully concerned about the implications of this new tax. The Ontario Home Builders' Association says that the residential construction industry provides some 368,000 Ontario jobs and contributes \$38 billion to the Ontario economy. The Ontario Real Estate Association—their industry provides 110,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Premier, your new tax is a full-bore attack on Ontarians who work in and depend on these industries. Will you listen to their concerns, pay heed to your words of a year ago and admit this is the wrong time to move forward with an ill-advised plan to, yet again, increase taxes on already struggling Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to remind my honourable colleague, as he well knows, the package of tax reforms that we're putting in place will cost the Ontario treasury money. I think he knows that, and he has had the opportunity to verify that.

As well, I think Ontarians need to understand that we're doing something that needs to be done, and we're being as fair as we possibly can in every single sector. This protects 97% of Ontario family home purchases. Only 3% are going to be subject to the full single sales tax; that's for new homes valued at over \$500,000—over half a million dollars.

Finally, if the leader of the official opposition represents a party that is so violently and viscerally opposed to our new single sales tax, you would think they might commit to undoing it, should they ever earn the privilege of serving Ontarians. The fact of the matter is, they're going to keep this because they know it's the right thing to do.

1040

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We'll make our commitments at the appropriate time, and it won't be on the advice of the Premier, the current leader of the Liberal Party.

My question is back to the Premier. This afternoon, MPPs will be debating a Conservative motion regarding the McGuinty sales tax, a tax that will have massively

negative effects on Ontarians looking to sell, purchase or even rent a home. The new sales tax will hit Ontarians renovating their homes, including installing energy-efficient windows, furnaces or insulation; repairing the roof; adding a room for a senior to live in; and painting a child's bedroom. Those are just a few of the extensive list of items the Premier's new tax will hit.

Can you explain why you are bringing forward massive taxes on the building, renovation and real estate industries, knowing that they are a pillar of the economy and one of the keys to getting Ontario out of recession?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You may recall that my honourable colleague has, on several occasions, quoted to me Roger Martin, who is the dean of the Rotman School of Management and the chair of the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity. This was his reaction to our budget: "The recent Ontario budget represents an exceedingly important step forward with its bold tax measures that will benefit all Ontarians. Businesses, consumers and families should be delighted with the leadership this government has shown." Again, that comes from Roger Martin, a figure of authority quoted on several occasions by my honourable colleague.

Our budget has also been supported by the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, the chamber of commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the public school boards, the College Student Alliance; I could go on and on and on. There is broad—

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is that the Premier has been all over the map on this issue. Not that long ago, Premier, you said that you'd have to be crazy to raise taxes in a recession. You added that even the NDP wouldn't do that. It's exactly what you are doing now, with your record-breaking sales tax increase on things like real estate services, legal fees, closing costs and moving costs. We agree with your earlier view, Premier: This is the wrong time to be implementing what is being referred to by major industry leaders, including the Building Industry and Land Development Association, as a job-killing policy.

Premier, are you telling us the experts are wrong, misguided and don't know what they're talking about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just quoted Roger Martin, an expert who has been cited on several occasions by my honourable colleague, and I quoted from a number of other organizations that have an interest in strengthening the economy.

The fact of the matter is we're bringing a balanced approach to the people's future through our budget. We are reducing corporate income taxes and, at the same time we're increasing the Ontario child benefit. We're reducing the small business corporate tax rate, and at the same time we're increasing the minimum wage. We're eliminating the small business clawback, and at the same time we're reducing income taxes on the lowest-income earners to the lowest level in Canada. What's more, we

continue to invest in affordable housing, in health care, education, post-secondary education and research and innovation. It is a balanced approach that is designed, in the long term, to improve prosperity, create jobs and make of us a continuing, caring society.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think it's fair to say there's growing opposition to the latest McGuinty tax grab, despite your attempts to suggest otherwise. I just want to give you a few quotes, Premier. The Ontario Real Estate Association said, "A harmonized sales tax is yet another cash grab on Ontario's already overtaxed homeowners." Hugh Heron, of Heathwood Homes, said, "This is a bad deal for us. This is a tax grab." The London Home Builders' Association said, "We lobby against any increases in taxes that unfairly raise the price of a new home or renovations and jeopardize ... jobs."

Premier, why are you ignoring the concerns of industries and professionals committed to advocating on behalf of consumers? In effect, what you're doing is giving them the back of your hand.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say again why it is that the official opposition will keep this new tax in place. They are violently and viscerally opposed to it, but they do not intend to repeal it, and let me tell you why that is. It's because we've been very determined to put this in place in the fairest way possible: 97% of Ontario families who buy either resale homes or new homes under \$500,000 will not be affected by this tax.

I think that the leader of the official opposition in his heart of hearts understands that at this particular time, in the face of such a tremendous economic challenge, we're called upon to provide leadership. Inaction is not an option. We are moving forward. We're doing something which we know is absolutely essential to strengthening our economy and making sure we have the capacity to continue to support good schools, good health care and good investment in research and innovation, for example. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to move forward with. He knows that. Unfortunately, he doesn't have the courage—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. The leader of the third party.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. It's becoming increasingly clear that this Premier's HST tax grab is anti-jobs and anti-growth. Today, the Building Industry and Land Development Association has issued a report which says that the HST tax grab threatens 21,200 construction jobs and will cost new homebuyers at least \$800 million.

How much more evidence does this Premier need before he does the right thing and reverses course on the HST tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's worth hearing from the Provincial Building and Construction Trades

Council of Ontario in their reaction to our budget. They said, "This unprecedented investment in our infrastructure will not only help Ontario's competitive position but will create jobs and sustain employment in the construction industry.... The government is investing in our future at a time that the construction industry has the capacity to meet the demand. The creation of these construction jobs will allow the industry to be better prepared when the economy turns around. There is no better time to make these kinds of investments." The fact of the matter is our budget is all about jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The industry study says that this Premier's HST tax grab will disproportionately affect new housing in the greater Toronto area. More than one third of all new homes sold in the GTA cost more than \$400,000. Even a 10% reduction in demand due to the job-killing HST is going to mean construction of 7,400 fewer units in the GTA. That would result in more than \$1 billion in lost wages for construction workers here.

Why won't this Premier realize that he has made a mistake and immediately withdraw his job-killing HST tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we just have a slightly different perspective on this. I think that people watching this have an understanding that what we're trying to do, more than anything else, is to be fair here. When you can say to 97% of Ontario families who are buying either resale homes or new homes under \$500,000 that we're being fair to them, and that only 3% of Ontario homes—that's 8,400 out of 250,000—will be subject to the full single sales tax, I think that's a pretty good saw-off. When you have 97% on one side and 3% who are buying homes at half a million dollars or more, and we protected those who are buying homes at half a million or less, I think we've been pretty fair. We're proud to put that before the Ontario people.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Simply put, this is the wrong tax at the wrong time. The construction sector in this province is already reeling. New housing demand has fallen precipitously in the past year. Many homes, because of this tax grab, are going to be subject to at least another \$25,000 in taxes, further weakening the demand.

There are 360,000 GTA construction workers. Why is the Premier insisting on playing Russian roulette with these workers, their jobs and their families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that experience on the ground is helpful in these circumstances. When they brought this into place in the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia saw a 16% increase in home sales over three years, and New Brunswick saw a 12% increase in their new home sales over three years. Experience tells us that it is different than the views that have been represented by the opposition.

If we stand back for a moment, given the nature of the economic challenge before us, I think what Ontarians expect of us is to find a way to move forward and do that

in a way that is as fair as possible. At the end of the day, they're looking for some leadership. That's what we are demonstrating through our budget. We will not be caught up in the inaction put forward by the members of the opposition. I think it's important for us to keep moving forward.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: I'm glad he is talking about economic challenges and moving forward. I spent the weekend in northern Ontario, and where I went, the stories were absolutely bleak. Workers are worried about the disappearance of their jobs, particularly in the forestry sector. Young people are worried about the future. Social service providers, counselling services and food banks are all overwhelmed. And there's an overwhelming sense as well that the McGuinty government simply doesn't give a damn about what's happening in northern Ontario.

I want to know, when will this Premier and this government finally step up for the people of northern Ontario?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm proud of the efforts that we continue to make to support every region in this province.

I too had the opportunity to visit the great north. You cannot help but be impressed by the work ethic and determination and the success that has been experienced by so many of our Ontario communities. They have some special challenges and, as well, they have some special opportunities.

We continue to find new ways to support the forestry sector, for example. We continue to find new ways to bring stability and certainty to the mining sector, which is so important to many folks in the north.

As well, the fact of the matter is that when I talk to families in the north, they're saying, "Whatever you do, please continue to find ways to fund our schools, our hospitals and our social programs." And again, our budget speaks to those basic priorities for Ontario families.

If you take a look at our budget, whether it's for families living in the north or any other part of this province, it is balanced. It invests in ensuring that there are more opportunities for business development in the province of Ontario, as well—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Platitudes about work ethic and determination do not put food on the table for northern Ontario families. People there are worried sick about jobs, they're worried sick about their pensions, and now they're worried sick about having to sell everything that they own. You know why? Because their EI has run out, and the only way they can collect social assistance is by selling everything off.

How does this Premier explain his government's hands-off approach to these Ontarians and their families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We can have all kinds of differences, and that's important and healthy in a vibrant democracy, but I know that I can make common cause with my colleague on this particular issue.

When it comes to employment insurance, Ontarians remain the subject of some discrimination when it comes to the federal distribution of employment insurance benefits. If you lose your job in Ontario, you get about \$4,000 less by way of employment insurance benefits than you do in any other part of the country. It takes longer to qualify, and when you do qualify, you get less money.

Surely when it comes to this particular matter, my colleague and I can make common cause and we can continue to pressure the federal government, and all parties that have the privilege of serving Canadians on Parliament Hill, to bring fairness to Ontario workers and to ensure that we enjoy the same benefits for our employment insurance.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Surely this Premier understands that asset liquidation is absolutely the wrong thing for these families when they're going to have to move to social assistance because their EI isn't there. That's one thing on which I hope he would agree with me.

If he was serious about northern Ontario, he'd quit playing games with the Toronto Transit Commission's new streetcar contract. That contract is going to sustain hundreds of jobs at Bombardier for many years to come.

What this Premier would do, if he was serious, is ensure that every last cent of the forestry sector prosperity fund got spent on forestry jobs. Three quarters of the fund hasn't even been spent, while thousands and thousands of jobs are vanishing in the north.

When will this Premier finally display some leadership and do everything he can to get northern Ontario workers working again?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of public transit, what we want to do, as much as we possibly can, is ensure that what is a win for the people in the GTA and Hamilton is also a win for people living in other parts of the province. We will continue to find ways to work with the city of Toronto and others when it comes to doing what we can to help those dollars flow into benefits for the people of Ontario.

Now, it's kind of strange, coming from my honourable colleague, given that her predecessor was opposed to those investments in public transit here in the GTA which could stand to benefit folks living in Thunder Bay, for example, working at the Bombardier plant.

As I say, we will continue to find ways to work with our partners in the GTA. We want to ensure, as much as we possibly can, that those new investments—\$9 billion plus of new investments in public transit—stand to benefit Ontario workers as much as possible.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. On Thursday, London Economics International released

their report examining the potential costs of Ontario's Green Energy Act. They've confirmed what we've been saying all along, that it will significantly increase the price of electricity in the province of Ontario. In fact, they're saying that by the time the act is fully implemented, it will raise the cost for a household by \$1,200 per year, and that does not include your sales tax that you're planning on levying next year.

We all understand, Premier, the importance of green energy and how we have to invest in that. What is equally important is being honest and straight with the people about what the implementation of any act is going to cost them. Will you now, with the release of this report, be straight with the people of Ontario and tell them what the cost to families and households will be under your green energy disguise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to speak to this issue. I know that Ontarians are very interested in their government providing leadership when it comes to addressing climate change and, as well, speaking to the cost of their electricity. That's a real issue; there's no doubt about it.

Our best advice that we're getting tells us that we can expect prices to go up about 1% a year, but one of the ways that we're going to keep overall costs down is to do as much as we can to drive energy conservation and create more and more opportunities for both businesses and homeowners to use less electricity, to use their existing electricity in a more efficient manner. That's the approach that we want to bring. I think Ontarians want us to do that. They want us to find a way to generate electricity that is cleaner and less harmful to the environment but at the same time puts as little cost pressure on them as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Premier, that best advice, I'm sure, is coming from the same people who told you that you could close the coal plants by 2007.

Your minister continues to bluster and blather and take that same message out, hoping that if he repeats it over and over again, people will actually believe it. He wants them to believe that you can invest billions and billions of dollars and, "Buddy, it ain't going to cost you a dime." People don't buy that. They don't believe it. Not a single person outside of your own government says that.

LEI says that's not going to happen. London Economics International is an internationally respected and recognized organization that does this forecasting for a business. They say it's going to cost \$1,200 per year per household once this is fully implemented. If you have other evidence, then do what they've done—a 67-page report that takes information from your sources: the OPA, the IPSP. They're not inventing numbers. If you've got other numbers, release the report so that people know—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There is a report, and I don't share that perspective.

I think we can speak to some fundamental truths which we all share, that over time the price of oil and gas is going to go up, and there is a very strong consensus that over time the price of renewables will come down. We're moving away from oil and gas and coal and we're moving towards more and more renewables. We're moving away from those things which we know are going to go up in price; we're moving towards those things which we know will go down in price. At the same time, we're creating more and more opportunities for homeowners and businesses alike, and for our hospitals and schools as well, to find ways to conserve energy, to use electricity in a more efficient manner. We're convinced we're moving forward in the best way, and our best information is that we're talking about increases of about 1% a year.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Hamilton Spectator published an excellent series of articles by reporter Denise Davy on children's mental health. Not only did the articles show that Ontario lags in its provision of children's mental health services and has 25,000 children needing help—45% are not getting it. They focused on innovative programs in other jurisdictions that do a much better job than the McGuinty government in serving children with mental illness. As this is the start of Children's Mental Health Week, what exactly is this government doing for the 25,000 children needing mental health services in this province?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is Children's Mental Health Week, and I'm glad that so many members in this Legislature are wearing the green ribbon to acknowledge and commemorate that.

I can assure you that children's mental health is a very high priority for this government. We are working hard to improve services for children and for their families. In 2006, we released Ontario's first-ever policy framework on children's mental health. It's called A Shared Responsibility. In it, we talk about how important it is that we actually develop a provincial strategy for children's mental health that acknowledges the importance of the integration of services. We are moving forward on the implementation of that strategy. We've set out a 10-year plan, and I will be happy in the supplementary to talk about some of the initiatives within it.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A framework doesn't affect the thousands and thousands of children in this province that are in crisis right now, not 10 years from now.

The McGuinty government's own studies, such as the roots of violence report, recommend major investments in children's mental health—not in 10 years, but right now. The minister is aware that a very successful website called mindyourmind.ca shut down Friday because the McGuinty government won't fund this highly effective

mental health strategy for children and youth, which was developed by Family Service Thames Valley, and which I'm sure the minister is very well aware of.

My question is this: If the minister fails to find outside funders within one month, as she has already pledged to this particular organization, will she promise here today that the McGuinty government will step in with full funding for *mindyourmind.ca*, a program that should never have been allowed to be in jeopardy in the first place in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just would like to remind the member opposite that when their government was in power, they froze spending for children's mental health. We do not take lessons from you on funding for children's mental health agencies.

Unlike you, we are investing in the potential of these kids. We are moving forward on the implementation of this strategy.

I'd like to mention a couple of areas where differences are already being felt. One of those is telepsychiatry. We have made major investments in telepsychiatry, which is providing mental health services to kids in their home communities, improving the number of kids who can receive that professional help they need. And we are working very closely with the Ministry of Education on the student support leadership program, which actually moves us forward to integrate services between those very important institutions that children rely on for help.

We are moving forward and—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I feel one of this government's great environmental achievements in the first term was protecting over 1.8 million acres in the greenbelt. Members in my riding of Ajax-Pickering are very supportive of the provincially designated greenbelt, as they know it permanently protects lands and supports a healthier environment for all Ontarians.

I'm concerned by the recent talk amongst the PC leadership campaigns and their lack of support for the greenbelt. Many of my constituents enjoy spending time with their families, going out and relaxing and exploring the vast agriculture of land and green spaces that we've protected here in Ontario forever.

For the benefit of the House, could the Minister please inform us about some of the recent activities within the greenbelt and its value to our province?

Hon. Jim Watson: I too share concern about the PC leadership candidates who are going around the province talking about their lack of support for the greenbelt. This is one of the greatest initiatives any government in the history of Ontario has gotten involved with, protecting 1.8 million acres of green space in perpetuity.

The David Suzuki Foundation estimates that ecological services and benefits provided by the greenbelt are valued at \$2.6 billion per year. Friends of the Greenbelt

president Burkhard Mausberg estimates that that amounts to over \$10 billion in benefits since the greenbelt's inception. A recent poll that was conducted by Environics indicated 93% of Ontarians support the greenbelt.

I would encourage the Conservative leadership candidates to stand up and support the greenbelt, and speak out in favour of preserving this valuable, natural piece of our heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: We know we only have one earth, one home, and that it is our duty as legislators in this province to protect, preserve and restore our planet for the generations to follow. Ontarians are concerned about their environment. We know now more than ever the urgency of action required by us to preserve the environment.

I'm proud of the work our government has done to protect and restore our environment, from safeguarding our drinking water through the Clean Water Act and new drinking water inspectors to tackling pollution through the "You spill, you pay" law and our current initiatives to reduce toxics and increase waste diversion.

We recently celebrated the implementation of the cosmetic pesticides ban to protect our families. I was concerned to learn that one of the leadership candidates for the official opposition is proposing to strike down that law. Could the minister please clarify for the members of this House the importance of that legislation?

Hon. Jim Watson: To the Honourable Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We don't agree with that candidate at all. We think that the ban is all about protecting our families, especially our kids, from unnecessary risk. That's why we've banned 250 different substances and 80 different ingredients, as far as using them on your front lawns back yards are concerned.

The act also sets clear and transparent rules around this province. We concur with the comments that were made, for example, by David Suzuki, who himself said, "We congratulate the Ontario government for raising the bar on protecting people and the environment from needless pesticide exposure," as well as Peter Goodhand, the CEO of the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, who said, "We congratulate the government for passing regulations that will provide all Ontarians with strong protection.... This is a significant success in our efforts to further our mission to eradicate cancer."

We don't agree with that leadership candidate and we don't—

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Frank Giannone, president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, has expressed concern that, "A harmonized sales tax will drive many renovators and some home builders to the underground economy."

Premier, do you believe that your increased sales taxes on the building and renovation industry will put people in a position where they prefer cash and feel it's acceptable to resort to illegal and underground trades?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, we don't agree with that. What we believe—and it's borne out as the Premier indicated to the House earlier today—is that only about 7% of new home purchases will be impacted as a result of this. We've laid out a very generous tax credit, more generous than the GST credit on new home purchases. Again, we believe that the overall impact of the government's budgetary policy will, in fact, help the economy to grow. We will get back to growth with the right mix of policies. It's simply not enough to sit on the status quo and do nothing. We have to take appropriate measures to get this economy moving again. We have the right package of tax incentives and we think that when this is fully implemented, Ontario will continue to grow and will see stronger growth than it has in many years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Premier seems to have been unable to answer the question and the finance minister didn't get it right. This is what the Premier said in opposition: "Just try to get a price on something in the Ottawa area, for instance, try to get the price for some work done on your roof, some plumbing, some guy to do the driveway or whatever. They'll always have two prices, and one is remarkably lower than the other. That's because ... it has become acceptable ... for people to consider that they no longer have to abide by our laws. That is because people have lost faith in the government's ability to properly manage the moneys that it's already receiving and they have no tolerance whatsoever for any more taxes." That was Premier McGuinty in 1994.

Premier, in opposition you appeared to be against the underground economy. Do you not understand that your new sales taxes will encourage that behaviour?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government's tax reform package will help grow this economy. It will help get us through this deep, deep international recession. I would remind the member opposite that the tax reform package we have brought forward has been endorsed by a whole range of groups as being the right step to take in this economy. Seven per cent of new-home purchases will be affected by this. As the Premier indicated earlier, we have worked to make sure that 93% of new and resale homes are not affected.

The member opposite would have us do nothing. Doing nothing is not an option. We have brought forward a package of tax reforms that will lower overall taxes, reduce revenue to government, and help growth come back to this economy to create jobs and fund our hospitals and schools in a way they haven't been in many years.

NURSES

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

Nurses' Association reported today that hospitals are not replacing retiring nurses or those on maternity or disabled leave. They counted at least 800 nursing positions that have been eliminated since last fall, while the workload continues to increase, this at the time when the health care system is already stretched to the limit and has lost any surge capacity.

In light of increasing workload, loss of surge capacity and the international pandemic alert, why is this government not hiring the 9,000 nurses that it promised in the last election?

1110

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question because it is an important one. I know that our partners at the Ontario Nurses' Association want to see more nurses in our health care system. So do I. That's why this government has hired almost 10,000 nurses since coming to office in 2003, and we're continuing to hire nurses; in fact, we're hiring 900 more this year. We will need more nurses as our baby boom population retires. We're not just going to need them in hospitals. Jobs are available for nurses throughout the health care sector, including long-term care and community health centres. If you were to go to Workopolis today, you would find more than 400 nursing jobs have been posted on that job site in the last two months alone.

The member presents some information in her preamble which is not correct. In fact, Ontario has surge—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, nurses do look at Workopolis. There are 427 jobs on there; half of them are from last year. People who posted in July 2008 have no intention of filling those up. You click on the link and go to the actual health care providers, and they don't have job postings on their website; it's only old, part-time or in home care, which pay so poorly and don't pay for travel that no nurses want those jobs.

This put aside, last week people from across rural Ontario came to Queen's Park to protest services cut at their community hospitals, including emergency room closures. We are reading and hearing of more and more hospitals being filled to capacity and of nurses' positions being left unfilled. In my own community, the CEO of Sudbury Regional Hospital says that layoffs are inevitable.

My question is, while the World Health Organization is set to declare a worldwide influenza pandemic, how can this—

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

Hon. David Caplan: I'm very proud of the work that we've done to support nurses, to increase positions within hospitals, within long-term care or within the community. We've made Ontario one of the few jurisdictions in the world to guarantee a full-time job opportunity to every nursing graduate. We've opened Ontario's first nurse-led clinic—and I hope the member will support it—in the community of Sudbury that she represents.

We've just recently announced the site for three additional nurse practitioner-led clinics in Sault Ste. Marie, in Thunder Bay and in Belle River.

I quote the president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario: "There is a tremendous need for better access to primary care in these communities and today's announcement is the answer that thousands of people have been waiting for." In fact, more than 5,000 new nursing graduates have been matched to guaranteed job opportunity through the program; 76% of new graduates reported full-time employment. No, there's a—

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

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, you tabled a bill entitled the Mining Amendment Act. The proposed legislation is very important, since the mining industry in Ontario is a vital component of our economy. Last year, Ontario led the country in exploration expenditures and mineral production, valued at over \$9 billion, and the current Mining Act is outdated. Ontario needs to bring it up to the 21st century so that we can continue our tradition of being a province with a vibrant mining industry.

Minister, when you introduced legislation last week, you assured Ontarians that the proposed legislation would promote a balanced development that would benefit all Ontarians. Could you please elaborate on the proposed legislation and tell the House how you have created balanced legislation.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member from Huron-Bruce for the question. Thanks to the efforts of our six-month consultation process, I believe we have succeeded in drafting balanced legislation. To do so, we've relied on input from all our stakeholders: certainly individual First Nations, aboriginal organizations, mining companies, exploration companies, prospectors, communities from across the province and many, many interested citizens.

Since tabling Bill 173 last Thursday, I'm happy to report that we have received positive feedback from various groups who have a stake in the Mining Act.

For instance, Garry Clark, the executive director of the Ontario Prospectors Association, has said, "As explorationists we believe these changes will provide certainty around access to land, which will allow us to attract investment to Ontario."

Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, leader of the First Nations of the Anishinabek Nation, has said this is "respectful to the recognition of First Nations rights and indicative of Ontario's commitment to working with"—

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. You must be very proud of the positive feedback that you have received on the proposed legislation from the prospectors' association and Grand Chief Beaucage.

Minister, I understand that the proposed changes to the Mining Act would see significant strides in aboriginal consultation and would address the key concerns of the aboriginal communities—certainly a vital component of the proposed legislation. I also understand that last week our government made an announcement for a resource benefits sharing plan with the aboriginal communities by committing \$30 million as a set-aside to demonstrate our commitment toward this initiative.

Will the minister please elaborate on this plan and inform the House how the changes to the Mining Act as well as our government's commitment to resource benefits sharing will promote economic development opportunities for our aboriginal communities across Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Last week marked some significant and, I would argue, even historic steps in our improved relationship with aboriginal communities in this province. In addition to incorporating aboriginal consultation directly into mining legislation and regulations, the proposed new legislation will also include the introduction of a dispute resolution process for aboriginal-related issues in mining. This unique consultation process was the most intimate government-to-government consultation process ever conducted in Ontario between a provincial government and First Nations people. We listened closely to our aboriginal partners during the consultation phase of this process.

I think these proposed changes to the Mining Act as well as our commitment to resource benefits sharing will lead to increased access to economic development opportunities for aboriginal communities in this province.

We're currently in discussions with First Nations leadership through the Ipperwash Inquiry Priorities and Action Committee—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Last year he made a written promise to my constituent Mark Douglas, Mark the painter, that he would—and I quote from the minister's letter—"not agree to harmonizing with the GST if that would increase the tax burden on Ontario taxpayers." Today we learned that the Dalton sales tax will mean an \$800-million tax increase for Ontario taxpayers. How can the minister explain his embarrassing about-face on this important public policy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, we don't agree with the numbers as laid out in terms of the impact on new houses.

To answer the member's question specifically, I did write to a number of people at the time. We adopted the single sales tax when the federal government, led by Jim Flaherty, provided \$4.3 billion to Ontario to help us implement this new tax. I would remind the member opposite that a number of analysts whom they have often

quoted in the past, including Jack Mintz, have called for us to do this.

Only 7% of new home purchases in Ontario will be affected by this single sales tax because of the very generous home purchase credit that we've been able to provide.

I'd remind the member opposite that this is taken as part of a broader range of tax changes that will actually—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: The minister's statements today will not reassure Ontario families who dream of owning their own home.

Half of my riding, the town of Halton Hills, is in the GTA. The Dalton sales tax on homes will hit hardest in the GTA, where houses cost the most. For example, I'm told the average sale price of a home in Oakville was \$531,000 last month. Today's Toronto Star quotes an authoritative report: The DST will cost GTA purchasers \$575 million more—a massive tax increase.

I've received scores of e-mails from my constituents expressing outrage, and the minister is receiving them too. They also point out that the new DST will be levied on legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees, moving costs and other services.

Will this minister now admit that his broken promise will mean broken dreams for families across the province?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, this tax package will help get Ontario through the roughest economic patch we have experienced in close to 80 years.

I'd remind the member opposite, we simply don't agree with the numbers that were published today: 89% of homes sold in the GTA, new homes or resale, are under \$400,000 and would not be affected. Accordingly, we believe this is the right policy for the times.

I simply don't share the member's view. It's not enough just to continue to do what we've been doing. That's why we've brought forward a comprehensive package of tax reform that will lower taxes for most Ontarians, and it will protect new homebuyers here in the GTA and indeed right across the province.

STUDENT GRANTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The question is to the Premier. The fact that Ontario universities are 10th in per capita funding has resulted in larger class sizes, fewer tenured profs and soaring tuition fees. Students are graduating with an average debt loan of \$23,000 and up.

On top of all this, you're going back on your promise and taking away the last little thing left for thousands of students. The textbook and technology grant and the distance grant will be taken away from the majority of students. The tiny, little textbook incentive was supposed to grow, not be snatched away. Now students in rural areas will face one more obstacle to their education. Why

are you taking away one of the few things you gave university students?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to acknowledge the truth in the conclusion of the question put forward by my colleague, when he said that our textbook and technology and distance grant is something that our government put in place for the first time. We did that just last year, and we're proud of that. We're now staring into the face of a worldwide recession, and we've had to make some adjustments. Some of those were not the kinds of things we warmly embrace, but we've got to act responsibly. So what we've done is changed it. There has been a reduction, that is true, but 72% of students who received the textbook and technology grant last year will receive it this year, and 94% of the students who received the distance grant last year will receive it this year.

We've had to trim things a little bit, given our financial circumstances, and we've tried to do that in a way that is fair. Given the overall nature of our budget, we are convinced that we're going to turn the corner, generate more prosperity and be able to fully fund these kinds of programs in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There are 10 provinces, and we are last in per capita funding and facing a litany of woes. First, university departments facing cutbacks across the board; fewer tenured positions; soaring tuition fees; graduates who can't find jobs; and students defaulting on their loans. The textbook and distance grants were the only real help students got from your government. How can you take them away, especially at this time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have done more than just put in place brand new textbook and technology and distance grants, which I believe are the first of their kind in the country. We have more than doubled student assistance since 2004. We've almost tripled the number of grants; now one in four students, approximately 120,000, are receiving non-repayable grants. And we restored grants. The NDP eliminated grants for our students.

What we did just yesterday, and I'm proud of this, is that we announced a new program—not a new program, but the expansion of an existing program. We announced another \$32 million to help 100,000 students find summer jobs; 27,000 thousand more students will participate over last year. We've increased funding for the summer job program by 57% over last year.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Rick Johnson: Celebrating Ontario's distinct cultural heritage is an important part of preserving our shared history. Heritage sites in large and small communities across Ontario trace the history of our province from its early beginnings to the vibrant, modern-day society in which we live today.

Conserving our heritage and promoting our links to the past is something that the government should actively advance in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. There are many heritage buildings, like Frost

House in Lindsay, once the home of Premier Leslie Frost, the Lindsay Fire Hall, and the Dominion Hotel in Minden, that tell the stories of our communities.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what the government is doing to promote Ontario's built cultural heritage?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Promoting Ontario's rich cultural heritage is a very important part of my ministry's mandate. The Ontario Heritage Trust, which is an agency of the ministry, launched the eighth annual Doors Open Ontario, which is the province's premier contribution on built heritage.

This celebration once again opens the doors of hundreds of unique architectural and heritage buildings through 48 Doors Open events right across the province. It allows the public to explore fascinating places, and to do so free of charge, which I think is a nice thing to be able to do in the summertime. They can go to places to which they would not normally have access. As we celebrate Ontario's heritage treasures, we celebrate our history. We have the opportunity to go to courthouses, places of worship, schools and even commercial buildings that are incredibly unique.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Doors Open Ontario will certainly help Ontarians learn more about Ontario's built heritage and raise public awareness of how important it is to celebrate our past. I am delighted that the Ontario Heritage Trust continues to fulfill its mandate to identify, preserve, protect and promote Ontario's built culture and natural heritage through programs such as this one.

In recent years, Ontarians have expressed a passion for the preservation and promotion of our historic past and its place in our future. I personally believe that we need to know where we come from to know where we're going. Doors Open Ontario, taking place in Lindsay and Minden and 46 other locations in Ontario, will help accomplish this goal. A modern society such as ours must devote more resources to agencies such as the Ontario Heritage Trust so they can carry out their mandate and inspire more Ontarians to cherish our historic legacy.

Can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to strengthen the capacity of the Ontario Heritage Trust?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I am very grateful indeed for the questions from that fresh voice from the Kawarthas, a voice that is hugely supportive of what we do in the Ministry of Culture and understands indeed what a program like this means to the Kawarthas as well as to the rest of the province.

The Ontario Heritage Trust continues to work with communities such as the Kawarthas and with other partners right across the province in order to compel a better recognition, perhaps, of the value of promoting our built heritage for current and for future generations. We have increased the funding to the Ontario Heritage Trust by \$1.6 million, which brings it to \$4.2 million. This is in ongoing recognition of the invaluable work of the OHT and all of the programs, such as Doors Open, that they make available to the citizens—

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Premier again. The Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association is very concerned about the devastating impact of your new HST on homebuyers and an industry that's already weathering a very difficult economic storm. They're concerned that your massive tax hike will not only make home ownership less affordable, but eliminate some of the 11,480 direct and indirect jobs expected in the residential construction industry in Waterloo region this year and tens of thousands of jobs throughout the province.

I ask you, Premier, what assurance can you give the industry that there will not be any job losses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That certainly wasn't the case in other provinces that harmonized. Ontario will be the fifth province to harmonize. I would remind the member opposite that there are a variety of measures designed not only to build on the strength of our economy but to in fact stimulate growth.

I don't agree with the member. We don't believe that status quo is the right way to move forward. This government is committed and has undertaken a broad tax reform that will cut taxes for small business, cut taxes for big business, cut taxes for individuals and indeed, with the most generous sales tax credit for new home purchases, will have a very minimal effect on a small percentage of overall new home sales in Ontario. It's the right policy to move forward—

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Back to the Premier: It really doesn't matter whether you agree with me or not; I am voicing the concerns of the Ontario Home Builders' Association and the local associations throughout the province of Ontario.

I want to quote the president of the London Home Builders' Association, who has expressed concern about the possible impact of your huge sales tax on homebuyers. Tom Kerkhoff said on April 1, 2009: "Obviously the provincial government isn't too concerned about the underground economy and the risk that homeowners incur dealing with these unscrupulous contractors."

Do you not understand that by raising sales taxes, you are hurting hard-working, honest people and ignoring those who don't play by the rules?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What we're doing is creating the conditions for economic growth to resume in this province so people can in fact buy new homes.

I don't agree with the member opposite, either in her premise or in her conclusion. First of all, only 7% of new home purchases will be impacted by this; that's number one. Number two, the tax cuts we're providing for individuals and for corporations will help this economy

grow. I disagree with the member that we should just do nothing at this point in time. It's incumbent on governments at all levels to take dramatic steps and dynamic steps.

I'll quote to her somebody I know her party has quoted many times. Mr. Jack Mintz, the Palmer Chair in public policy, said: "Nonetheless, sales tax harmonization will reap large benefits to the Ontario economy. The McGuinty government will go down in history for its leadership in"—

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

SEWAGE SLUDGE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Many municipalities and environmental groups are opposed to the McGuinty government's scheme to spread sewage sludge on farm fields without a waste disposal permit. A few months ago, the minister said that the McGuinty government had "participated, conducted and funded" studies about the spreading of sewage sludge on farm fields, but not one of the studies listed by the McGuinty government considered the human health impacts from spreading sewage sludge on farm fields.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government going to allow the spreading of sewage sludge on farm fields without a waste disposal permit when you have failed to examine the human health impacts of that sewage sludge?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, I can tell you that within the Ministry of the Environment, we are concerned about people's health and safety. That has always been our primary concern. We are studying this situation, and we will get back to the member in due course.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: In fact, you're far beyond studying. What you're proposing to do is to allow these companies to spread sewage sludge on farm fields without any kind of permit whatsoever. You've ignored the studies—for example, one done at the University of Toledo, which shows there is increased risk of abdominal bloating, jaundice, weight loss, respiratory, gastrointestinal and chronic diseases among people living within one mile of farm fields that have had sewage sludge spread on them.

You're going to open up the system. You're going to make it difficult for people to find out when sewage sludge is being spread, what kind of sewage sludge is being spread and how much of it is being spread, because they won't require a permit anymore. Will you commit to doing the human health impact studies before you create this free-for-all?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, this has been done in the province of Ontario in one way or another for over the past 30 years. We always rely on

the best science. We will continue to do that. We will make sure that the health and safety of the people of Ontario is protected at all times. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY HELP AGENCIES), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AGENCES DE PLACEMENT TEMPORAIRE)

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

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

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Balkisson, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
Bentley, Christopher	Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza
Best, Margaret	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Brown, Michael A.	Horwath, Andrea	Phillips, Gerry
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Kormos, Peter	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Watson, Jim
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wilkinson, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McGuinty, Dalton	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Shurman, Peter
Bailey, Robert	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Chudleigh, Ted	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Runciman, Robert W.	
Hardeman, Ernie	Savoline, Joyce	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 13.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I would like to welcome in the west members' gallery today Janet Dalziel, president of the Canadian Celiac Association; Jim McCarthy, executive director of the Canadian Celiac Association; and Serge Buy from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like members to welcome Rebecca Evans, who's a project manager with Midhaven Homes and the first vice-president of the Durham Region Home Builders' Association. She's in the members' gallery. Welcome, Rebecca. Enjoy the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have seven people coming to the Legislature this afternoon. They haven't arrived yet, but I'll introduce them in anticipation of their arrival: Pamela Taylor, Carmine Iacono, Louise Gomez, Tony Rahim, Aubrey Leblanc, Gita Chopra and Alan Krolrk.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to introduce members of the Lawrence family. There would be Moira Lawrence and her daughter, Alison; her husband, Brian Young, and their son, Sean; his wife, Esther Shipman and their son, Declan. The family is here today to draw memory to her deceased husband, Allan Lawrence.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: This week is Children's Mental Health Week in Ontario. It is a time for us to think of the children and their families who are going through so much and to remember a government that is doing so little.

Last week, I asked the Minister of Children and Youth Services to provide the funding needed to get children off waiting lists and give them the care they need, yet when I pointed out that the government's own Roots of Youth Violence report suggested \$200-million increase, the minister attacked us for advocating overspending. Imagine, they attacked their own report.

What is their response to the need for more money? The minister is conducting a "mapping of the current services available." "Mapping services" is the response? What this government does not need to do is waste time

writing out plans, but to actually give children's mental health the funding it needs.

Minister, there are thousands of children around the province waiting for treatment. There are excellent and renowned agencies around the province waiting for funding. When are you going to do your part?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Jim Brownell: Since 2003, my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry has seen unprecedented investment and support from the Ontario government. Like all communities, my riding has endured difficult times, but this area has continually shown its character and resiliency, and these investments are certainly paying off.

To illustrate this point, I'm very pleased to announce that 2009 will be a record year for construction value for the city of Cornwall. The chief building official, Barry Coleman, has recently told the city's planning advisory committee there will be at least \$175 million in construction value this year, which is the highest recorded value since statistics began being kept in 1958.

This great record is partially due, in no small part, to the commitment by this government for the redevelopment of the Cornwall Community Hospital. This investment not only demonstrates the McGuinty government's dedication to the health care renaissance in this community and across the province, but also shows the benefits to our citizens in all sectors of the workforce when we invest in the infrastructure of our community.

Hospitals and roads are being built, which gives our construction workers jobs. They, in turn, buy food and clothing for their families and thus provide more jobs and more benefits to our families.

The results are more far reaching than just structures that are created and repaired. The results are in the improvements in the lives of our citizens and their families. I'm very proud to see the continued developments in my riding, and across the province as a whole, by this government.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I know that members know there is an opposition day motion today, and I'd like to put some remarks on the record right now.

I am here today to warn the House that this government's new tax undermines the dream of home ownership for families in Ontario. The Durham Region Association of Realtors advises me that the new PST means higher costs for legal fees, appraisal fees, real estate commissions, moving expenses, home-staging services, landscaping, mortgages, insurance and the list goes on—title insurance etc.

Executive Officer Cail Maclean and PAC Chair Lloyd Elliott note in a recent letter that the harmonization will

have a dramatic negative effect on the resale housing market.

Today, the Building Industry and Land Development Association estimates that the cost of the PST to new homebuyers in the greater Toronto area would be \$800 million.

The extended PST threatens up to 21,000 jobs in the construction industry. The new tax will not just make everyday items more expensive; it's more than that. It puts at risk the dream of home ownership for Ontarians, as well as thousands of jobs in the building, renovation and real estate sectors.

The citizens of Ontario have had enough of this government's tax-and-spend policies. I can assure you that the people of Ontario will not easily forget a government that has twice promised not to raise taxes, and yet has done exactly that three times. They have raised taxes irrespective of the state of the economy. In fact, they have exacerbated the state of the economy, and I think it's time—

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

TAMIL CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr. Michael Prue: Outside, Tamil Canadians are protesting the civil and genocidal war in Sri Lanka. In the past, they have organized many protests in this city. Tens of thousands of Tamils formed a human chain around the downtown core several months ago. Thousands sat in on University Avenue across from the United States consulate. Yesterday and today, they are protesting in front of Queen's Park. Tomorrow, they're forming a human chain around the downtown core again. They are bringing a message, one of passion and one of the safety of family, friends and loved ones who are dying daily in Sri Lanka.

I think that what they are asking is absolutely reasonable: (1) They are asking the Canadian people, the people of Ontario and the people of Toronto to speak with one voice to halt the war and find a political solution in their former homeland. (2) They want to stop the bombing of civilians and hospitals; we read with horror about people being bombed in a hospital and dying yesterday. (3) They want to provide assistance to the dispossessed in that country, of which there are hundreds of thousands. (4) They want the embargo lifted on food and medicine for humanitarian aid for people who desperately need it. (5) They want to open up the area to international observers and the press so that the entire world can see what is happening.

I think that what they are asking for is more than reasonable, and members of this Legislature should go out and say hello and give them some support.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Reza Moridi: It gives me great pleasure to be part of a government that has made great strides in improving driver safety across Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals have made significant progress in improving road safety by repairing aging infrastructure, enacting tougher street-racing laws and establishing aerial enforcement of the 400-series highways.

The McGuinty government also recognizes that safe driving requires one's full attention. Unfortunately, a leading cause of collisions is distracted drivers. I am pleased that our government has taken steps to reduce the consequences of these actions by introducing legislation that will prohibit the use of electronic devices, allowing drivers to keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road.

Our government is also looking to toughen drinking-and-driving laws by increasing the penalties for drivers who blow into the "warn" range to three days for a first occurrence, seven days for a second occurrence and 30 days for a third occurrence.

The award presented to the government of Ontario by the Ontario Safety League was not given by chance. This award is a symbol of the collective road safety initiatives we have taken. We will continue to work hard to maintain Ontario's standing as having the safest roads in North America.

1310

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last month this Legislature heard about Mark the painter. Mark Douglas received written assurances from the Minister of Finance—and I quote from the minister's letter—that he "would not agree to harmonizing with the GST if that would increase the tax burden on Ontario taxpayers." It was a promise not worth the paper it was written on, as was established this morning in question period. The Dalton sales tax threatens to drive many small businesses into the underground economy and make it more difficult for legitimate businesses, like Mr. Douglas's, to compete.

Today, we learned that the DST will drive up the cost of not just the painting of homes but also the homes themselves. People are quite rightly outraged. They want to know why this government would levy the Dalton sales tax on services necessary to purchase a home like legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees and moving costs.

Half of my riding, Halton Hills, is in the GTA. The Dalton sales tax on homes will hit hardest in the GTA, where the houses cost the most. The DST will cost GTA purchasers a whopping \$575 million more. For example, I'm told that, last month, the average sale price of a home in Oakville was \$531,000. That average home is now subject to the DST, putting it even further out of reach for Ontario families.

Like Mark the painter, these families are wondering: When will this government stop breaking its promises to impose no new taxes? When will it start supporting their hopes, their dreams and their aspirations instead of standing in the way?

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Bill Mauro: It's with great pleasure that I rise to share with my colleagues some of what our McGuinty government is doing to ensure a strong future for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Recently, we announced \$10.4 million in capital funding through the Investing in Ontario Act, helping Thunder Bay reduce its infrastructure deficit and maintain their taxes at lower rates than might otherwise have been the case. It's only one of a series of announcements on infrastructure for Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario in the recent past. Very soon, Thunder Bay will be receiving \$5 million as part of the affordable housing program to build 251 home repair housing units. Thunder Bay will also be receiving almost \$30 million from the Ontario municipal partnership fund to ensure Thunder Bay can invest in the business, cultural and community infrastructure needed to ensure a prosperous future. This amount represents an increase of \$1.4 million over last year's total.

A very clear indicator of our commitment to our community is seen as we flow \$4 million per year, likely to happen for three years, for a total of \$12 million, to fund the net operating loss on the city's homes for the aged—there are at least two of them—as part of our commitment to replacing two of the three homes with a new long-term-care facility.

Thunder Bay has a storied history as the gateway to the far north, and today it remains northwestern Ontario's largest municipality. Our government is committed to responding to the challenges of our city through strategic investments that will improve the lives of all of its citizens.

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: May is Celiac Awareness Month in Canada. Celiac disease is a medical condition in which the absorptive surface of the small intestine is damaged by a substance called gluten. This results in an inability of the body to absorb protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins or minerals, all of which are necessary for good health.

It is estimated that celiac disease affects one out of 133 people in Canada. At present, there is no cure, but celiac disease is readily treated and controlled by following a gluten-free diet as long as it is quickly diagnosed. That is why early diagnosis is so important and why, throughout the month of May, the Canadian Celiac Association will be speaking to politicians, health care providers and the public about the need to ensure that screening tests for celiac disease are readily available to everyone.

The Canadian Celiac Association is a national organization dedicated to providing services and support to persons with celiac disease through awareness, advocacy, education and research. Founded in 1972, they have an

active membership of over 7,000 people, including 3,000 in Ontario.

I would like to recognize the good work being done by the celiac association through their president, Janet Dalziel; their executive director, Jim McCarthy; and our local representative in Ottawa, June Williams. I encourage all Ontarians to take the time to learn more about celiac disease this month.

I'm hoping members and their staff will join me at the Canadian Celiac Association reception this evening from 4:30 to 7 p.m. in committee room 2.

MICHELLE MENDES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I rise today to discuss a matter of deep sorrow that has affected not only the citizens of my riding but the entire country: the untimely death of Major Michelle Mendes.

Michelle was a young woman of unsurpassed dedication to her country. Her first tour of Afghanistan was tragically cut short when she was injured in 2006. After receiving medical treatment, Michelle returned to Afghanistan to continue her tour of duty. Michelle died in Afghanistan on April 23, 2009. Her passing has left a hole in the hearts of many, particularly in Michelle's hometown of Wicklow. Michelle returned home with full military honours and began the procession down the Highway of Heroes on Sunday, April 26. The small, two-lane bridge in her hometown was jammed with people, including members of the Alnwick/Haldimand fire department, who stood atop their vehicles, as well as Branch 580 of the Legion Honour Guard, who stood on the on-ramp of the highway.

At times like these, it's hard to adequately express the grief we experience as a community, and the sorrow we feel for Michelle, her family and her loved ones. I'd like to convey the gratitude we feel for Michelle's selfless dedication to her country.

I'm proud to say that Major Michelle Mendes was a true hero. She was a young woman who many of us were proud to call a wife, a daughter, a granddaughter and a friend. Michelle was a gifted student, a school athlete, a person who strove every day of her young life not for mediocrity but for excellence—a true inspiration, particularly for the young women of Ontario.

We can never know the depth of sorrow of Michelle's family and friends. Our hearts go out to her husband, Victor; Michelle's parents, Ron and Dianne Knight; and the rest of the family.

I would ask for unanimous consent for a moment of silence to remember and honour our hero, Major Michelle Mendes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in recognition of Major Michelle Mendes.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 174, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / *Projet de loi 174, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.*

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. John Yakabuski: This is not my first attempt to remedy this inequity. It was interesting that today the Premier was talking about inequality with respect to the Employment Insurance Act. If this act is passed, it will remedy the inequity in the gasoline tax rebate and the way that the ministry provides it to rural municipalities.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For over 20 years, the month of May has been officially recognized as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. It's a time to acknowledge the survivors of sexual violence. One survivor tells us, "We can't speak publicly because then we are too visible and fear not being believed or doubted."

The Ontario Coalition Of Rape Crisis Centres tells us that sexual assault prevention month is a time to publicly remind citizens that sexual assault happens every day in our communities—and globally—and often in places unseen and unheard. It's a time to mourn the missing and murdered aboriginal women and recommit to taking action to end violence against aboriginal women. It's a time to raise awareness that the actual and perceived vulnerability of women with disabilities places them at greater risk of sexual assault. It's a time to inform ourselves that homeless and transient women are also at greater risk, as well as immigrant women and women from racialized communities.

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It's a time for francophone women to come together and be vocal about the challenges they face in order to make public the misconceptions about their lives. To Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, working together reinforces the idea of solidarity.

During this month, there are a variety of activities and events taking place in communities across this province. Whether it's community breakfasts, open houses, workshops or touring schools to discuss healthy relationships, the people in our communities are doing the hard work to find innovative community solutions to ending the complex issue of sexual violence. I invite you to visit the Ontario Women's Directorate website at Ontario.ca/women for a list of events taking place in your communities. I'd like to acknowledge the incredible people in our communities who have been working hard day in and day out for over 30 years.

Less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to police. Myths around sexual assault can make women and girls feel they will be victims over and over again if they speak out. For example, it's simply wrong to suggest that a woman is responsible for violence against herself because of the clothes she was wearing. Sexual Assault Prevention Month is an important opportunity to dispel this and other myths. It's also an opportunity to redouble our efforts to raise awareness and encourage dialogue on this complex issue.

Our government is committed to developing a sexual violence action plan, and I'd like to thank our partners and survivors of sexual violence whose voices are reflected in what I've had to say today. In particular, the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes and the Disabled Women's Network Ontario, known as DAWN. Thanks to the sexual assault centres and the sexual assault/domestic violence treatment centres. I'd also like to thank the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres and the Ontario Native Women's Association for their ongoing dedication to ending violence against aboriginal women.

Finally, I would urge all members of this House to get involved in this work and to support your community organizations however you can. I'm convinced that if we work together, we can end sexual violence in Ontario.

RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

L'hon. John Wilkinson: Je prends aujourd'hui la parole à la Chambre pour vous entretenir de la situation de la recherche scientifique en Ontario.

I rise in the House today to speak about the state of scientific research in Ontario.

Around the world, we are known by our global research leaders, especially in genomics and the life sciences. We are, in fact, the fourth-largest biomedical

cluster in North America and by far the largest in Canada.

Some of Ontario's exceptional global research leaders have taken time out of their busy schedules to join us today at Queen's Park. I'd like the House to particularly recognize two gentlemen who are with us this afternoon. We have Dr. Lou Siminovitch, who is the great researcher from the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute at Mount Sinai Hospital, and also Dr. Christian Burks, the CEO of the Ontario Genomics Institute. Welcome to Queen's Park.

These scientists and others are doing exceptional transformational work in their fields. Their achievements make all of us in Ontario very proud. They are committed to Ontario, and Ontario is equally committed to standing up for them. More than that, Ontario is going to bat for them. We are saying that we understand the value of science to our economy and our future and we value the work that our scientists are doing and the wealth and the jobs they are creating. We are sending a clear signal that we will not stand by and idly watch as competing jurisdictions attempt to play catch-up with Ontario.

Les membres du gouvernement McGuinty ne baisseront pas les bras quand d'autres juridictions tentent d'attirer hors de l'Ontario des membres de notre milieu de recherche de calibre mondial. Nous disons au monde : « Nous sommes disposés à collaborer avec vous, mais nous ne tolérons pas le braconnage. » Nous livrerons bataille.

Le gouvernement McGuinty tiendra ses engagements, fier du travail de ces scientifiques et finançant l'excellence en recherche en Ontario. Aujourd'hui, nous prenons position.

Unlike other governments, the McGuinty government will not stand down while other jurisdictions attempt to lure members of our world-class research community out of Ontario. We are saying to Washington and to the world, "We're willing to collaborate with you, but no poaching allowed"—not without a fight, and not for a lack of commitment on the part of the McGuinty government, and not for a lack of pride in their work or a lack of funding for research excellence in Ontario.

Today we are taking a stand. When it comes to making funding for research and innovation a priority, we've had our flag in the ground for several years, and today we announced new funding that will keep it firmly planted here.

Where other jurisdictions around the world, including the United States, have recently come around to the idea of the knowledge economy and the importance of investing in basic and applied research, Premier McGuinty created a ministry dedicated to research and innovation four years ago. He gave Ontario a head start and today, thanks to the Premier's vision and leadership, Ontario is not only in the game, we are in the lead. Last year, our government launched Ontario's innovation agenda, our \$3.2-billion plan to support innovation in Ontario in areas like the life sciences, where our province already is a global leader. And just a few weeks ago, the McGuinty

government reaffirmed its commitment to research and innovation in the 2009 provincial budget. The budget provided \$715 million in new investments and more than \$110 million in additional tax relief to support Ontario innovation, because we know that new knowledge leads to new products, new companies and new jobs.

The new economy is fuelled by new ideas. That is why we are committing an additional \$400 million to support basic and applied research, which brings me back to today. Of this new funding for research, it's my great pleasure to announce that the McGuinty government is investing \$100 million in genomics and gene-related research. We are creating a new world-class fund, the global leadership round in genomics and life sciences, to support the groundbreaking work of leading scientists and their teams in fields such as genomics, proteomics and stem cell research.

J'ai le grand plaisir d'annoncer qu'en vertu de ce nouveau financement de la recherche, le gouvernement McGuinty investit 100 \$ millions en recherche en génomique et en recherche relative aux gènes.

Nous créons un nouveau fonds de calibre mondial, le volet Leadership mondial en génomique et en sciences de la vie, pour appuyer le travail révolutionnaire de grands scientifiques et de leur équipe dans des domaines comme la génomique, la protéomique et la recherche sur les cellules souches.

Genomics is a tremendously complicated field, about as complicated as science gets. A genome is the complete catalogue of the DNA blueprint that makes all life on this planet unique. It's typically expressed as a number of base pairs. The human genome contains three billion base pairs. I found a good analogy that puts this in perspective: If you compare the human genome that's stored on DNA to a set of instructions stored in a book, it would be over a billion words long; you'd need 5,000 volumes, each 300 pages long, to store the material; and you'd find a copy of that book, all 5,000 volumes, in almost every cell in your body.

If genes and DNA are like an instruction book, mastering the content is vitally important. Genomics holds out new hope for finding cures for diseases like cancer, diabetes and heart disease. It also holds the promise of green solutions for agriculture, the environment and biodiversity protection.

All of these—better health care, a cleaner environment, and a better quality of life—are part of our vision of Ontario's future. That's why we're committed to training, attracting and retaining the world's best researchers to pioneer the cures, discoveries and technologies of tomorrow. As an example, we are all extremely proud to hear that on April 29, Dr. Janet Rossant, chief of research at Sick Kids, was one of only 18 foreign associates to be elected to the prestigious United States National Academy of Sciences.

Avec le nouveau volet Leadership mondial en génomique et en sciences de la vie, de 100 \$ millions, l'Ontario continuera de cultiver une économie d'innovation qui appuie le travail révolutionnaire de grandes et grands scientifiques et de leur équipe.

Ainsi, comme l'annonce la présente communication, on continuera de découvrir, de mettre au point et de concrétiser de grandes idées et ce, ici même en Ontario. Il en résultera de bons emplois et un avenir radieux pour nos familles et nos collectivités.

Finally, with the new \$100-million Global Leadership Round in Genomics and Life Sciences, Ontario will continue to grow an innovation economy that supports the groundbreaking work of leading scientists and their teams. Today's announcement means great ideas will continue to be discovered, developed and brought to life right here in Ontario. That means great jobs and a brighter future for our families and our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: As the Progressive Conservative critic for women's issues, I'm pleased to be able to join the minister to recognize May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month.

We all agree that sexual assault is horrific and traumatizing and causes a great deal of physical and emotional harm within our communities. That is why it's so important that we not only recognize but also provide support for those affected by sexual assault. We each have a role to play in modeling respectful behaviour towards others. Sexual assault is a violent crime. It extends beyond sexual harassment and is the actual unwanted threat of sexual contact without consent. Its effects can crush one's self esteem, worthiness and dignity. It is absolutely an infringement on one's rights.

Although this year marks the 21st year that Ontario has recognized May as Sexual Assault Prevention Month in Ontario, the stats on sexual assault are shocking. Studies show that 50% of all Canadian women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime and most of them are under the age of 25. Girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 21 are at the highest risk of being sexually assaulted. A staggering 38% of women and girls are sexually assaulted by their husbands or boyfriends. The majority of victims know the accused. Also, what is probably the most troubling statistic: Only 6% of all cases get reported.

Sexual assault is one of the least-reported crimes against both men and women because of feelings of shame or fear of re-victimization through the criminal trial process. Sexual assault is a crime that does not discriminate based on race, culture, creed, sex or age. Statistics Canada stated that in 2005, 61% of sexual assaults reported were committed against youth under the age of 17 and that 83% of disabled women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. Certainly these numbers depict a frightening story, and I think we can all agree that we have to do better.

This month gives us the opportunity to come together as citizens and legislators to help raise awareness for a topic that is reported to afflict one in four women and one

in five men. It's about making sure that the citizens of Ontario, those who are victimized by unwanted sexual acts, know unconditionally that we, as elected officials, will stand by them.

In my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, Family Transition Place, together with the Headwaters Health Care Centre's sexual assault treatment program and the Dufferin Child and Family Services mental health program, are working on the Sunrise Program. The Sunrise Program ensures adult and children survivors of assault have access to the medical, emotional and psychological support they need. A public education initiative is in the works to help survivors, who are often reluctant to seek help, feel more confident in opening the door to support.

We need to be instilling awareness in this subject at a very early age. More than 5,800 youth in grades 5 to 12 from the Upper Grand District School Board, Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, through Family Transition Place, have been learning about some of the underlying attitudes, behaviours and skills that can help them have healthier, more respectful relationships with their friends and family, and ultimately stop the assaults before they begin.

Family Transition Place counsellors have provided support and direction to many of our students and their families over the years. They leave schools more aware and informed with regard to the issue of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. I'd like to thank the many groups that work tirelessly to spread awareness and remove the stigma associated with sexual assault across Ontario in all our communities.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'd like to express our thanks to those who are working every day to help people overcome their experiences with the violent crime of sexual assault. I urge all members of this Legislature to work towards raising awareness not just during the month of May, but every month, so that all victims will feel confident in reporting these crimes and will know that their community stands behind them.

RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

M. Gilles Bisson: Je veux prendre l'occasion, premièrement, de féliciter le ministre pour avoir essayé, autant que possible, de faire son discours en français. C'est toujours apprécié quand on voit nos amis les allophones se lancer dans la langue de Molière, comme on dit, pour s'exprimer dans cette Assemblée. Je peux vous dire, comme francophone, que c'est apprécié.

Le gouvernement aujourd'hui a annoncé quelque chose qui, dans son intention, n'est pas une méchante affaire. Je ne vais pas me lever dans la Chambre pour dire que ces investissements sont négatifs. Mais clairement, le problème, c'est que c'est seulement une partie de ce qu'on a besoin de faire, qui est toujours un dossier beaucoup plus grand que ces 100 \$ millions dont on a parlé aujourd'hui.

On a parlé aujourd'hui pendant la conférence de presse de l'importance de s'assurer qu'on ne voit pas nos

scientifiques partir de l'Ontario pour aller aux autres pays comme les États-Unis. Oui, c'est important. On a besoin de s'assurer que ce n'est pas le cas. Mais je vous pose cette question : avec tout ce qui se passe dans notre système scolaire postsecondaire, est-ce qu'on va vraiment arrêter l'exode de ces scientifiques vers d'autres pays comme les États-Unis, ou même aux autres provinces ? La réponse est non. Ça va aider une partie, il n'y a aucune question, mais il y a encore un plus gros problème dans le système. On connaît beaucoup de jeunes qui décident de faire l'exode parce que les opportunités sont plus grandes ailleurs. On a beaucoup plus à faire ici en Ontario pour arrêter cet exode des scientifiques de cette province.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege to rise and speak on behalf of those victims of sexual assault. I have to say the member from Dufferin-Caledon said it best: One in two women in Ontario and Canada is the victim of sexual assault at least once during the course of their lifetime. This is an absolutely staggering statistic. This is something that we should all be horrified by. I often think that if one out of every two hockey players was the victim of sexual assault, we'd have a cabinet committee struck to do nothing but look into the issue. But the reality is it's not hockey players, it's not men; it's women, particularly vulnerable women—children, teenagers, the elderly, in fact.

So the question is, what do we do about it in this month? It's not enough just to have a month set aside. What do we do about it? The answers are very, very clear. Certainly I in my professional capacity, before being elected and since being elected, have travelled the province talking to women's groups, and they ask with one voice that this government respond. Here is what they're asking for: They ask for dependable, long-term funding for social services that deal with victims of assault—they don't have that yet; they ask for transition housing so that women can escape from violent men and adequate transition housing—they don't have it yet. They ask, because we know that sexual assault is perpetrated on those who are economically vulnerable—they ask for a living minimum wage, for economic independence in a province where women make 71 cents for every dollar that men make.

I have put forward two motions on the order paper that I beg this government to look at: (1) Holly's law, put forward by the mother of Holly Jones, Maria Jones, who is calling for primary prevention in elementary schools across Ontario. We certainly need that. It would cost only \$1 million, which is not a great deal. You just heard a \$100-million announcement. Why not \$1 million to prevent our children from being abused? Holly's law would do that through the Boost program; and (2) something very simple that wouldn't cost a dime: I've asked for an all-party-member women's committee to look at

issues that deal with violence against women. If we all got together, put aside our partisan differences and actually focused on the task at hand, maybe, just maybe in the month of May we'd make a difference instead of just having May after May come and go, and the statistics remain the same.

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I'm speaking on behalf of all victims and I'm saying it's not enough just to have a month; we've got to do something. We know what to do, the groups out there know what to do; they're asking this government to do it, so please, on behalf of the victims, actually do something.

ALLAN LAWRENCE

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in tribute to the Honourable Allan Lawrence.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: On behalf of the PC caucus, it is my distinct privilege to pay tribute to the Honourable Allan Lawrence, PC, QC, B.A., LL.B., L.S.M. We're paying tribute to his 30 years in public office.

With us in the gallery today are his wife, Moira; as well as their daughter, Alison Lawrence, and her husband, Brian Young; Allan and Moira's son, Sean; his wife, Esther Shipman; and their son, Declan. Allan and Moira's granddaughter, Emma Healey, has visited the Legislature previously with her grandfather. She is unable to join us today because Emma is in her final year at UTS before attending Concordia in Montreal this fall.

Sadly, Allan Lawrence passed away September 6, 2008, in his 83rd year. Allan Lawrence was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1958, over 40 years ago, representing the riding of St. George until 1972: 14 years at the provincial Legislature.

At that time, Allan was the youngest MPP ever elected in Ontario. During his early days in the Legislature, when he still practised law, he would go to his law office early in the morning and then return up to Queen's Park for question period. He would then return to the law office late in the afternoon, and then again would go back to the House for night sittings. We must recall there were no subways or streetcars back then.

Under Premier John Robarts, he was responsible for the Lawrence report, which became the template for the Ontario Business Corporations Act. It formed the basis for company law reform in Ontario.

Allan Lawrence was Minister of Mines from 1968 to 1970. He served as Minister of Mines and Northern Affairs in 1970-71, Minister of Justice and Attorney General in 1971-72, and Provincial Secretary for Justice from January 5, 1972, to September 28, 1972.

In 1971, Allan ran to succeed John Robarts as party leader, losing to Bill Davis by a mere 44 votes on the fourth ballot. Turning to federal politics in 1972, Allan was elected in Durham-Northumberland. He would serve

Durham–Northumberland federally for 16 years, retiring from office in 1988. During that time, Allan served as Solicitor General for Canada and Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs in the Joe Clark government.

Allan Lawrence is fondly remembered for his lifetime achievements beyond the federal and provincial parliaments. He was an ex officio lifetime bencher of the Law Society of Upper Canada. He received the law society's medal for outstanding service to the legal profession. In his community, he was always active, serving as a director of the Northumberland Art Gallery; chair of the millennium task force at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cobourg; and a member of the major gifts committee for the Northumberland hospital fundraising campaign. Allan Lawrence was also a 30-year member of the board of governors for the Central Hospital in Toronto.

His family deeply cherish the memories of Allan Lawrence as a husband, father and grandfather. Whether it was in the legal profession, community service, Parliament, cabinet or among his family and friends, Allan Lawrence was a leader and an inspiration to all. In 2005, he was recognized and received the Churchill Society Award for his contribution to parliamentary democracy in Canada, with 30 years of public service. He also served his country as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy in World War II.

I'm grateful for the time and advice that Allan Lawrence shared with me as a mentor and a friend. I'm honoured to offer these words of tribute and I'm confident my sentiments are shared by all members of the Legislature. The Honourable Allan Lawrence was a gentleman, an admired elected statesman, a dedicated family man and a great Canadian citizen. I was fortunate to have known him.

I want to thank Moira, Alison, Sean and members of the family who are with us today.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed my honour to stand and pay tribute to Allan Lawrence.

As a student at the University of Toronto, I would sometimes sneak out of my class where we were learning about politics and come over here to the Legislature to actually watch it being practised. I would sit up there and watch the politicians as they rose to answer the thorny questions of the day, to make the great speeches, and often thought that I might one day like to come here as well.

I remember watching Allan Lawrence. I remember watching him here in the Legislature on so many occasions back in those days.

But what I remember most is, in my final year at the University of Toronto in 1971, being part of a group of students who went down to watch the Conservative leadership convention. I still have my little badge to prove that I have attended a Conservative leadership convention. It's among my paraphernalia at home. I went down there to do a study. We did a study on Legislatures and elections and how delegates figured out who they were going to support. Every day, after we took the delegates' information from them, I remember we had to put it on

punch cards, because that was the computerized system of the day, and then we had to take the punch cards and marry them off based on their geographical locations, their education—we had a number of criteria. I remember going down there as part of that U of T team and listening to the delegates. We set up a booth. We invited confidentiality. We had, as I said, collected raw data.

But what I remember most is that Allan came to our booth to say hello. He shook all of our hands. He was, of course, in the midst of a leadership race, but he found some time to talk to three or four students dedicated to the inexact science of political science, and we had quite a good and long conversation with him. I do remember that during those times he spoke to us about his goals and his policies and why he wanted to be leader and why he thought he would be a great leader. I remember watching his amazing speech at that convention. Most of all—and I think I can still sing the theme song, *Winning Is Just the Beginning*, because it played over and over for three days, especially as the ballot results were announced through four successive ballots. It was a very tight race, as has been said. He was a man of great class and conviction, and although he lost the race by some 44 votes, he immediately rallied around the winner, Bill Davis, and brought all of his team with him so that the Conservative Party had a united front. That is an amazing thing for a politician to do when he had come so close.

Following his political career in this House, as has been said, he went federal, where he distinguished himself over a great many years.

He had many accomplishments, but I think the one for which he is most internationally known was the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, which sought around the world to talk about parliamentary democracies; the way that democracies and democratic peoples met together through their institutions. As has been said, he was awarded with the 2005 Churchill Society Award for furthering parliamentary democracy around the world.

Allan Lawrence was a man who loved this Legislature. He loved its parliamentary traditions. He was a man who loved the House of Commons and all of the traditions of that great House. He fought for his principles throughout his entire life, mindful that others might have differing principles, and he loved the cut and thrust of debate. He brought to this House a dignity and a respect from all sides and a commitment to his party and to the people of this province.

To his wife, Moira, and to his children, thank you for sharing a husband and a father and a man who helped to make Ontario a very good and wonderful place in which to live.

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Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an honour for me to be able to pay tribute to an individual who played such a significant role, not only in this House, but in the federal House of Commons as well.

If you had any interest in politics—and the member for Beaches–East York just made reference to this—as a student, and I think some of us had an early interest in

politics, one of the names that we had heard and one of the people that we would have observed was Allan Lawrence as being very prominent, not only within the Conservative Party here in Ontario but also within the government of Ontario.

Of course, it was a very exciting race that took place in 1971 for the leadership of the party. I think Bob Welch was involved in that one as well at that time. A lot of excitement was generated in the Niagara Peninsula, but it was well known that some of the people who were going to be contesting were very powerful individuals, and Allan Lawrence was considered to be a very significant contender—with justification.

When you lose by 44 votes—it's probably easier to lose by 444 votes than 44 votes. He didn't look upon it as a loss—there's obviously the disappointment—but he took the opportunity, again, as my friend from Beaches–East York said, to rally around the flag of the party at that time, and that's not always an easy thing to do. When there's a very toughly contested race, from time to time people fall away from a party or fall away from a government or decide that they're simply going to allow the new leader to perhaps flounder and point out to the party they made the wrong choice. That was certainly not what Allan Lawrence did, and by bringing his considerable team to the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, he provided that service.

He also served federally in the House of Commons. One of the things you look at when you look at statistics, and statistics don't tell the whole story, but he won 10 elections—and it takes a lot to win 10 elections—both at the provincial level of government and the federal level of government. Consider, as well, a very urban downtown Toronto riding was where he was elected as a provincial member of the Legislature, and as a federal member in Northumberland–Durham, which would be much more rural and small-town than larger communities. But he was able to be elected there and consistently elected.

One of the things that he never forgot, as my colleagues have mentioned, is the constituents themselves, and that's exceedingly important. One can get a position, if you will—and he had positions in cabinet that have been mentioned, both federally and provincially—and having attained that position, forget about the constituency work. He never did so, and that speaks well of him.

He also was very close to family, and family are here today. When we're going through some of the history that we look at, it's interesting to note how different people have handled these circumstances. It says, "He was always home on Saturday and Sunday evenings and he never went on vacation without his children. 'It was probably to his detriment in terms of advancing his career, but he just felt his family was the most important thing,'" and that was his daughter Alison saying that. And that is important in his particular case. There are people who make those sacrifices.

Again, as is the case for so many of the members of the Legislature, he is a person who didn't need to be in

politics. He was going to be successful almost wherever he would be, certainly, in a legal career—and exclusively in a legal career he would have been very successful—but he chose to allow his name to be placed on a ballot and to serve the people, both provincially and federally, in the province of Ontario in two different constituencies.

One of the things I noted is that they always accuse, "they" meaning—John Diefenbaker used to refer to this vague "they" out there when he talked about people. From time to time, people accuse politicians of being liars. In this case, it actually fit for one reason and one purpose, and that was a very noble purpose. He lied about his age to get into the armed forces, and many people in those days did. While we may criticize people in life for not always being truthful, there's one case where, invariably, those of us in our society are thankful to people who actually didn't tell the truth about their age so they were able to serve in our armed forces. That showed a dedication to country. That showed a dedication to serving others not only within our country but in other places in the world as well. So we thank him very much for fudging the truth in that particular case and being a wonderful Canadian.

Again, the relationship to family and the relationship to their jobs out there and what might they do once they're out of politics: Allan Lawrence decided he would continue to serve, it has been mentioned, within his own community—the local hospital, the art gallery. It's easy to fade away and simply not have much to do with community, but people in public service are often inclined to do so.

Something else: It's easy to win an election when the tide is coming in, and you're coming in with the tide. He was in federal politics at a time—you think of 1974, when there was somewhat of a Liberal sweep at that particular time. He was still elected despite that. It wasn't just the matter of a tide taking him in or a tide taking him out. He was a pillar who stood there regardless of the circumstances.

I will not be repetitive of some of the things that my colleagues have said, except to say again that on the international front he was prepared to serve as well, and his love for parliamentary democracy and its importance to all of us in this jurisdiction and other jurisdictions was appropriately recognized, as well as receiving outstanding awards in terms of being a member of the legal profession.

Also, I note that when a federal opposition MP during the government of Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau, he served as the Chair of the public accounts committee, and that is a very prestigious and difficult position because you are holding a government to account. So the highest award from the Law Society of Upper Canada, the law society medal for outstanding service, and again, my friend mentioned the Churchill Society for the Advancement of Parliamentary Democracy award.

Al Lawrence didn't look for awards, he didn't look for recognition. He looked for an opportunity to serve the people of Ontario. We thank his family for sharing his

life with us, through his political life and political service with us. There is a sacrifice despite the fact he was very considerate of family while in public life; there is always that sacrifice that the family has. We thank them very much. Again, the province of Ontario is a better place because Allan Lawrence served us both in this province and in the national Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in memory of former member Allan Lawrence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I'd just like to thank you, Mrs. Lawrence and members of the Lawrence family, for being here today. We'll ensure that copies of Hansard are sent to you as a memory of the tributes that have been paid to your late husband today. Thanks for joining us.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: More petitions on the HST.

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

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

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

"Whereas the blended sales tax 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 am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Alexis.

1400

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to thank many of the nurses at the Credit Valley Hospital for having organized this particular petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

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

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Cooper to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts; and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh, MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I agree with this petition, and I'm pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to page Robyn

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's March 26, 2009, budget introduced a harmonized sales tax to be implemented on July 1, 2010; and

“Whereas the harmonization will have a deleterious effect on all Ontarians, merging the GST and the PST to a regressive 13%; and

“Whereas new home buyers will be forced to spend 6% more on any property above \$500,000; and

“Whereas additional taxes will be levied on properties between \$400,000 and \$500,000 on a sliding scale; and

“Whereas rentals of commercial property will now be taxable for the first time; and

“Whereas legal fees, appraisals, commissions, home inspections, moving costs and other services associated with purchases of property are now subject to HST;

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

“We demand that the McGuinty government not implement the harmonized sales tax, particularly where it relates to the sale of property and especially at this time of economic slowdown and recession.”

I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of members from the West Lincoln Historical Society, in Smithville, Ontario. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and shall sign it and send it to the clerk’s table.

MULTIPLE MYELOMA

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

“Whereas Health Canada has approved the use of Revlimid for patients with multiple myeloma, an incurable form of cancer; and

“Whereas Revlimid is a vital new treatment that must be accessible to all patients in Ontario for this life-threatening cancer of the blood cells; and

“Whereas multiple myeloma is treatable with the proper therapies, thereby giving hope to the 2,000 Canadians diagnosed annually;

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

“Immediately provide Revlimid as a choice to patients with multiple myeloma and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with this petition and send it with Timothy.

AIR QUALITY

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority is accepting proposals from companies for the operation of a gas-fired power plant in the Clarkson airshed study area that would see a new, very significant source of additional pollution into an airshed already determined as stressed by the MOE;

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

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

I will sign it and provide it to Cameron.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition here assembled by Lurvie Deblois from the Fiesta Filipina Dance Troupe in Mississauga. It's in support of our nannies and caregivers.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

"Whereas foreign workers" and caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support Lurvie Deblois and all the caregivers and nannies who need this protection, and I affix my name to the petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Eric.

1410

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas crack houses, brothels and other persistent problem properties undermine a neighbourhood by generating public disorder, fear and insecurity; and

"Whereas current solutions—enforcement measures based on current criminal, civil and bylaws—are slow, expensive, cumbersome and not always successful; and

"Whereas safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation is provincial, civil law which counters the negative impact on neighbourhoods of entrenched drug, prostitution or illegal liquor sales based out of homes and businesses and is being successfully utilized in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and the Yukon; and

"Whereas the following have endorsed SCAN legislation: city of Ottawa, city of Kingston, city of Hamilton, federation of Ontario municipalities, Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Police Services Board, Ottawa Centre MPP Yasir Naqvi, Ottawa Neighbourhood Watch executive committee, Concerned Citizens for Safer Neighbourhoods, Eastern Ontario Landlord Organization, Friends and Tenants of Ottawa Community Housing, Hintonburg Community Association, Somerset Street Chinatown BIA, Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa and the Dalhousie Community Association;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to enact safer communities and neighbourhoods (SCAN) legislation in Ontario for the benefit of our neighbourhoods and communities."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature and send it to the table with page Cameron T.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: "Whereas St. Mary's hospital, Grand River hospital and Cambridge Memorial Hospital in the Waterloo region are experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to population growth;

"Whereas hospitals in the Waterloo region receive \$279 less per resident compared to other Ontarians;

"Whereas the McGuinty government's policies have contributed to nursing cuts and to other staff cuts, bed closures and the closure of outpatient clinics, all of which reduce the quality of care; and

"Whereas the provincial government has secured significant additional health care funding from the federal government;

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

"That the McGuinty government provide our hospitals with their fair share of provincial funding and introduce a funding formula based on demographics and the health needs of the population."

I'm pleased to affix my signature.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Glengarry county, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform

Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontarians are currently denied full discretionary access to their locked-in retirement accounts (LIRAs, LIRFs, LIFs); and

"Whereas the monies within these locked-in accounts have already been earned as deferred salary, i.e., they are not government handouts or bailouts; and

"Whereas Ontario pensioners have already demonstrated throughout life that they are quite capable of prudent financial management, given that they have raised families, bought and sold homes and automobiles, managed investments, paid their taxes, operated businesses, among other successes; and

"Whereas similar legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 2002 has been successful and has demonstrated the wisdom and prudence of retirees; and

"Whereas a quick and immediate unlocking of pension funds would act as a significant and timely stimulus to the economy during the current recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support into law the private member's bill recently tabled by Mr. Ted Chudleigh"—my seatmate—"MPP Halton, allowing all Ontario pensioners, at age 55, full discretionary access to all monies accrued within their locked-in retirement accounts."

I'm pleased to sign this in support of my seatmate.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: On behalf of my colleagues in the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, I move the following opposition day motion:

Whereas on March 26, 2009, Dalton McGuinty once again broke his solemn promise to Ontarians and announced a massive McGuinty sales tax; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax increase will force homebuyers and sellers to pay more tax on services associated with real estate transactions, including but not limited to: legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges, home inspection fees and other closing costs; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax will cause home renovators and builders a massive McGuinty-driven cost increase through increased McGuinty sales tax charges; and

Whereas the McGuinty sales tax will cause vulnerable citizens, including seniors and renters, significant cost increases due to McGuinty sales tax charges; and

Whereas under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario homeowners have already been faced with a barrage of increased costs including skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes; and

Whereas an economic recession is the worst time for Dalton McGuinty to increase taxes and erect further barriers to home ownership; and

Whereas the housing renovation, construction, sale and resale industries are a pillar of the economy in Ontario:

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon Premier McGuinty to acknowledge that, due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with his ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes on all people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day number 4. Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Young couples struggling to make better lives for their families work hard in this province to realize a dream: owning their own home. They are willing to sacrifice in other areas and lock in to huge mortgages to make this universal dream a reality.

With homeownership comes pride of ownership. When you own your very own home, you want to make it yours—decorate it your way and landscape the property around it your way—and in many cases you instantly become part of a community of other homeowners who want to do the same.

A house is merely a structure. The environment you create in it for your family makes it a home. Many in this Legislature have probably heard common expressions that address the value of homes; for example, "Home is where the heart is," or Dorothy, in the Wizard of Oz, who says, "There's no place like home."

March 26 of this year marked a sad time for couples, both young and old, hoping to buy a house or condo, to

realize the dream to make it a home for their family to grow and prosper together or to enjoy retirement after raising a family. That's the day the roof came crashing in on many people's dreams of home ownership. That's the day that Premier McGuinty's Liberals announced their biggest tax grab yet, in the form of a blended tax that means more taxes for everyone on everything from A to Z, from accounting services to the zinc in your vitamins.

Premier McGuinty decided to merge the PST and GST, but it's the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario who will pay the price of his mistimed and misguided decision, including those who buy a home. For starters on the Premier's tax hit list is a tax on homes over \$400,000. If you are watching this debate, you might be thinking—and certainly the Premier has encouraged this type of thinking—"I can't afford a home in this price range, so I'll just shut my TV off now; it doesn't apply to me." To those people I say, please keep listening and watching. I will let you know right now how you too will be affected.

Anyone looking to buy a house listed at any price will not be able to escape Premier McGuinty's new sales tax. If you are not taxed on the sale, the Premier will tax you somewhere else along the way to buying your new home. People will be forced to pay more tax on services associated with real estate transactions, such as legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. People who decide to renovate an existing property will be taxed on home renovations and landscaping, and people who want to be good stewards of the environment by purchasing Energy Star appliances will be taxed on those too.

1420

That's on top of all the other goods and services that will be taxed by Premier McGuinty. I'll just give you a little bit of an example here: prepared foods under \$4, like coffee and doughnuts; gas at the pumps, increased 7 cents a litre and 32 cents a gallon; electricity; home heating oil; newspapers; magazines; haircuts and styling; manicures; postal stamps; Internet access fees; cellphone bills; theatre admissions; ski lift tickets; tobacco; adult footwear under \$30; financial advisory services; legal services; gym fees; arena ice rentals; sports field rentals; audiobooks for the blind; funeral services; snowplowing; grasscutting; electrical services; plumbing services; carpentry services; air conditioning repairs; furnace repairs; rentals of commercial property; conferences and seminars; dry cleaning; car washes; bicycle safety gear; bicycles; veterinary care; domestic air travel; train fares; taxi fares; bus fares; golf green fees; courier fees; moving vans.

Mr. John O'Toole: Where does it end?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, where does it end? That certainly isn't the end. This rather lengthy list seems to grow every day, and it gives a whole new meaning to the expression "The only guarantees in life are death and taxes." As a friend of mine noted with respect to taxing funerals, Mr. McGuinty now has his hands in the pockets of the last suit you'll ever wear.

Today, we're focusing on the new tax implications of home ownership. They are significant. This morning, the

Building Industry and Land Development Association released a report called Big Hit on GTA Middle-Class Homebuyers with the Ontario Budget's HST Proposals. The report was written for BILD by veteran housing analyst Frank Clayton, PhD, and it reveals several key points. Premier McGuinty's tax on new housing will grab \$800 million a year in additional taxes. GTA new homebuyers will absorb \$575 million, or nearly three quarters, of the \$800-million tax increase, while accounting for less than half of new home sales in Ontario. Middle class families will be hit the hardest by the \$800-million tax increase.

Homes over \$400,000 are not just purchased by so-called wealthy Ontarians. Thirty per cent of home buyers who purchase new homes between \$400,000 and \$500,000 have an annual income of \$70,000 or less. Fifty per cent have an income of \$100,000 or less and are firmly middle class. Stephen Dupuis, the president and CEO of BILD, in a Globe article from May 1, said that the McGuinty tax on new housing "is really a backdoor way to raise taxes and is certain to deeply affect the GTA's growth."

People who buy houses in a community buy other things in that community. It's not a stretch to make the assumption that without people moving into a community and spending, that community will have great trouble rebounding from Ontario's current recession. In fact, the BILD report released today estimates that up to 21,200 jobs could be threatened just because of Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

That brings me to the other side of the issue. I think we've established the far-reaching implications of Mr. McGuinty's latest tax grab on potential homebuyers, but the Premier's new sales tax has far-reaching implications on other industries that serve them. OREA, the Ontario Real Estate Association, represents 47,000 brokers and salespeople who are members of the 42 real estate boards throughout the province. They say that the Premier's new sales tax will add over \$2,000 to the cost of a real estate transaction. Just so we're clear here, that's just for the taxes on the paperwork needed to seal a deal on a house purchased, whether it's a new home or a resale. According to an OREA press release dated March 26, real estate in Ontario last year accounted for \$56.6 billion in sales, \$6.01 billion in ancillary economic spending and \$1.35 billion in land transfer tax revenue to the provincial government. As far as overall employment numbers, OREA states in its release that real estate directly and indirectly employs 110,000 people in the province. In the same press release, Pauline Auger, who is the president of the real estate association, made the following comments:

"Now is not the time to be erecting barriers to homeownership. We need consumers to invest in housing to help get our economy going again."

"These additional taxes could price some homebuyers, especially first-time homebuyers, right out of the market. Harmonizing will not help homebuyers in any way."

"From municipal land transfer taxes to skyrocketing property taxes, homeowners are being pushed to the

brink to accommodate increasing demands from government. A harmonized sales tax is yet another cash grab on Ontario's already overtaxed homeowners."

I digress for a moment to point out an important fact. It's clear that sources outside of the opposition parties agree that the Premier's new sales tax, under the guise of an economic plan to get us out of the recession, is just another way to generate revenue, pure and simple.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association, another example, represents 4,200 residential construction companies organized into 29 local associations across the province. This group says the residential construction industry contributes over \$38 billion to Ontario's economy and employs over 368,000 people across the province. In a press release dated April 8, the OHBA's president, Mr. Frank Giannone, says the Premier's new merged tax will negatively affect these construction jobs. Mr. Giannone said, "I just don't understand why we are spending billions in taxpayer dollars to bail out the auto industry, while destabilizing the residential construction industry with massive tax hikes that will eliminate tens of thousands of jobs."

I could go on and on all afternoon about the damaging impacts of the Dalton McGuinty sales tax on the people who wish to buy or sell a home or condo and the many people employed in the residential housing industry; however, several of my caucus colleagues would like to join the debate, and I want to afford them that opportunity.

In closing, based on their past votes on the tax issue, I would respectfully encourage the Liberal MPPs in this House to support the home ownership dreams of their constituents and all Ontarians. Stand up for the tens of thousands of jobs in the residential housing industry.

I would also call on their constituents to not let them get away with simply following Dalton McGuinty's directions. They were elected to represent you, not Dalton McGuinty and his backroom unelected advisers. Liberal MPPs can do the right thing today simply by voting in favour of our motion later this afternoon. Ontarians will be watching.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I want all the members opposite to know before I stand up, before I speak, I am going to be supporting this motion. I want to speak to whether Ontario should proceed with an HST, but I also want to speak on it from a different angle. I want to speak on it from a New Democrat angle, a social democratic angle. I want to speak about how this is going to affect ordinary people, particularly those who do not have a lot of income. This view will be very different, I suggest, from that of my Tory colleagues, and I will be talking a lot, as well, about the wrong-headed corporate tax giveaway which is also a part of this budget and which necessitates this government finding alternate sources of revenue.

Let's be clear: There is nothing at all harmonious about this tax, because what it is doing is taxing people who can ill afford to pay the tax in the first place. It is

taxing people on goods and services that were never before taxed. This new tax will tack on 8% to more goods and services than people had previously expected, had paid for and it is, in reality, a tax on a lot of everyday purchases.

Starting with the car or the van, how many people fill up the car or van at least once a week? If you have an ordinary car that gets ordinary mileage, it is not uncommon to put 50 or 60 litres of gasoline in a car per week. Before, that was not taxable, but it is going to be taxable now, and you're going to see that your gas costs, no matter what they are, are going to be 8% more than they were in the past.

1430

If you pay a monthly electricity bill, and literally almost every person in this province pays a monthly electricity bill; if you have a home heating bill, and we live in a cold northern climate, so everyone has a home heating bill, you are going to find out that in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, come next July, there is going to be an 8% increase.

If you have air conditioning—and a great many people choose to have air conditioning, even though we are in a cold northern climate, because the summers can be pretty hot and humid—you are going to find that air conditioning cost as well is going to be 8% more.

In the past, if you went out and bought a cheaper pair of shoes, you would find that those shoes were tax-exempt. Now you're going to find out that those shoes are no longer tax-exempt, and they too are going to cost you 8% more.

The newspaper and the magazine that you pick up in the morning are going to cost you 8% more. Having your hair done is going to cost you 8% more. Paying your Internet bill is going to cost you 8% more. Buying prepared foods, which you used to be able to go down and buy, if they were under \$4—and I remember the huge debate that took place in this Legislature—are now going to cost you 8% more.

I don't know what happened to that huge debate. I remember when former Finance Minister Greg Sorbara stood in this House and talked about taxing fast foods and those that cost under \$4. There was a hue and cry from one end of Ontario to the other, and there was a retreat that took place on that, because people understood that to have an ordinary coffee, to have a muffin in the morning, to have a hot dog from the vendor on the street, a slice of pizza, something to have over the lunch hour—some milk, you know?—it just did not seem real or rational to tack on 8% more. The restaurateurs from across this province were opposed to that because they saw declining sales. The government backed off. But the government is not backing off, or does not appear to be backing off, on this today.

The thing I really want to talk about is new homes. If there is one purchase that a family makes in its entire economic life, that is the one. That is the largest single expenditure they're ever likely to make. And look what happens: If you buy a new home for over \$400,000, you're going to get whacked.

I heard some of the catcalls from my friends on the other side: “A \$400,000 home—can you imagine that?”

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, I will tell you, if you live in some places in this province, you will not find many \$400,000 homes. Without a doubt, you will not find new \$400,000 homes.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: New, new.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: New ones, Michael.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, new. I don't know how many new \$400,000 homes—to my friend here from northern Ontario who keeps yelling “New”—are being built in Blind River, perhaps he might want to tell me how many or how many new \$400,000 homes are being built on Manitoulin Island or in the areas throughout northern and central Ontario. I will tell you that there are not a lot.

Today in the newspaper, as we opened it up, as everyone surmised from the beginning, we see that the places where new homes are being built for above \$400,000 are primarily in the little circle around Toronto, that place that we call the GTA. The overwhelming majority of homes that cost \$400,000 are being built in very close proximity to this Legislature. There is a reason for that. That's because this is the economic engine. This is the place where homes tend to cost more, whether they be new or whether they be used.

It is not unusual to travel the length and breadth of Toronto and to see signs going up on new homes advertising them for huge costs. I remember one day, in my own riding of Beaches—East York, going down to what was formerly the Greenwood racetrack. There are now hundreds and hundreds of new homes sitting there, and there was a big sign up on the corner of Queen and Woodbine. The big sign advertised that there were 10 homes for sale at about 2,500 or 3,000 square feet—pretty large homes, pretty nice homes, in the former Greenwood racetrack. There were only 10 left, and they were being advertised for \$1.4 million. I don't know how people could afford to live there, but that was the cost of a new home in my riding—I think, a pretty nice place, but a place, all the same, where that's the kind of cost that new homes are commanding.

As I go up and down all of the streets in the Beach and in East York, as older homes are taken down and new ones replace them—because the housing stock is all 50 or 60 years old—you will find that when those new homes are built and they go on the market, they go on the market for a lot more than \$400,000. So it is not surprising to me that the people who are going to get whacked are those who live in the downtown core of Toronto and in the GTA area that surrounds it. That is the place where most of the homes that are costing \$400,000 are being built and will be built in the future, so everyone who buys one of those is going to find a huge amount of tax. I know it's on a sliding scale from \$400,000 to \$500,000, but when it's \$500,000, it's 6% more than what is being paid here today—and you're looking at \$30,000, at minimum, of extra tax for any home that comes in above \$500,000.

Is that going to dissuade people from purchasing a new home, especially a nice, big new home? I would hazard a guess: absolutely, yes. That's what we heard today from BILD; that's what we heard from contractors; that's what we've heard from people across this entire province: It is going to hurt the construction industry.

These tax increases are going to be permanent.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm being heckled all over the place. Obviously, they don't like to hear the truth.

These tax increases are going to be permanent. It's not just for one year. It's not just for the recession. It's going to be forever. So, starting next July, for every new home that's built, for every cup of coffee that's bought, for every hairdo, you're going to see an extra 8%.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Talk about the tax credit.

Mr. Michael Prue: Now my friend is talking about his little, tiny tax credit. I'm going to talk about the little, tiny tax credit for exactly what it is: a pittance. It's \$300 for an individual, given out over three cheques, \$100 at a time, and it is an absolute pittance. The \$300 will completely run out just before the next election. Is that \$300 going to continue in perpetuity? I don't think so. But what is going to continue in perpetuity is this tax.

The tax increases are permanent. They will be felt immediately. They will be felt long after the Dalton dollars are handed out and forgotten.

With joblessness rising and people settling for lower pay, family incomes aren't rising. The tax hikes will have a real, measured impact on families' already strained budgets.

At the pump, this tax grab will add seven cents to a litre of gasoline today. That's seven cents on a litre of gasoline that is retailing in the 85 cent range. But we know that that price is not going to last forever. We know that as early as last summer, gas was retailing at \$1.35. So what is going to be added at 8% to the \$1.35 is about 10 cents a litre. So every time you fill up the gas tank, if your gas tank holds 50 litres of gas, you're going to be paying \$3.50 to \$5 extra right away. And if that cost goes up, you are going to see the cost go up as well. So every time you fill up the tank, you're going to remember what this government has done long after you've spent that \$100 cheque.

We're not just talking about nickels and dimes here. We're talking about how much this is going to cost the average family. Most people, and new car dealers will tell you this, drive their car about 20,000 kilometres a year. That's pretty much the average that a person will put on a new car built here in Ontario—20,000 kilometres a year, and the gas associated with that. We are looking quite literally at \$300 or \$400 per year just out of the pockets of struggling families to pay for that. When all the extra costs of day-to-day purchases are factored in, we're talking about a lot more. We're talking a lot more from families.

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The McGuinty government is claiming that companies will have lower prices as a result of their significant cost savings. I've heard this across the floor, and it makes me

want to chuckle because what they're asking me to believe is that when you lower the cost to the companies—when you factor in the lower corporate taxes and you see that the companies aren't going to have to pay as much in PST and that individuals will have to pay more—the companies will pass on these huge savings. I've never heard such balderdash in my entire life. After all, with the corporate tax breaks and the end of sales taxes on inputs, corporations are the big winners.

How will it get cheaper? Do you think that Exxon is going to lower the price of gasoline because we're paying 8% more? I don't think so. Do you think that General Motors is going to reduce the cost of a car, if in fact they still produce them? I don't think so. Do you think that Tim Hortons is going to decrease the cost of a cup of coffee because we're paying 8% more? I don't think so. I don't know where people get this idea that there are suddenly going to be lower prices to accommodate the extra 8% that ordinary taxpayers are paying.

Will Enbridge, Thunder Bay Hydro, Hydro Ottawa or Union Gas drop their rates to offset the 8% increase? I don't think so. I haven't heard of a single company yet say that they are going to now lower their prices in deference to the consumers who are going to pay 8% more. It's simply not going to happen.

The companies have an obligation to their corporate shareholders. They have an obligation to their board of directors. They have an obligation to maximize their profits, and they're not about to reduce those profits simply because consumers are being forced to pay 8% more. Nothing is going to cost less.

I've heard this several times from the cabinet when they stand up in question period, that they anticipate that there are going to be reductions in prices. I don't believe Ontarians believe this, and I don't believe it's ever been shown to happen anywhere as well.

Here are some of the numbers from the report by the Building Industry and Land Development Association released today. That report says that HST threatens 21,200 construction jobs and will cost buyers of new homes at least \$800 million; that the HST will disproportionately affect new housing in the greater Toronto area; and that over one third of all new homes sold in the GTA cost more than \$400,000, and even a 10% to 15% reduction in demand due to a job-killing tax would mean 7,400 to 11,100 fewer units being built. This, in turn, would result in up to \$1.1 billion in lost wages due to lost jobs. This will be disastrous, absolutely disastrous.

I also want to talk about the corporate tax cut. The corporate tax cut is part of this government's budget process. The corporate tax cut is given out to corporations who are going to see a windfall. They're going to have less and less taxes to pay for the upkeep of what we consider to be essential in this province.

Now, I can say that everybody wants to see a tax cut. I'm sure that corporations want to see a tax cut. I'm sure they're going to be thankful for the tax cut, and I'm sure they're going to go out and make their shareholders happy. But this isn't going to create any jobs.

We watched this whole trickle-down theory take place in the United States throughout all of the period of Reagan, Bush and everyone else. The trickle-down theory: Give big corporate tax cuts and watch the economy boom. I want to say to everyone who's in this room, everyone who's watching it on television, that it didn't work. We know it didn't work. You see daily that it doesn't work. The big corporate tax cuts didn't do anything to further the economy or to help ordinary people. There was no trickle down. There will never be a trickle down.

What this government is choosing to do is to take the corporate tax cuts and give them to already successful corporations that, in turn, will only do one thing with them: They will maximize their profits. That's what they're supposed to do, that's what we expect them to do, that's what they've always done and that's what they're going to do here, because these corporate tax cuts are not to create jobs. If you want to create jobs, you give the money to struggling companies; you give the money to companies that prove they are going to hire and keep people working; you give the money to companies that absolutely need it.

These monies are being given indiscriminately to all corporations, but in order to get a corporate tax cut, you have to be making a profit. We are giving money to profitable corporations. That's what you're choosing to do in this budget: give money to profitable corporations. This is not an argument about whether or not to give it to Chrysler or General Motors or to the forest industry or to all those tens of thousands of people who are losing jobs. This is about giving it to profitable corporations, and that is what this government has chosen to do. Corporate tax cuts are not there to create jobs.

We know what happened in the last round of corporate tax cuts in this province, we know what happened in the last round of corporate tax cuts in this country and we daily witness what happened in the United States: The corporations keep the money. Does anyone there expect that that's not what they are going to do? Does anyone there expect that this is not going to be a chance to maximize profits; to put up the flag for the shareholders and say, "Our company is worth more money"; and to sell additional stocks and say, "Our company is making a profit"? That's what this money is going to end up doing. It's not going to create jobs, it's not going to create wealth and it's not going to create prosperity in this province.

Ontarians have seen this movie before. They didn't believe it then, and they're not going to believe it now. They don't believe it, because politicians have tried to pitch them trickle-down economics for years and years and we've seen the results; we witness them daily on the stock market and with the announcement every month of another 30,000 people in Ontario losing their jobs.

In a recent case study—we don't have to look much further than the United States—years of corporate tax cuts have gone hand in hand with deregulation. The result is millions of families losing their jobs, their savings and their homes.

The budget couldn't have been clearer that this government is now committed to that same disparaged, right-wing, trickle-down theory. They're giving \$4.5 billion dollars in corporate tax cuts over the next three years. Some people have called this obscene. It's obscene because the tax on corporate profits and the companies that need help in a brutal recession are not the companies that are making profits right now, and they're not the companies that are getting any part of this money.

I'm at a bit of a loss to understand how the government came to that conclusion. The only thing I can think of is that there were 4.5 billion reasons why they completely reversed themselves from being opposed to a harmonized sales tax just a few months ago, to being in favour of a harmonized sales tax. The 4.5 billion reasons all came out of Ottawa, and the 4.5 billion reasons were all dollars given by Finance Minister Flaherty, who of course is a proponent of the harmonized sales tax and gave the Ontario government, I would suggest, something they fell for, hook, line and sinker.

They looked at the monies that were being made available to do this and reversed years of opposition. We do know from reading the newspapers, and by the harried and worried look on some of the backbenchers in the Liberal Party when this was raised, that this took them quite a bit by shock. We know that they within the backbench were not consulted, we know that those within the caucus were not consulted and we also know that even some members of cabinet were not privy to the signed deal between the finance minister—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Michael, you should get your eyes checked.

Mr. Michael Prue: My friend here, who wears glasses, tells me I should get my eyes checked. I suggest that if you took yours off, you might not be so myopic. Madam Speaker—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: That's a personal attack, Speaker.

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Mr. Michael Prue: Well, it could be, but I did not attack without being attacked first.

After all, Madam Speaker, it was only last November that the Premier and his finance minister rejected the HST recommendation made by his very own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. I don't know what happened since November, except that the finance minister in Canada came up with a deal you couldn't refuse.

In fact, when the report came out, the Premier worried about the impact of HST on families, and I quote the Premier: "Not only from our treasury perspective but from the perspective of consumers, some things like children's snowsuits, home heating fuel and other things like that that are really important to consumers would go up in cost." Minister Duncan added that it wasn't the time to "tinker" with the province's tax regime. But here we are; it's been done all the same.

This is a motion being made by the Conservatives. The Conservatives are opposed to the HST. I find myself in opposition to the HST as well. I think New Democrats

looking at what has been done here find that it is a regressive tax. It is going to hurt people in ways that they cannot possibly understand. It is going to hurt starting now. We're starting to see opposition from people who sell homes, opposition from people who build homes, opposition from people who work in restaurants and the fast-food industry, opposition from people who sell gasoline—opposition literally from everyone.

The government can sit there and they can think about this all they want. The government can sit there and say that everything is going fine. But I read the letters to the editor too. I read them in the Toronto dailies; I read them in the dailies outside of town. I have yet to see, save and except people on the government bench writing, a single person who supports this new tax regime. They all see the \$1,000 that is being given to families as some form of bribe with their own money, in three instalments, with the last instalment coming out just before the next election. If you are a single individual, you're going to get \$300, and that's the maximum that you're going to see. That will easily be eaten up in terms of the cost on gasoline, the cost on home heating fuel and the cost, at 8%, on your electricity. There will be very little left over from that. We do know that it's going to bring in hundreds of millions of dollars of extra revenue to this government that is going to come from consumers. At the same time, we're seeing a loss of money from the corporate sector which has been well calculated.

We believe that this is a bad budget. We believe that this is a bad measure. The Conservatives, in attacking it, are only attacking one side, but I find myself in agreement with the side on which they are attacking; that is, the HST is the wrong tax at the wrong time. It is going to hurt consumers, and someone needs to stand up for them. If the opposition are the only ones who are going to stand up for consumers, then so be it, but I think it behooves all the members of the backbench to say something about this. If you can't say it in this Legislature, then please use the opportunity tomorrow in caucus to exercise your voice and your vote and tell the cabinet that you think this is wrong-headed.

I do believe this is a seminal moment for this party and for this government. Should this bill pass, should this HST continue and should it be implemented next July, as is the plan, you are going to see the fortunes of your party decline, and decline rapidly. People will understand this in the same way that they understood the hated GST back in the time of Mulroney. You saw what happened to that once-mighty party. Be prepared to see the same thing happen to yours, because this is exactly what makes people mad in the long term. It's being nicked and dimed; it's being eight-percented time after time, purchase after purchase. I would suggest that the backbenchers have a duty and an obligation to their own party to help to ensure that when a mistake is being made, their voice is heard. If you sit back and say nothing, if you sit back and do nothing, then be prepared to take the same fate. At the same time, the consumers of this province will not stand for what is being done. The Conservatives on this issue have it right, and I will be supporting them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It is my pleasure to rise today and have a few minutes to speak on the opposition day motion. As comes as no surprise today, the opposition parties are doing what they're wont to do—we respect that; we expect that. But it will come as no surprise to those in the Legislature and listening that we come at this from a bit of a different perspective.

I'm going to begin today where I guess a lot of our members will begin. We've got a long lineup of people on our side who are willing and ready to speak to this today, and they will be doing so in short order. I've got a sense that they're likely to begin where I am going to begin, and that is to deal with the obvious contradictions in the positions taken by both opposition parties, first the official opposition and then the members of the third party.

What we've come forward with today is clearly a policy position that has been long advocated by the members of the official opposition provincially and with their federal cousins. Certainly, they have been talking about doing this for as long as I've been around here, going on six years now. During my time on municipal council, I think that this sort of discussion was already beginning to resonate within the ranks of provincial Conservatives, even back in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as I remember it. So here we find ourselves today, debating this very issue that was a policy piece that they were putting forward for a significant period of time and, I think, if truth be known, today still do.

It must be a very difficult position, especially for those who find themselves on the leadership trail right now. We've all got the quotes. They're asked the question, "Do you believe in the single sales tax? If you were to form a government in 2011, would you repeal the single sales tax?" I'm not going to repeat the quotes that are here today that we've all got.

I almost feel a little bit sorry for them, truth be known, watching how they're stumbling and bumbling as they attempt to answer the question. I do feel a bit sorry for them. It's a difficult position that they're in. But clearly, it's patently obvious to everybody around this place who knows the history of this issue that that party, the official opposition, has long been supportive of what is going on here today, and quite frankly, we know that they still are.

The members of the third party—I listened intently to the member who spoke on behalf of the New Democrats earlier today—have taken a position opposed to this as well. I also find that very interesting, given that the very recent history on this issue shows that their former leader, Mr. Hampton, a little more than one year ago had written a letter to our Premier, asking the Premier to increase the provincial sales tax by one percentage point. That was just a very short time ago.

Mr. Michael Prue: For what purpose?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, the purpose—the point would be simply that it would still be a tax increase on the people of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

The point is—the purpose aside for a moment—the point is that he had advocated for a tax increase, one percentage point on the provincial sales tax, that, as I understand it, would have been a \$2-billion tax increase on the people of Ontario.

When you go forward with that position, what you see missing from the New Democratic position is that while they were advocating for increases in the provincial sales tax, what was missing was any sort of tax reduction for the people in the province of Ontario. Unlike what is in our budget, that was not attenuated with the position brought forward by your former leader: simply a tax increase, but no tax decreases. There are going to be permanent personal income tax reductions for people in the province of Ontario, going forward. The member knows that.

I have to go to the point that they continue to spend more time on, I think, to be fair, than they probably should—I wrote it down. I think the member's words were, "More wrong-headed corporate tax giveaways." I think that's the language that the member used.

Absolutely, we have corporate tax reductions in this province in our budget and as part of our package, going forward. The member of the third party—and, I think it's fair to say, almost all members of that party—never seem to support this, but what they always seem to forget is that people work in those corporations.

I take, for example, in my riding right now, Abitibi-Bowater. There are 1,100 employees there right now—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Not today they don't.

But you don't think those people, in their head office in the United States of America, as a multinational corporation, aren't sitting back and looking forward to when they get out of this creditor protection, and aren't viewing the landscape of where the best places on the planet are to invest their money? If you don't think they're thinking about that, then I think that's unfortunate, and probably a statement that you shouldn't be making. We have significantly reduced corporate tax rates for these people.

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But more to the point, here is where the contradiction goes even further. The members of the third party like to stand often and talk about energy rates when it comes to the pulp and paper industry in the province of Ontario. I'm supportive of that effort. We worked very hard. So far, for that company in Thunder Bay, we've brought about \$40 million to the table for them—one plant—on energy plant reductions, and in this budget going forward beginning October 1, 2009, there will be a further almost \$20 per hour reduction in their energy rate. But here's the rub—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Here's the rub. The members of the third party want us to do that for that corporation, but they don't want us to do the single sales tax that will allow these groups and companies to be significantly more competitive on an international landscape. There's a complete contradiction in the position that they take; they do it all the time.

I'll tell you where I'm going to land. I'm going to land on the side of the people who provide the employment in the province. As I said, this one company supports 1,100 jobs in my community, and they find themselves right now in creditor protection, owing \$6 billion, \$2 billion of it due yesterday. If you don't think that they're viewing the landscape to make a determination about where is the best place to maintain their investments, whether they've got 20 or 30 or 40 plants left operating when they come out of this, you'd better believe they are looking very closely at where is the best place where they want to remain operational, whether it's in Ontario, BC or anywhere else.

My time is almost up, but I want to close by saying simply this, and everybody knows this: Four other provinces in Canada have already done this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Members, I'm having trouble hearing.

Mr. Bill Mauro: —130 countries have already done this, we've seen a very clear signal going forward from Manitoba that they're very seriously considering doing this; and I believe that in a week and a half, should the Liberals win the provincial election out in B.C., we're very likely to see them do that as well. The reason they want to do it is that they don't want to leave Ontario with a significant competitive business advantage when it comes to where people are going to make their investments in this country. There's a lot of evidence to support why we've done what we've done, and I thank you for your time.

My time is up, and I yield the floor to my other members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Dufferin-Caledon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to speak to the Progressive Conservative motion to debate the impact on the proposed harmonized sales tax and what it will do to Ontario's housing market. I know e-mails from realtors are going to everyone's office here. They are concerned that this new McGuinty sales tax will affect their businesses and their livelihoods, and frankly they have a right to be concerned.

Dalton McGuinty's latest tax grab will make it even harder for families to realize the dream of home ownership; families hoping to experience the pride of owning a home, who have already been hit with McGuinty's skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes.

Anyone looking to buy or sell a house listed at any price will not be able to escape the McGuinty sales tax. If you are not taxed on the sale, the Liberals will tax you somewhere else along the way to owning your new home. People will be forced to pay more taxes on ser-

vices associated with real estate transaction, such as legal fees, moving expenses, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. The Ontario Real Estate Association estimates that this could add over \$2,000 to a resale home transaction.

If you decide to renovate an existing property, you will be taxed on home renovations and landscaping. Even Energy Star appliances for your home will be subject to Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax.

In my own riding of Dufferin-Caledon, the average cost of a home is just under \$430,000, according to the Toronto Real Estate Board. The McGuinty sales tax will only exempt the homes selling for less than \$400,000; again, they're hitting the middle class. This McGuinty sales tax grab will have an effect on urban and rural areas across Ontario.

I received a letter from Dalerose Country Inc., a custom home builder in Orangeville. They're very concerned about the negative impacts the McGuinty sales tax will have on new homebuyers, residential renovators and employment in the residential construction industry. Dalerose Country is concerned that the Liberal government is unwilling to resolve unclear transition issues, therefore creating tremendous uncertainty for consumers and the thousands of construction workers, professionals and others employed in affiliated industries in Dufferin-Caledon and the surrounding communities. Dalerose Country has raised five key issues, and I would like to bring them forward today:

Inflation and rising home prices in Dufferin-Caledon will erode affordability over time, as fewer and fewer new homes qualify for a rebate. Ontarians will be subject to the highest cumulative tax burden on new homes in North America. Businesses will be deterred from coming to Ontario because their employees will face the most highly taxed jurisdiction in North America.

The provincial government is proposing billions in taxpayer dollars to bail out the auto industry, and yet the Liberals are willingly destabilizing the residential construction industry with massive tax hikes that will eliminate tens of thousands of jobs. A blended sales tax will drive some renovators and home builders to the underground economy.

The proposed structure of the blended tax on new homes has significant flaws, specifically between the \$400,000 and \$500,000 threshold. Middle-class consumers will be subject to massive tax increases.

The residential construction industry is very concerned about affordability for future generations of homebuyers and renters.

In a report prepared by the Building Industry and Land Development Association, or BILD, they have estimated the tax burden that will now be placed on new homes in Ontario. This McGuinty sales tax will result in a very large increase in sales tax imposed on new homes. For an average single, detached house in Toronto, the total sales tax paid will be just above \$96,000—\$96,000—and if you can imagine, the McGuinty Liberals consider this a positive move. This is an incredible amount of money during this troubling economic time.

Since the McGuinty sales tax would not apply to the sale of existing homes—for now—this would put the new housing market at a competitive disadvantage with the resale market.

The adverse consequences on homebuyers, housing affordability, the housing industry and the economy in general will be damaging.

The new housing industry is a significant creator of employment—and this is a time when Ontario needs to be creating and sustaining employment, not killing it. Based on 2007 housing stats in Toronto, residential development accounted for nearly \$6 billion in production, generated more than 53,000 jobs, created \$2.5 billion in wages, and produced \$1.3 billion in income, sales and payroll taxes. But that wasn't enough for Dalton McGuinty. This prosperity will drastically shrink when the McGuinty sales tax grab is implemented on July 1, 2010.

What about Ontario realtors? I know that everyone has received hundreds of e-mails from them, as have I. Not only do realtors have to deal with this economic downturn, they have to worry about how the McGuinty sales tax grab will hurt their business.

Ontario's real estate industry is essential to the provincial economy. In 2008, real estate in Ontario accounted for \$56.6 billion in sales, over \$6 billion in economic spending, and \$1.35 billion in land transfer tax revenue to the provincial government. In addition, the real estate industry employs 110,000 Ontarians directly or indirectly.

This Liberal initiative is going to drive Ontarians into the underground economy. Construction workers and home renovators are going to undercut the costs of those working above board, therefore forcing more and more workers to enter the underground economy.

The federal budget recently introduced a \$750 tax credit for first-time buyers to offset closing costs and to encourage home ownership. However, a home bought for over \$403,000 will use all of the federal tax credit, paying the incremental portion of the new McGuinty sales tax. The federal government giveth; the McGuinty Liberals taketh away.

Leith Moore, chair of the Building Industry and Land Development Association, has said that Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government have totally missed the mark on this one. He said, "It ignores the fact that housing is a long-term shelter investment which continues to pay annual property taxes, unlike other personal goods and services."

Nowhere in this Liberal government's platform did they mention the possibility of blending Ontario's two sales taxes or even the prospect of discussing changing taxation rules with the federal government, and yet here we have the HST.

Dalton McGuinty's sales tax grab will affect all Ontarians, but homebuyers and homeowners will be particularly hard hit. Dalton McGuinty needs to listen to his constituents, my constituents, and all of Ontario. Listen when they say that this is the wrong time to move forward with this ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes for families across Ontario.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I certainly am pleased to enter the debate. I just have to say that, when I hear the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Dufferin–Caledon talking about the pride in home ownership, from this side of the House, we understand that, and there has been such significant work done.

What I'm going to focus on is just the actual property tax, specifically when I hear the member from Leeds–Grenville talk about the Wizard of Oz and going down the yellow brick road. I must say, where was his voice when all the downloading happened in the previous government—service after service, and no consulting with the municipalities, just one after the other. So when I see the member rise in the House today, to stand and talk about property taxes, what did he think was going to happen when they downloaded all those services to the municipalities? Of course, the only venue that the municipalities had to raise the needed revenue for those services was through property taxes. The member was in cabinet at that time, so I can only assume that he was on the yellow brick road and really not in cabinet bringing forward his concerns—or he never actually found the path that led to the table that was actually discussing these issues. He could have provided input into it and then might have done some of the things that we did as a government.

When we think about the uploading that has happened and the work that has been done with MPAC, we recognize that there's more work to do. It's something that one must continually work with. But when I hear them talk about the pride of ownership—we understand that, and that is why we have brought forward a very comprehensive tax package. The members across the way would lead you to believe that everyone in Ontario is going to be negatively affected. There couldn't be anything further from the truth: 93% of the people of Ontario will not be affected.

What they won't talk about from across the way is the fact that this gives the business community the ability to adjust their input costs. They don't want to talk about that. What they want to talk about is a very simplistic message: a trip down the yellow brick road. You sprinkle a little bit of fairy dust around, you click your red heels and you just talk about simple things. But people understand. People take the time to figure out whether this a policy that will in fact move us forward in Ontario? The people understand; they get it. They aren't swayed by glib messages coming from across the way.

But I want to get back to property taxes for just one moment. When the downloading happened, they knew that the municipalities could ill afford it and so they would be raised. But they just did it: They forced amalgamations and continued on, and so now we hear the lectures from across the way. But since we have formed government, this has been part of the transformation. We've uploaded public health, we've uploaded disability

support, we've uploaded drug benefits, we've uploaded ambulances and we've also uploaded Ontario Works. There are percentages, and the municipalities understand that.

But we knew that there had to be a fundamental shift within property taxation that would allow the people of Ontario to not only purchase their property for the first time, but also to keep their properties. So as part of our comprehensive tax package, we increased—we doubled—the seniors' property tax credit from \$250 to \$500. These are two things that affect not only our young people buying their first home, but also our seniors. We've adjusted the property tax that goes forward on their properties; we have brought forward a property tax credit for our seniors; and for young people starting families, the \$600 child benefit—that's what it is today—is going up to \$1,100 per child per year. I can tell you that that will make a difference for a lot of people who are raising children.

The reconfiguration of MPAC: I know from my riding that something that was very important was the reverse onus on MPAC to establish how they arrive at the assessed value. The system before put the onus on the people, and forced people into areas of expertise they were not comfortable with. The reverse onus gave property owners the ability to go in and see. You can go to the website and see how they arrived at the assessed value. There will be categories of four properties that you can compare your property to. So it really does give you a scan of what you need to know.

We've also come forward with property tax credits and personal tax credits. I know the members from across the way will tell us that this is just a tax grab. Once again, these are glib statements that are made because they're simple, they're easy and they roll off your tongue. But they actually have no meaning. In fact, this will cost the Ontario coffers over \$2 billion.

When I have a call from my constituents, one of the things I say is, "Go on the website, punch in your numbers and you will know what your contribution will be," and let them be the judge of what that difference will be, and they do. They go in, they calculate it and add up the difference, and so far they have come forward reflecting the numbers we have brought forward: 93% of people will not be affected and will end up with more money in their pockets than they have today.

Thank you for allowing me to enter the debate. We have many more members who are very anxious to speak.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously, it's a real pleasure to be able to bring forward many concerns that constituents of Nepean–Carleton have with the harmonized sales tax.

The previous member spoke about the issues that the opposition—whether it's the Progressive Conservative Party or the New Democratic Party—have as being glib, that they roll off the tongue. I would beg her to remember a solemn promise Mr. McGuinty made in the 2003

election. Again, he made another promise in the 2007 election. He said, "I won't raise your taxes." That was a solemn promise made by a leader of a political party who would become Premier not once but twice and who broke his promise, who looked at the people of this province and said, "I won't raise your taxes," yet he brought in the single largest increase in taxes in this province's history, called the health tax. What did he do a year and a half after he was re-elected with a larger majority? He broke his tax promise again with an even larger tax hike on the people of this province, called the harmonized sales tax.

Despite what the member opposite says, this will impact more than 93% of the population. It will impact every single resident in this province. Every time they purchase a good or service, it's going to be 8% higher. That means that whether you're building a new home or purchasing soup and salad or putting gas in your car or purchasing Internet services or you want to buy a newspaper or you want to send a letter to your friend, or even, sadly, if you, in the process of grieving or dying, have to allot 8% more on what that is going to cost. I couldn't think of anything more crass than telling the people of Ontario, if they're in the dying process or a loved one is going to pass, that not only will this probably be the worst day of their lives, but they will also be taxed. There was once a time when they said there are two things that are certain in this world: Death and taxes. Now there are three things: Death, taxes and the certainty that Mr. McGuinty will tax you in death.

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Unfortunately Mr. McGuinty and his—I don't know if I want to call them the blind mice, the trained seals, the sheep that follow their leader, but the real challenge that we are faced with on this side of the chamber is that the public no longer believes in the government, because the government is not listening to them. At this point in time, the Liberal Party and the Liberal government are only doing what they are told. They are not listening to their constituents. I could think of no bigger betrayal of a community than sending their leader, their civic leader, their member of provincial parliament to this chamber and they are ignored.

I'm going to read into the record several pieces of correspondence from my constituents, which you must remember because you sit among us in this chamber of commoners who are elected to serve the people. You're getting the same e-mails that I am that are telling me this is not the time to put forward a massive increase in taxes, and you can't tell me that my colleagues opposite aren't receiving them. In fact, those members from Ottawa who sit in ridings right next door to mine are oftentimes sending me e-mails which are copying members from other Ottawa-area ridings. So I'm actually getting correspondence from Liberal ridings because they're not being perceived—these Liberal MPPs—as listening to their constituents.

Here's one. It's an interesting one, because it's very topical with respect to the resolution in front of us: "Dear Ms. MacLeod:

“As a resident in your riding considering the purchase of a new home, I’m writing today to express my disappointment over the 2009 Ontario budget proposal to harmonize sales taxes.

“Harmonization will add more than \$2,000 to the cost of a home transaction, eroding my ability to buy a home in Ontario. Specifically, provincial sales taxes will now be levied on legal fees, appraisals, real estate commissions, home inspection fees, moving costs and other services related to a real estate transaction.

“As an already cash-strapped Ontarian concerned about how my family will make it through this recession, I am astonished that the province would introduce a new tax at a time like this. Not only will this affect my ability to purchase a home, but it’s also going to increase my daily cost of living with the addition of PST on gasoline, personal and professional services, home heating, and renovations, etc....”

This is signed by Nicole Maradea from Craig Henry Drive in Nepean.

I’ve got another e-mail here from Timothy Ward. This is interesting because this, of course, went to the Premier of Ontario, who is my next-door neighbour in Ottawa. Those of you from Toronto, which is the majority in this House, might not be aware that Nepean–Carleton and Ottawa South actually share a combined border. This is to the MPP for Ottawa South. He happens to be the Liberal Party leader and Premier.

“Good morning:

“I recently wrote to the Premier expressing my concerns over the potential disastrous effects that this proposal will have on the economy in general and in my life in particular. Not only will it raise the costs of everything, but after years of saving, I am now in the position to purchase a new home. Will I still be able to?” Of course, this is from Timothy Ward.

I think Timothy and Nicole helped make our point today. I would hope that the Liberals, those Liberals who represent ridings similar to mine and everyone else’s, will listen to us, because this is a concern, it’s important and it needs to be addressed.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I think it’s time that we have a close look at the Conservative motion here and try and deconstruct it a little bit. What does the motion actually say? Well, to the Legislative Assembly, it calls upon the Premier to acknowledge that due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with this HST plan—the wrong time to move forward. Implicit in that statement that it’s the wrong time to move forward is the flip side of that statement: that they recognize that there’s a right time to move forward with the harmonization of the sales tax. So, while the Tories, in this motion, make it appear to members of the public that they’re opposed to the harmonization of the sales tax, they’re not. They’re in favour of the harmonization of the sales tax, and they’re making an argument about when the right time is to impose that harmonization.

When I say that they’re in favour of the harmonization, there’s some documentary evidence that supports that.

Here is a quote from the interim leader of the PC Party, Bob Runciman, from a scrum on March 25, 2009: “In principle, we think it’s something that should occur.” They agree with harmonization.

Christine Elliott, on Saturday, April 4, 2009, in the St. Catharines Standard: “I can only say that (for) Ontario right now, our party’s position is that the harmonization is something that we could take a look at perhaps in the future....” So there’s the incoming leader who’s supporting it.

Frank Klees is quoted in the Kirkland Lake Northern News. He’s a little more circumspect. He said, “If it is not possible to dismantle” the HST, “then we’ll take an appropriate action to reduce sales taxes to provide” other forms of relief. There’s someone else in favour of it.

John Tory, on January 22, 2009: “I think it’s something that many people in business and elsewhere say is going to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario and create jobs.”

Peter Shurman, on March 24, 2009: “If there’s an announcement on Thursday that what we’re going for is harmonization, I am not saying that harmonization ultimately is a bad idea.”

Let’s have a look and see what Tim Hudak said. This is from the Kirkland Lake Northern News of April 6, 2009: “Asked if he would repeal the” harmonization “tax if the Conservatives won government in 2011, Hudak would only say, ‘I’m not convinced that the tax that Dalton McGuinty has brought forward is actually going to go into place.’” He won’t make the very clear statement.

None of those Conservatives whose names I’ve just read out will make a clear statement that they’ll rescind the harmonization sales tax if it’s approved by this Legislature, yet they’ve got this motion before us that says this is the wrong time to move forward with this.

In my view, this motion is disingenuous. It doesn’t mean what it appears to say. What they’re trying to convince people that it says is, “Look, we’re opposed to harmonization.” But they won’t come out and make that clear, unequivocal statement. They waffle-waffle with this: “Well, this is the wrong time to move forward with this initiative.” Clearly they recognize that it’s a good initiative to move forward with, and clearly that’s what the leaders and the senior members of the Conservative Party have said in the past. Bob Runciman, John Tory, Peter Shurman, Christine Elliott, Tim Hudak: That’s the senior leadership of the PC Party.

It gets a little better than that, because in their 2009 pre-budget submission, the Ontario Conservative Party wrote, “The official opposition calls on this government to heed the call of the federal government and take immediate action to fix Ontario’s uncompetitive tax structure.”

Let us go back and see what the federal government wants to do in terms of the tax initiative that they want to

talk about, that the Ontario PC Party in its 2009 pre-budget submission supported. Jim Flaherty said in his budget that a single sales tax “is the single most important step that provinces with RSTs could take to stimulate new business investment, create jobs and improve Canada’s overall ... competitiveness.” Shortly after that statement was made, and again I come back to it, the Ontario PC 2009 pre-budget submission endorsed what Flaherty had to say about harmonizing the HST.

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Again, I say that when you take a close look at this motion and you reflect on the words, “This is the wrong time to bring this HST initiative forward”—that’s the substance of the motion—and you couple the wording of that motion with the previous statements of virtually the entire front bench of the Ontario PC leadership, you have to ask yourself what’s in their mind.

Why won’t they come out and make a clear statement about their opposition to HST? Why won’t the interim leader of the PC Party answer, when asked the direct question, “If you win the election in 2011, will you repeal the HST?” That’s the question that was asked of Mr. Hudak, and rather than say, “No, we won’t repeal it,” or “Yes, we will repeal it,” it’s waffle, waffle. To quote Hudak, “I’m not convinced that the tax that Dalton McGuinty has brought forward is actually going to go into place.” He won’t answer that direct question.

Why won’t they answer that direct question? Because the harmonization of the GST is a good thing. It’s good for Ontario; it’s good for the economy. The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party knows that. They should stand up and be straight with the people of Ontario and not try to baffle us with this opposition motion which talks about “the wrong time to introduce it.”

It’s the right time to introduce it; it’s going to strengthen our economy. The motion is disingenuous in my view, and just in closing, let me read the definition from the Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language, 1997. The definition of “disingenuous” is “not straightforward or candid; crafty.” This is a crafty motion. It’s not straightforward—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Oftentimes we’re in here and there will be a point of order raised for imputing motive, and I think that this covers it in terms of talking about crafty and disingenuous. I think that maybe the ember ought to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That is not a point of order, but will the member withdraw that comment?

Mr. David Zimmer: I will withdraw the statement that the definition that I read in from Nelson Canadian Dictionary of the English Language defines “disingenuous” as “crafty.” I withdraw that.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I guess we’ve just seen another example of how government members like to play ostrich and stick their heads in the sand. In fact, the Toronto

Star, April 28, reported that finance minister Duncan insists the harmonized sales tax is a hit with Ontario voters. I wish to indicate otherwise in my presentation. Even plugged ears must have heard by now that in tough economic times, the last thing we need is more tax hikes.

Ontario’s new tax—it’s the one that is a tax on just about everything, the so-called harmonized sales tax—means we pay more for meals under \$4, cellphones, telephones, Internet, coffee and coffins.

If I were to accurately quote the kind of comments that I have been receiving on this McGuinty 13% tax, I would actually have to commence with a disclaimer, and the disclaimer would be: “The following speech may contain coarse language and mature subject matter. Viewer discretion is advised.” This is the kind of feedback that I receive in restaurants, in cattle barns and at gas stations.

This 13% tax, this blended sales tax, is known as the BST, the BS tax. It’s known as the DST, the Dalton sales tax. Speaker, I will explain to you that because taxpayers feel they are being treated like mushrooms and left in the dark, they do refer to it as the HST. They’re not referring to “harmonized sales tax”; they’re referring to a horse manure tax, and I won’t explain what the “s” stands for. This is what I’m hearing. The HST starts with “horse,” and we’re going to hear that for the next year or two. I do feel that those who are phoning government members opposite with their concerns about this hare-brained scheme to raise these taxes at a time when the economy has brought so many people to their knees—people are convinced this tax is not going to fly.

The Ontario Real Estate Association—we’ve heard an awful lot about the concerns of home builders and carpenters and people who are involved in our housing industry. The new tax will add approximately \$2,000 to the cost of a real estate transaction—\$2,000 out of the average guy’s pocket. We see the PST now being applied to legal fees, moving costs, commissions, mortgage and insurance premiums, title insurance—the list goes on and on. They’ve come up with a figure now of \$300 million a year in the costs of resale homes. What does that lead to? I’m afraid that’s going to lead us further down the road of a cash-only economy.

I built my own house. If I was building houses for other people here, why would I continue past \$400,000 and accrue these kinds of added tax burdens? Are we going to see a builder stop at \$400,000, hand it over to the next guy? “You finish the drywalling, the electrical, the plumbing, the painting and finish off the house.” I’m afraid that’s what we’re going to see. We see that with so many other commodities. I think of tobacco taxes, for example.

We also know that this may well become a bigger hit than the so-called health tax. By the way, I guess my question across the floor is, how’s that one working out? I pose that to government members. Government members will recall the throng of hospital protestors who were out front last week. I would suggest that this new McGuinty 13% tax is not going to work out very well.

This so-called economic measure was proposed, we were told, to alleviate the strain on business; I can say

that the bulk of the complaints to my office have come from business people. They understand that this kind of tax increase will spook their consumers—their customers—to postpone purchases, particularly the big-ticket items. These are the kinds of big-ticket items that are required to get our steelworkers back on the job, our auto industry, farmers, families—pretty well everybody; and when I say “everybody,” I do get an awful lot of not only phone calls, but letters and e-mails.

I really feel that the concern out there is that this government is insulting their intelligence, bringing in the so-called harmonized sales tax and then offering a rebate cheque in return, essentially paying people off with their own money. There’s that old saying, “You can bribe Peter to pay Paul. Peter complains, and after a while, Paul questions why this is going on as well.”

I have also received a number of e-mails, and I’ll just quote in part from one:

“Dear Mr. Barrett,

“As a resident in your riding considering the purchase of a home, I’m writing today to express my disappointment over the 2009 Ontario budget proposal to harmonize sales taxes.” It goes on and talks about the \$2,000 cost and the various fees. I’ll quote further:

“As an already cash-strapped Ontarian concerned about how my family will make it through this recession, I am astonished that the province would introduce a new tax at a time like this. Not only will this affect my ability to purchase a home but it’s also going to increase my daily cost of living with the addition of PST on gasoline, personal and professional services, home heating and renovations, etc.

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“I am looking for a home in the resale market and the single tax transition benefit does not even come close to covering the new tax on my future home purchase.

“Please tell Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister Dwight Duncan that the government should be helping Ontarians like myself achieve the dream of home ownership. Please put pressure on the government to introduce a HST rebate program for resale housing so that I can purchase a home.”

I have hundreds of e-mails of the same ilk, and I’m sure not only opposition members but government members are getting this kind of advice as well. Basically, the advice is to reject this approach.

We know, in part, there’s a theory that this was introduced at the time basically as a bait-and-switch to divert people’s attention from the real issue, our tanking economy. Very clearly, that approach didn’t work out. It’s time to take off the blinders. You’ve headed down the wrong trail with this. You’ve picked the wrong time; you’ve got the wrong tax. It’s not too late. Pull back on the reins and turn these horses around.

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: I’ve been listening intently to all of the members and the expressions of concern from the opposition as to the situation at hand. I find it fascinating

that they would come forward with a motion that actually conflicts with the very thing they have been asking for over the last number of years that I’ve been participating. Throughout this time, they’ve been asking for the government to take on more measures for tax cuts, and they have been promoting, through our discussions, a harmonization that’s a more efficient system going forward.

Then I found it fascinating to hear the member from the NDP, who expressed some concern and said that he will support the motion. Yet, again, the third party has even considered increasing the PST as a means by which to offset some of the GST cuts that were proposed in the past.

If I put into perspective our economic situation at this time globally—we’re in this recession all around—and the impact it has on us as Ontarians and here in our local communities, it’s even more important for us to position ourselves to be more competitive in the long run. We recognize that over 130 other countries around the world have a value-added tax. We recognize also that we compete with other provinces and other states in North America. So it’s even more important for us to do something ahead of the curve.

The motion talks about the timing, and I couldn’t disagree more. The time for us to get our act together is now. Now is a time that we need strong leadership to move forward, not mixed messages from members of the opposition who have yet to come clear in terms of where they stand on this issue. We have a situation where in short order—we anticipate another year and a half or so—we can move forward and we can be in a position that’s stronger than it is now. We can only be positioned in that place of strength, so to speak, if we get some of our reform packages in place.

So let’s talk about this tax reform package that we speak of. The opposition will only talk about the notion of a harmonized tax or a single tax system. What they’re not telling the viewers and members of the media—and, of course, those that I speak to in my constituency recognize it all too well—is that we do talk in our budget about tax cuts to personal income tax and tax cuts to businesses and corporations. Why? Because we want to ensure we have a landscape that provides incentive for business investment, and ultimately job creation.

The tax reform package, when we talk about the harmonization, is important not only on the flow-through of input costs, but the fact that we’re no longer taxing our retail sales tax on top of tax. Right now, the current system is that businesses have inputs; they pay PST. Sometimes they sell to other consumers, again, with PST. So you’re taxing on tax. The flow-through on a single tax system, theoretically—and we’ve heard the argument that it will not trickle down, but it has trickled down in other provinces. The result has been lower costs, and that could be reflected to consumers.

The other part of this tax reform package being brought forward is the tax cuts—permanent, stable, sustainable tax cuts—which puts Ontario, as a jurisdiction, when it comes to personal income tax, as one of the

lowest jurisdictions in Canada. That's an incentive for business to invest as well, because they know that their employees will benefit from lower tax. The businesses themselves will have the great benefit of having lower tax by way of corporate income tax, as well as small business clawback, which will be removed. In essence, we are providing a landscape, an environment, for businesses to thrive, and providing the incentive, the stimulus, to enable those businesses to come to this jurisdiction.

We hear a lot about tax-and-spend policies that have been proposed by members of the opposition, particularly the third party, and we also hear about the opposition's proposal, which is in essence a slash-and-burn policy—neither of which is good for the times that we are in right now. We've got to take the precautions necessary to support those most vulnerable, to ensure we have sufficient funding for education and health care, at the same time ensuring that we have an environment that provides a welcome to businesses to come to Ontario.

I'm not saying this alone. Many experts agree. I can quote a few. I'll quote two.

Jack Mintz, chair of public policy for the school of public policy at the University of Calgary, says, "Sales tax harmonization will reap large benefits to the Ontario economy."

Carol Wilding, president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade: "We looked for significant tax reform. There are big bold moves in there that will make quite a significant difference. (The Ontario Budget is) very powerful from a business community perspective."

This motion talks at great length about our builders and about the real estate market. I've had ongoing discussions with some of those individuals from the home builders' association as well as Toronto BILD. I know, in speaking to my colleagues, that we recognize the great importance that industry has for Ontario. We also recognize the tremendous importance it has in creating jobs in Ontario. So we do not want to hurt the real estate industry. In fact, we're doing everything we can to try to promote and encourage greater movement in real estate.

We have to be clear that resales are exempt from PST. Seventy three per cent of homes actually sold in Ontario are by way of resale. If your home is \$4 million, you're not subject to a PST on the resale of that home. Let's be clear on that point. The point that's of contention here is the 27% of new homes that are built. But when you take into consideration that the majority of homes built in Ontario are below \$400,000, and when you couple that with the fact that all resales are not subject to tax, 97% of those homes are not subject to the HST or the tax.

I will conclude by reinforcing the fact that the tax reform package being put forward means one tax collector, which makes it more efficient and less expensive for business. It means that now you're not paying tax upon tax, but you're only paying tax at the tail end because of the flow-through of savings through the system.

Also, recall that it was the federal Conservative cousins who had been pushing hard for this harmon-

ization. They've helped, and we've allowed this thing to proceed to the extent we have because of the incentives and the funds that have been transacted in order to enable our taxpayers to benefit through this transition.

I will just end by saying that all Ontarians will benefit, in my belief, from lower personal income tax, a move to a more vibrant economy, as well as protective social services like health care and education.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak to the motion introduced today by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robert Runciman. It of course is in regard to the massive HST that was introduced by the McGuinty Liberals on March 26. Our motion today speaks to the impact that the harmonized sales tax is going to have on Ontario's housing market. We are calling upon Premier McGuinty to acknowledge that, due to the current economic downturn, this is the wrong time to move forward with his ill-advised plan to yet again increase taxes on people in this province.

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I've been surprised and I guess a little bit disappointed to hear the government questioning why we would bring forward an opposition day motion. The truth is, we are Her Majesty's loyal opposition. It is our job to be responsive to the people of Ontario, to question the decisions that are made by the government and to bring to its attention people's concerns and points of view. I would say that I cannot recall an issue in recent years that has generated as much negative feedback, whether by e-mail, telephone, written word, being stopped on the street or whatever, than the introduction of what many say is a dreaded, feared and hated harmonized sales tax.

For those Liberals who are questioning why we're here, we're here because we represent those who can't come to this House but who want to make sure their voices are represented. I can you that I have heard from home builders, I have heard from renovators, I have heard from realtors, I have heard from renters and I have heard from homebuyers and home sellers in the region of Waterloo who are all concerned about the impact of this harmonized sales tax on their homes.

I think it's extremely important to acknowledge that for some families this is going to make it more difficult to realize the dream of homeownership. I have recently heard from one young couple who were pretty excited and then heard about this. We've already been hit, in recent years, with skyrocketing property assessments and land transfer taxes. Regrettably, if you're now going to be buying a new home or a used home, you are going to be hit with the new Dalton sales tax, and you're going to be forced to pay more on services associated with real estate transactions such as legal fees, moving fees, real estate commissions, development charges and home inspection fees. If you decide to renovate your property, you're going to be taxed on your home renovations and on landscaping.

There was fear expressed by the building association. I say again to the Liberals who question why we're stand-

ing up, that we're standing up because the building association, the realtors and all the others in this province can't come and stand up for themselves, so we're representing their voices. We've been told that this latest tax grab could impact jobs in the residential housing industry, including the 110,000 Ontarians who are employed directly or indirectly in the real estate industry and the 368,000 people who are employed in the province's residential construction industry.

People also tell us that the economy is not doing well, and they believe this is the wrong time for the Liberal government to raise taxes yet again. They also remember that this is the second time that Dalton McGuinty has said, "I won't raise your taxes." Of course, the first time was in 2003. In the first budget, we had the largest tax increase in the history of this province when he introduced the health tax. In fact, everybody recently had the opportunity to take a look at their income tax form and see how much money they had to pay for the health tax—it would be up to and including \$900—at a time when the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. Member for Huron–Bruce, I can't hear the speaker. Thank you.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's interesting to hear the member for Huron–Bruce. Last week we had several thousand people on the lawn of Queen's Park protesting the health policies of Premier Dalton McGuinty. In their hospitals, they have seen beds closing, nurses fired from their jobs—and we had that confirmed today by ONA. We've seen outpatient services disappearing. We've seen wings of hospitals closing, emergency rooms announced for closure and, folks, hospital closings. So this government not only introduced a dreaded and hated health tax, but access to health services has deteriorated.

Today, we're talking about this particular issue, and I can tell you that the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association is concerned about the negative impacts of the harmonization of the GST and PST. They fear it will have a negative impact on new homebuyers, residential renovations and employment. So they are asking us to stand up for them.

They also fear that it will drive many renovators and some home builders to the underground economy. They're concerned about the 11,480 direct and indirect jobs in the residential construction industry which may well be at risk if there is less building taking place. So I'm going to support this motion and be speaking on behalf of Ontarians.

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

M. Gilles Bisson: Merci beaucoup, madame la Présidente, pour l'occasion de participer à ce discours. Je peux dire que c'est intéressant d'écouter les députés du gouvernement parler d'une manière—comment dire ? Ils sont un peu touchés négativement par tout ce qu'on entend ces jours-ci en Ontario quand ça vient à cette

initiative d'augmenter et d'harmoniser la taxe avec la fameuse TPS fédérale.

The government will argue—and it was interesting to listen to this all the way through. They were saying that they're really, really wondering why it is that opposition members, both from the Conservatives and the New Democrats, will argue that this is the wrong time to increase taxes. I guess they really haven't noticed what's going on in the economy these days. The world is in a recession, and it seems to me that one of the things that we're trying to do—all governments that are affected—is to find a way to boost consumer spending.

One of the basic things you try to do at a time of recession is make sure that you instill confidence in the consumer so that consumer continues on buying, and so that those products that are made by your neighbours and friends are being purchased and sold through some store that hopefully somebody works at in your neighbourhood. So one of the things that all governments try to do is to instill some confidence in the consumer to do some spending.

Therefore, at a time of recession, why would a government, quite frankly, decide to increase consumer taxes? You've got to ask yourself the question. That's exactly what this initiative is doing. Oh, yes, the government stands there and says, "Oh, but this is only harmonization. This is part of a bigger tax plan. This is a way of making it easier for large corporations to get tax cuts as a result of not having to pay some taxes that they would pay now," and that somehow or other this absolves them of all wrongdoing when it comes to what it means for the average consumer on the street.

The reality is, once this tax is in place and you harmonize the PST with the GST, you will be paying more taxes on consumer items. That's the long and the short of the story. You can cut this any way you want it, but at the end it means to say that our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, along with his Liberal government, has decided in a time of recession to increase consumer taxes, at a time when it's probably least advisable to do so.

There are all kinds of examples in our current tax code that will indicate that there are a number of items on which you'd currently have to pay provincial sales tax or federal sales tax, and it's not applicable to the other. So when you harmonize the tax, a whole bunch of items that are presently exempted from the GST will have to be paid by way of consumers. How do you cut this any other way than saying that the government has decided it's going to increase taxes in a time of recession? I just think it's wrong-headed.

Listen, I understand wholeheartedly why government needs the revenue to pay for essential services such as health care and basic infrastructure in our communities. We understand that costs a better part of \$100 billion. We understand that somebody has got to pay for it. I don't think there's one member in this House who doesn't get that. But do we really want to be whacking the consumer even more, at a time when homeowners are probably most ill-affected?

For example, currently under this law, if it was to pass—and I would imagine it will; the government has a majority—you will have to pay additional taxes when purchasing a brand new house over the price of \$400,000.

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I listened to the government heckle across the way, both in this debate and during question period today, where they said, “Oh yeah, but here you are, the NDP is advocating for people who have big and rich houses.” My God, how much does it cost to buy a house in most places, in a lot of our communities across Ontario? You can’t go out and buy a house for \$50,000 or \$100,000 like you did 25 years ago in Toronto. In many communities across Ontario, a house for a regular family to move into is the better part of \$400,000. So this is not a tax-the-rich kind of thing. This means a lot of consumers, would-be homeowners, who currently would not have to pay taxes when purchasing a house over \$400,000 are going to have to pay those taxes.

At the end of the day, this is going to affect the working class just as much as people with money, and probably more. Sure, there are going to be people who buy houses for a million or a million and a half who will have to pay taxes, and I’m sure there are people in my party and others who say, “Well, maybe they can afford it more.” But the reality is, a whole bunch of people who are working class, who are trying really hard to build into that dream that we have here in North America of owning your own house, have no choice but to buy the house in the market they live in, and many of those houses are over \$400,000—at a time that we are the jurisdiction in North America that pays the most property taxes.

A lot of people don’t recognize that, but Ontario has the highest property taxes of any jurisdiction in North America. So couple having to pay the highest property taxes with now having to pay a tax on a house with a value above \$400,000, and we’re going to be whacking a whole bunch of consumers who can ill afford to pay it as it is now and discouraging the sale of those homes. This means to say at the other end that, yes, some families are not going to be able to own the home that they want or maybe own a home at all, but the other part of it is that they’re also not going to be able to afford to do so, which means that a whole bunch of houses that would have been constructed may not be constructed.

We saw a report today that said this is going to lead to a slowdown in the housing industry, which means to say there is less dimensional lumber sold, which affects my constituency, where it is that we can produce lumber. It means to say that less of the goods that go into houses—everything from drywall to nails to finishing trim to windows and counters and cabinets and all those things that we produce in Ontario—are going to be sold as a result of this, at a time when we’ve got a recession going on, when we’re trying to get more people to work. If this is part of the government’s plan to end this recession, I’ve got to say, “Some plan.” My God, it’s going in the wrong direction.

I agree that the government has to find ways to pay for the programs they’ve got, but I would argue that we currently have a tax regime in Ontario that provides us with about the amount of money that we need in regular times. In bad times—obviously we’re going to run a deficit this year, but so be it. That’s what happens at a time of recession. God, even George Bush understood that he had to run a deficit in good times, let alone bad. George Bush was running deficits in the United States at a time when the economy was booming.

Deficits in themselves are not a bad thing. The key thing is to be able to afford to pay them off when the times are good. That’s the situation we’re at in Ontario. Ontario is in an enviable position that when the economy is going well, we have surplus revenue, and that surplus revenue allows us to pay down our debt. When the economy gets slow, yes, then you’ve got to run yourself a deficit, but for the government to come into the House and say, “This is part of our overall plan to deal with the recession and put people back to work,” I’ve got to say to you, you’ve got some funny way of having a plan, because it’s going to do exactly the wrong thing.

The Conservative opposition has brought in this motion as a way of trying to sound the alarm bells in this Legislature, to get the government to realize that if they truly think this is a way of being able to get more people back to work, in fact it’s going to be exactly the wrong thing to do. For that reason alone I will support this particular motion, because I think they’re right. Both Andrea Horwath and Mr. Runciman have stood in this House on numerous occasions over the last couple of weeks to point out the wrongness of what this government’s trying to do with this harmonization, and I think that they should pay heed to it.

Here’s the other part of it that I think is interesting. Do you remember the name Brian Mulroney, the name Michael Wilson? Do you remember how bad those names were? It was so bad that in the subsequent election, after they introduced the GST, they dropped down to two seats in the federal House of Parliament. Who would have ever thought that the Conservative Party of Canada would drop down to two seats in the federal Parliament?

A large part of the demise of that government was because of the introduction of the hated GST. Yes, there were other things that people were upset about, but the one unifying point, that brought everybody together, was hate for the GST. People understood viscerally that they had to pay more taxes on consumer goods and they didn’t like the idea. They saw this as the government of the day—the Brian Mulroney government—and the finance minister of day, Michael Wilson, trying to shift paying taxes from the large corporations to the consumers. The average voter understood that and said, “That’s wrong. Why should we have to pay more? If I have to pay more, it means I can afford to buy less.” It probably led to not the ideal circumstances when it came to the economy of the day, and that government was defeated and brought down to two seats.

I know that government members here are starting to feel the heat. Is it to the same degree as Brian Mulroney? I don't know. But I will say to you: Heed what happened to Brian Mulroney, because this was a disaster for them as a government and brought them down to two seats.

It was interesting to listen to the tone of the debate this afternoon, because many of the members on the government side, in their defence, were quite animated in trying to explain this as being a good thing and how the opposition was wrong, and going out of their way to use language to make it look like only they understood what was good and that the public was on their side. Well, excuse me, but the public is not on your side on this.

I'm sure your brother-in-law, your mother, kids, aunts, relatives, neighbours—I'm sure some of them will support you. In bad times you'll still get their support, it doesn't matter what you do. But the average consumer in Ontario—I don't care if they live in a Liberal riding, an NDP riding or a Conservative riding—is not in favour of having consumer taxes increased. That's the long and short of it. The government can cut this any way they want. At the end, what it means to say is that we're going to pay more for consumer goods.

The other irony of this whole thing—one of the Conservative members raised this; I was hoping I'd be the first to do so, but good for her. I forget her name. Lisa—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: MacLeod.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—MacLeod raised it. Sorry, I was digressing there for a second. She said that the irony of all this is that you're going to have to pay taxes into death. It does mean that when you go out to buy and pay for a funeral—be it the casket, the funeral services, the chapel services and the rest—you're going to have to pay extra taxes to bury a loved one, or your estate will have to do so. Currently, the GST exempts that, but it's not exempted by the provincial sales tax. Once you merge the two taxes, it means you're going to have a 7% increase on all funerals. It's kind of an irony: They're going to get you coming and they're going to get you going out, and you're going to have to pay a lot more taxes at both ends of that particular equation.

I say to the government members that they should heed what the opposition has been trying to say. Don't try to couch this as some sort of economic development tool to help people get back to work, because we know very well that the worst thing to do, at the end of the day, is raise taxes on consumers during a depression or a recession. All this is, short and sweet, is a tax grab on the part of the McGuinty government. You can't cover it any other way.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this motion. I think it will not come as a surprise to the members that I will be speaking against this motion, and I will state some facts as to why I'm going to be voting against this motion. We know that in a debate, emotions run high and

we say things and muddle the truth, we muddle the facts. In the time allotted to me, what I want to endeavour is to get some facts on the record, black and white.

Fact number 1: The proposed combined sales tax, the GST plus PST, does not come into force until July 1, 2010, 14 months from now. I hope that we will be out of the global economic recession by then, and that there will not be in place what is happening in the economy right now. By all economists' accounts, it seems like we are on the mend. The purpose behind having this proposed combined sales tax is to ensure that we give a competitive advantage to Ontario businesses, so that when we are out of this recession, we are better positioned to compete globally.

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This motion speaks to the impact on homes, on houses, the building sector in Ontario. So fact number 2 is that the proposed combined GST and PST will not apply to resale homes. I'd like to repeat that again: The combined GST and PST will not apply to resale homes. Resale homes will still remain exempt from the PST.

Fact number 3 is that it will only apply to newly built homes, but homes that are above \$500,000 in value. Any home that is \$400,000 or less will be treated exactly the way it's treated today. For any homes that are between \$400,000 and \$500,000, there will be a proportional tax applicable. And as I mentioned, \$500,000-plus homes will be taxable.

That then begs the question, what's the percentage, the magnitude of resale homes and new homes in Ontario? How many people are impacted by this proposed combined GST and PST? The majority of homes sold in Ontario today—73% of homes that are sold in Ontario today—are resale homes, and as I mentioned earlier, resale homes are not subject to the proposed combined GST and PST. In my riding of Ottawa Centre, the majority—perhaps over 73%—of the homes are resale homes. So nothing will change between how things happen today and July 1, 2010. In fact, 97% of homes that are sold in Ontario are either resale homes or new homes below \$500,000. As I mentioned earlier, things don't change; things remain essentially the same if your newly built home is less than \$500,000 or it's a resale home. So we're basically talking about 3% of new homes which are sold in Ontario. That's what we are talking about, so I wanted to get that fact out.

Fact number 5—I believe I'm at fact number 5—is that the proposed tax, the combination of the GST and PST, will operate just how the GST does, which means that the builders of homes will receive an input tax credit for everything they use to build the home. Today, what happens is that the builders of new homes get an input tax credit for all the material they use for the GST portion of it, but they don't get that for the 8% PST paid. We're talking about building equipment, we're talking about office supplies, we're talking about all kinds of construction materials—nails, bricks, cement, lumber—you name it. Every time a builder buys these products to build a house, they are paying 8% PST. And what happens

with that 8% PST? That 8% gets embedded in the cost of the house. As of July 1, 2010, the builder will get that 8% back, so the cost to build a house will come down. It should come down. We should demand from the builders that they pass on those savings to the consumers—consumers deserve it—because they will be getting the 8% PST, which they don't get back today. In the new regime, they will get that back, and they should pass the savings on to the consumer.

Fact number 6: The member from Timmins–James Bay was talking about increasing taxes. In fact, all the opposition members talked about it, but what they forget and neglect to talk about is that in this budget there are also significant personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts. The opposition presents to Ontarians that somehow the government of Ontario is just harmonizing the GST and PST, but they never mention the fact that there are significant personal income tax cuts and corporate income tax cuts also in this budget to balance the impact on some goods and services where the cost will go up because of the 8%. So when we're talking about personal income tax, the fact is that if this budget is passed, Ontarians will get a tax cut worth \$10.6 billion, and that's a tax cut every year. Ontarians who make \$80,000 or less will see a 10% reduction in their taxes, not to mention the sales tax credit of up to \$260 per adult, per child, which is also a permanent sales tax credit which is embedded, and other features as well.

Similarly, corporate income tax cuts: \$4.5 billion worth. The general corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 14% to 12% and then to 10% by 2013. For small businesses, corporate income tax is being reduced by 18%. The small business deduction surtax is being eliminated.

All these features are going to assist businesses; the personal income taxes will assist Ontarians. It's important that that fact is outlined.

I firmly believe that this is a balanced budget and is a budget which will help Ontario weather this storm and come out stronger than we were before.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 4. 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 to the motion will please say "nay."
In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1617 to 1627.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Runciman has moved opposition day motion number 4. All those in favour will please rise.

Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Gélinas, France

Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Prue, Michael

Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldeep
Kwintar, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 44.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MINES

Mr. Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Debate? Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am honoured today to lead off debate on Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, legislation aimed at bringing our mining legislation into harmony with the values of today's society while at the same time promoting a strong, vibrant and competitive mineral industry.

I'm not sure that everyone in the province realizes how important mining is to them, but this morning, average Ontarians woke up in a home fabricated with stone, steel and other materials made out of minerals mined in our province. They showered in bathrooms made out of ceramic tiles, with stainless steel fixtures made out of materials fabricated from minerals, and they brushed their teeth with toothpaste made with minerals.

Interjection: I didn't know that.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That's true.

Their breakfast consisted of food raised by farmers who enriched their soil with lime, peat and fertilizers made out of minerals. The farmers' crops were planted,

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles

Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth

maintained and harvested with metal machines and implements made out of minerals.

They rode to work in automobiles, buses and trains made largely out of products made from minerals, everything from engine blocks to brake linings to catalytic converters, and they travelled over roads and rails made out of materials mined and quarried in Ontario.

Those who work in offices switched on computers made of components fabricated from more than 30 minerals and metals.

In hospitals, minerals help save lives and improve our health. Radioactive cobalt and iridium are used in life-saving cancer treatments, and as we know, most advanced state-of-the-art medical equipment is made out of materials made from minerals.

The electricity powering homes, businesses and industries is generated by nuclear plants fuelled by uranium or metal turbines spinning in hydro generating stations.

When we want to celebrate, acknowledge and reward, we do it with items made out of Ontario-produced gold, silver, platinum and diamonds.

From the blades on the skates of boys and girls aspiring to represent Canada in ice hockey arenas around the globe to the Canadarm on the space shuttle on the frontiers of space, the products of mining are all around us. The products of mining are everywhere in everyday life: in medicine, in transportation, in electronics and in consumer goods. They enable our technologies. They are the basis of our scientific breakthroughs; they are our springboard into the future. Mining is quite simply vital to life as we know it.

I am proud of the role Ontario plays on the global mining stage, and I cannot possibly overstate the importance of the mining sector to Ontario's economy. Ontario is Canada's leading jurisdiction for the production of non-fuel minerals and a major player in the world. The province's mineral production in 2008 was valued at \$9.6 billion, with its 27 metal mines generating \$6.6 billion for the economy. Ontario led the country in exploration expenditures in 2008 with \$667 million, and despite the challenging economic times we're going through is expected to lead again in 2009.

Ontario leads Canada in the production of nickel, gold, cobalt, copper and salt, as well as cadmium, selenium and barite. Ontario is Canada's only producer of phosphate, nepheline syenite and indium. Active mining claim units reached 363,000 in 2008, exceeding 2007's record level of 308,000, which was itself a record level for the sixth year in a row. Currently, there are 41 operating mines across Ontario, including 16 base metal mines, 10 gold mines, Canada's only platinum mine, 14 industrial mineral operations and, of course we're very proud to say, Ontario's first diamond mine.

The diamond mine, De Beers Canada's Victor Mine in the James Bay lowlands about 50 kilometres west of Attawapiskat, is estimated to contribute \$6.7 billion to the Ontario economy over its projected 12-year life. The mine created 600 jobs during construction and 400 new full-time jobs when production began in July 2008.

The Toronto Stock Exchange is considered the mine financing capital of the world. In 2008, the TSX was home to 57% of the world's listed mining companies and was among the leading exchanges for mining capital raised. Toronto is also home to around 400 mining and exploration companies and 260 other mining-related companies.

Approximately 100,000 people across the province are employed directly or indirectly in the mineral industry. Furthermore, the mineral sector is the largest private sector employer of aboriginal workers in Canada.

You can understand why the mining industry is so important to the province of Ontario. May I say our government remains wholly committed to building on our industry's status as a world leader in mineral exploration and development—and that means embracing sustainability. With that in mind, we made sustainable mineral development the central theme of our province's first-ever mineral development strategy, introduced by our government. The strategy's four key initiatives are: (1) promoting long-term sustainability and global competitiveness; (2) supporting modern, safe and environmentally sound exploration and mining; (3) clarifying and modernizing mineral resource stewardship; and (4) promoting community development and opportunities for all.

One of the action items under our mineral development strategy was the modernization of the Mining Act, and that speaks to our view that our mineral wealth is both a gift and a responsibility that must be managed effectively for the benefit of all Ontarians in the future.

If passed, this legislation would revitalize Ontario's approach to mineral exploration and development. It proposes very bold steps toward making our Mining Act modern, effective and innovative through legislation that would balance all of our respective interests and benefit all Ontarians. Moreover, it will provide the clarity and the certainty that the minerals industry has been seeking. In so doing, it would ensure that an absolutely critical economic catalyst in Ontario remains strong and in a position to strengthen our communities.

It delivers on the promise made last July by Premier Dalton McGuinty when, as part of his announcement of the far north planning initiative, he called for new approaches to mineral exploration and development that would be more respectful of aboriginal communities and private landholders.

The Premier's promise presented us with a very challenging task, and I must say he set an ambitious timetable. But I want you to know that I took up the challenge with great enthusiasm and, perhaps, a little bit of trepidation as well. But I believe that we have succeeded in drafting legislation that would fulfill the Premier's promise, and we have done it by insisting upon a balanced approach that sought to reconcile all divergent views, again for the benefit of all Ontarians. This balanced approach was in my view the only way we could achieve our social and economic goals, and may I say I am very pleased with the outcome.

There are certainly many features to the act, but there are two features of the modernization process in which our ministry and I myself take particular pride.

First of all, this proposed legislation is groundbreaking in several significant areas. For instance, it would expressly incorporate aboriginal consultation in legislation and regulations. It would also introduce a requirement for completion of an awareness program to obtain a prospector's licence and it would introduce a dispute resolution mechanism for aboriginal-related issues in mining.

These provisions would make Ontario a leader in mineral resource stewardship. No other jurisdiction in Canada has such provisions.

Second, our draft legislation draws on a consultation process that was by far the most comprehensive ever undertaken by my ministry. Since launching the formal process last August, we have benefited from the input of approximately 1,000 individuals and organizations, including the minerals industry, environmental groups, municipalities and private citizens.

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Our proposals reflect the input of all major aboriginal organizations, with approximately 100 First Nation communities. These groups participated in workshops and community meetings across the province or presented individual submissions on issues that were of special concern to them. Let me say that it has been an honour and a privilege to engage with so many leaders and representatives of our First Nations and Metis communities and to hear them speak so passionately about matters of great concern to their people.

Some elements of this consultation process, such as the 12 community workshops hosted by the Union of Ontario Indians, were groundbreaking in themselves. Naturally, participants brought their own viewpoints and concerns to the table; we would expect that. At times, the gulf between us seemed quite wide, and on occasion it was difficult to reconcile our diversion interests. But in the end I think we grew to understand each other better. I think we gained a far better appreciation of and respect for all our different needs and aspirations, and therein lies the essence of communication. As a result, our draft legislation is much sounder, and we are all richer for the process.

I believe we have laid a solid foundation for the future, and I am very proud of that. Nor will the dialogue end with the introduction and the debate on the bill. There will be more opportunities for input as the bill moves forward. If it is passed, there will be more consultation involved as we draft regulations and begin implementation.

Interjection: Good idea.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It certainly is. On that note, I'm delighted to tell you that, through the 2009 provincial budget, our government has made a very strong commitment of \$40 million over the next three years to implement our modern Mining Act.

One of our main objectives in launching the modernization process was to ensure that mineral exploration and

development is undertaken in a way that respects the rights and interests of Ontario's aboriginal communities. First Nation communities and aboriginal organizations have certainly told us that they want meaningful and informed consultations throughout the mining sequence. Many communities also have some concerns about the way prospectors and mineral exploration companies gain access to mining lands under our current system.

At the same time, the industry places a high value on this competitive system, because it gives individual prospectors, junior exploration companies and major mining companies equal access to lands that are open for mineral staking. Although there is no automatic right to mine, this system of securing mineral tenure is also important to investors, because it provides them with the knowledge that they have the right, when a defined set of conditions is met, to move a project through the mining sequence from prospecting to extraction so they can recoup their investment. Industry has also told us that it would be a serious problem for them if they had to reveal their exploration plans before they had secured their ground through a staked claim.

In our proposed legislation, we have tried to balance these positions in a way that is fair to all and that benefits all Ontarians. For instance, our modernized approach would include provisions that would allow to us withdraw significant aboriginal cultural sites from claim-staking. It would also help us modernize the way claims are staked through the phased introduction of map staking across the province. Notification of aboriginal communities will take place immediately after a claim is staked, and requirements for prospectors and companies to notify aboriginal communities of plans for exploration activities within their traditional lands will be part of the legislation.

In addition, the proposed legislation would introduce a graduated approach to aboriginal consultation, with the scope and degree of that consultation tied to the impact of the proposed exploration activities. Under this graduated approach, consultation and accommodation requirements would be outlined, environmental rehabilitation would be required and exploration work plans or permits would be required for activities.

To provide additional certainty for both the communities and the mineral industry, I am proud to note that Ontario would be the first Canadian jurisdiction to build a dispute resolution mechanism for aboriginal-related issues into its mining legislation and regulations. And to ensure that prospectors understand their responsibilities under these new provisions, we would require them to undergo awareness training before they get their licence.

I would also like to point out that many exploration and mining companies have already adopted best practices as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility. What I have outlined are very significant changes. They really would address some of the key concerns we heard during our consultation process.

Another objective in modernizing the Mining Act was to mitigate the conflicts that have arisen between mineral

exploration companies and private landholders who do not hold the mineral rights on their properties. While the situation affects a small number of properties—only about 1.4% of the land in southern Ontario, for example—we do recognize that the issue has certainly been a vexing one for many, many landholders. Ontario proposes to withdraw crown-held mining rights in southern Ontario where surface rights are privately held while respecting existing claims and leases.

To address the concerns about staking during this interim period prior to the act receiving royal assent, I have ordered that these lands be withdrawn from staking. If the bill passes, then the withdrawal order would no longer be necessary as the new provisions of the act would take effect. In northern Ontario, private land holders could apply for such for such withdrawals. Ontario would consider criteria such as mineral potential before deciding whether to grant them again. Existing claims and leases would be respected.

When private land is involved as well, there would be enhanced requirements for notification as well as provisions covering the post-staking and exploration stages. Across Ontario, where there are existing claims and leases on privately owned surface rights, the proposed graduated regulatory approach would be followed. This would include enhanced notification and environmental rehabilitation requirements—a big improvement from the past. In addition, owners of patented mining lands who are not using that land for mining purposes would be able to apply for an exemption from the mining land tax. This would end a tax that has been viewed by some as unfair.

These proposed changes would address the concerns of private property owners, provide clear rules to the exploration industry and reduce the impact of mineral exploration on the environment. They would provide clarity and certainty to the mineral industry and to communities and areas of mineral exploration activity.

Our proposed legislation also responds to calls for greater consideration for the environment. It would reduce impacts to the environment by including remediation requirements in our new graduated regulatory approach to exploration activities. It would embed in legislation the provision that no new mine opening can occur in the far north unless there is an approved community-based land-use plan. The implementation of map staking—a modern commuter-based system that doesn't require stakers to enter or disturb the surface of the land—would reduce the already low impact of ground staking.

Those are certainly some of the highlights of our modernized approach. I firmly believe that it sets a framework that supports significant strides in aboriginal consultation. At the same time, it steers a wise and a prudent course that balances all our social and economic interests. I do acknowledge that in the short term these changes may require some adjustments, but I feel strongly that in the long term our proposals would strengthen the industry and provide new opportunities for growth, particularly in our northern, rural and aboriginal com-

munities. Certainly, we cannot forget the importance of economic development to First Nations and Métis communities. They have told us very, very clearly that they want to see meaningful employment and business development for aboriginal people in mining, forestry and other natural resource-based industries. Our proposals would help ensure that aboriginal peoples participate more fully in mineral sector activities in their territories.

Working in conjunction with other government initiatives, such as the \$30 million that has initially been set aside for resource benefit sharing, our proposed legislation would foster partnerships in development, promoting prosperity for aboriginal communities and Ontario as a whole.

Resource benefit sharing is about including aboriginal communities province-wide in the many benefits of natural resource development in Ontario. It also means promoting skills training, job creation, and economic spin-offs for aboriginal communities, as well as encouraging business partnerships between those communities and natural resource companies.

1650

I'd like to point out that many exploration and mining companies are, on their own initiative, already forming productive partnerships. Right now, there are more than 50 agreements currently in place between First Nations communities and industry.

The fact is that we set out to create a modern Mining Act that would promote balanced development that benefits all Ontarians, while modernizing the way that mining companies stake and explore their claims. At the same time, we wanted our legislation to continue supporting a vibrant Ontario minerals industry that would help our communities realize their economic and social aspirations. I believe that our proposals succeed in meeting those objectives.

If passed, our modernized Mining Act would help us ensure that Ontario remains one of the best places in the world to live, to work and raise a family, as well as for mineral exploration and mining investment.

I want to conclude my remarks today by expressing my view that, for all intents and purposes, the Mining Act is truly a living document. We all know that the Mining Act must reflect changes in the mining industry and the expectations of society. Mining and societies are nothing if not dynamic. Globalization, technological advances and stakeholder expectations are dictating a permanent state of redefinition and rising expectations for the mining sector in Ontario and around the world. As the industry is redefined, so too must be the legislation governing it.

Our commitment to modernize the Mining Act is rooted in policy objectives that foster a business climate that promotes sustainable economic development and community engagement, objectives in keeping with the goal set out in Ontario's first-ever mineral development strategy.

The bottom line is that mining will continue to be one of Ontario's economic pillars. As nations around the

world advance, the need for minerals will increase. Ontario will continue to be a global supplier of many different minerals. The question is not whether or not mining will be done in Ontario, but how it will be done. This updated Mining Act will define how it is done to reflect the realities and the expectations of Ontarians in the 21st century.

By getting the Mining Act right—and we know how important that is—we can ensure that Ontario remains one of the best places in the world for mineral exploration and mining investment. We have the opportunity to advance legislation that continues to promote sustainable development in a way that respects the environment, communities and individuals.

I would like to close by thanking the many people who have been involved in modernizing the Mining Act for their ongoing commitment and contributions to advancing legislation that is so fundamentally important to Ontario's prosperity: certainly, members of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, who worked very, very hard; all the communities that have participated; and may I say all those who have also felt free to share their thoughts as we introduced the legislation last week. We appreciate the support, but we also are looking forward to the full debate and any concerns that come forward. The fact is that this has been a remarkable process. I'm very proud to say that we look forward to the debate and we believe that we have achieved our goal of finding the balance that's needed to modernize the Mining Act in a way that will give us opportunities that we know are so important for the future.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It was interesting to listen to the minister. I know the minister is very committed to mining; I'm not sure his party is.

The importance of mining to Ontario: As the minister pointed out, it's not only important today; it goes back to our very beginning. Ontario has had a huge mining industry, and of course a lot of that mining industry developed with the development of CP Rail, the first rail line that went across northern Ontario and opened up the north and made it available. As they were blasting through the rock, the rail company of course had geologists with them, and they were finding considerable amounts of valuable materials and minerals.

The minister pointed out that Ontario does lead in gold production, silver production, palladium, salt, copper. He didn't mention that uranium, which we used to lead in; we don't lead in it anymore. He didn't mention nickel, of course, which was one of Ontario's hugest productions at one time. I believe Thompson, Manitoba, and soon Labrador will be outproducing Ontario by a significant amount, which is too bad. We could have had more production in Ontario if we had had a more benevolent way in which the mining companies could extract these minerals from the ground.

This Mining Amendment Act is long overdue. Hopefully, when we have a look at the act and when we see

the regulations that will come with it, it will lead to a more vibrant mining industry. I have my doubts, because I think this bill is going to put more red tape in the way of mining companies as opposed to solving their problems.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I listened intently to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and what he had to say. We got a bit of a geology lesson here and a bit of a mineral lesson in terms of the kinds of things that each of us uses every day. There is no doubt that much of what we use is mined, and there is no doubt that, through the smelting process and everything else, we have built a mighty and a wonderful society based on what we have taken out of the ground.

There is no question in my mind, and the minister is right: The Mining Act is ancient. The Mining Act is as old as Confederation, or darn near it, and it was time that it be updated. But I have to question, and perhaps my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, who is our expert on this field—mining seems to have been booming. Notwithstanding the fact that we had an ancient act, mining has been booming across all of Ontario. Every time that I speak with the miners or meet the miners, they're talking about how the cost of the commodities keeps going up. The profits being made by the mining companies are huge. When I go to Sudbury and talk to Inco and to its predecessor, everything seems to be going—or at least was going—fairly well under old legislation.

The problem, as I see it, with the Mining Act isn't about the mining itself, but it's about the problems related to staking. It's about the problems of people going out and doing the surveys and looking at the land, and the way that it impedes on private property and the ownership of private property, especially when it relates to First Nations.

Now, I didn't hear the minister talk a great deal about First Nations, but for me, the nub of it comes down to the First Nations. Are they going to accept this bill? Are they going to be protected, particularly north of the 51st parallel? I think that is the whole debate and what I need and others need to hear as this bill fans out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I too—

Interjection: You were a little slow, Mike.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Maybe my enthusiasm got ahead of me. But I listened with great interest to the presentation by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know the operative phrase is to “modernize” the Mining Act, and I do stress that it's very, very important to realize that we can learn from the past.

My family has been involved in gold mining, and when I say that, I guess I'm going back 160 years ago. My great-great-grandfather saw three of his brothers leave Port Dover, get down to New York City, catch a

boat to Panama, buy horses—across the isthmus, up the California coast to San Francisco to be there for the 1849 gold rush. Two of the brothers at that time did very, very well. A couple of their sons did very, very well. They have the claims. We have the family claims.

I was out there this past summer. I had an opportunity to go in one of the tunnels; we pulled out quartzite. I brought some quartzite back. I've got it sitting on my fireplace. That would be my great-great uncle. Tunnels all through the California Sierras—this is in the Yosemite area. Some of the family—the one brother, Henry, California Harry, was also in the Okanagan. There was a Kimberley goldfield just north of there, and much of the business there was mule teams to bring supplies up there. We can learn an awful lot from what was done 100 and 150 years ago. We can modernize this, but we have to respect the knowledge and wisdom of those miners and the very hard work—I know that in my family the work continues in the goldfields in California.

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

1700

Mr. Mike Colle: It's clear that the minister is very committed to mining and the impacts that mining has, positive and negative—obviously mostly positive—on the people of Ontario and especially the First Nations people. He went on at length about the incredible dialogue they've had with the Union of Ontario Indians and all these incredible First Nations groups; they've been consulting since last August. I think the consensus is that they have come up with a very good framework for a piece of legislation that has been waiting in queue for 100 years.

The minister also pointed out how important mining and mineral extraction is, not only to northern Ontario but to the economy of Ontario in general—certainly the connection with Bay Street and all the mining entrepreneurs who have been here in Toronto for decades and decades as motivators of the capitalization of Ontario's minerals. It's a very important industry, and I think that those of us who live south of the 401 sometimes forget how important it is that an industry like mining thrives.

In this global economy, as he said, it's critically important to understand where Ontario stands, and where Ontario's future will be, because the demand for minerals—and Canada and Ontario are rich in minerals—will be something that will sustain us for generations to come. What we do to mining is critically important for Ontario's economic future, and I think that Ontario looks to have a bright future—no pun intended—with the diamonds in Attawapiskat. It's something that is crucial for Ontario's economic future and the economic development of all of Ontario, especially the northern part.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to truly thank the members for Halton, Beaches–East York, Haldimand–Norfolk and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments, and

particularly the members for Halton, Haldimand–Norfolk and Eglinton–Lawrence for their support for the legislation and for the efforts we are making to find a true balance for the mining sector that actually allows us to maintain a vibrant, positive investment climate for mining while at the same time being more respectful of our aboriginal communities, our partners and other people who are involved in this process. I must say that the wisdom and knowledge the member from Haldimand–Norfolk asked me to take into consideration—we have listened to so many people during the consultation process, and I respect that. As for the member from Beaches–East York, I appreciate your comments.

Certainly there is no question that the support we've received from the aboriginal community has been most impressive. Last week, Grand Chief John Beaucage, leader of the Anishinabek Nation/Union of Ontario Indians was by my side acknowledging what an important process we had gone through in terms of the consultation process, and he was very supportive, as was Ontario regional Chief Angus Toulouse, again recognizing this was virtually an unprecedented process. May I say that the fact we are recognizing aboriginal and treaty rights in the preamble and the purpose statement of the legislation itself is also something that has never happened before, in terms of our legislation in this province, so the support is there.

There's no question that there will be much more discussion, much more work to be done, but again, the goal is clear, and I think we've achieved that goal, which is to find that balance between maintaining a positive investment climate and finding a more respectful relationship in terms of our aboriginal communities. I look forward to further debate of this very important legislation.

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

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You may not be applauding when I'm done. Let's start off and do business here. Our friend page Cameron is bringing me two—this is a two-glass speech, so you're in for it.

First of all, let me just pick up on what the minister said in closing. He said that he went through this consultation process and how wonderful it was, and at the end of the day, he achieved balance and got consensus. Nothing could be further from the truth. You know that as well as I do.

What was really telling at the press conference on Thursday of last week was who was not there. Yes, Angus Toulouse was there and Mr. Beaucage was there; no question. But people such as the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, the people who are most affected by this legislation—because this legislation speaks to the far north, which is all of NAN territory—were not there. In fact, Grand Chief Stan Beardy was pretty clear in his displeasure about what this legislation didn't do and put out a press release on Thursday saying that this thing stops short of what they've asked for, and that was the issue of

consent. So let's not say that we got a balance, because we didn't get a balance.

Is this a step forward? Yes, it is. I don't disagree. There is an attempt in here to try to deal with the real issue, which is how to make sure that First Nations are not left aside when there is a mining project on their traditional territories. Yes, there is going to be a process under this legislation whereby everybody, from the prospecting community to the operators of the mines themselves, will have to have a form of consultation with the First Nations. But at no point in that consultation process will there be an absolute right of the First Nations to say yes or no to the project—and that's what they were asking for. So let's not say that this is a great victory for First Nations. There are a lot of First Nations—I know, because I called a number of them as of Thursday, and I've had a number of them call me back. As you know, I've been pretty active on this particular file for years. So I have to say to the minister, up front, that it doesn't really deal with the core issue of being able to say yes or no to a project.

I find this an odd spot to be in, because I've been advocating for years in this Legislature that we move in this direction.

I was the member who brought in, if you remember—I don't know if you were here at the time—the very first motions and bills on the issue of revenue sharing. What I was trying to get at in those bills was that we need to get away from the practice we've had in the past of saying that First Nations should be sort of like innocent bystanders when it comes to any development that happens in mining on their territories. The reason I had done that—and I've got to tell the story—is I could see that in the future there would be far too many problems trying to get projects forward because more and more First Nations are demanding what they should have demanded a long time ago, and we would have more and more conflict as a result of mining intruding on to their territories if we didn't have some mechanism to deal with two things: One was revenue sharing, which I'll get into later, and the other was land use planning.

I say to the government across the way, the bill achieves neither of those points. It brings you part of the way toward giving First Nations the right to be consulted, to be informed of what is going to happen on their traditional territories—that's a step forward; I'm not going to say that's bad, because that's something I would have put in a bill—but it doesn't deal with the final issue, which is being able to get revenue out of a project in their traditional territory, as I would in a municipality such as Timmins or Sudbury or Red Lake. A municipality automatically has a right to revenue from those projects if they're in their boundaries. That's called municipal taxation. The citizens of those communities automatically have a right to those jobs because of their vicinity to the project. With First Nations, it's not as clear, because if a mine is established on their traditional territories, there's absolutely no right to revenue, even in this legislation, or what's currently on the books in the legislation of On-

tario—and there's been no ability to even be informed that there was going to be exploration on their territories. So the legislation deals with the informed position, but it doesn't deal with the issue of consent.

So I've got to say to the government that if your stated goal was that you wanted to provide First Nations with the assurance that if a project went forward, (a) they would be informed; (b) they would be in the driver's seat when it came to helping shape what good land use policy should be; (c) they would have an ability to identify jobs that their citizens are able to get from their home communities—and the last part, which is revenue sharing—then you've not hit that goal.

On the flip side, what industry is looking for is certainty. You understand, Minister, because you spoke about it in your speech. If you're going to go out and compete in the world for money to invest in mining—you want to invest in a jurisdiction that has clear rules, that says, "Here's what's expected of you if you're going to come in and explore in Ontario. If you're going to bring a mine into production, these are the rules, A to Z," and it's a clear enough process so that everybody knows the game.

1710

The big problem we have today is that there are some good rules around mining in Ontario. That's why we're the premier area for investment across the world. Ontario is the strongest place of those mining jurisdictions around the world because we do have expertise and we do have some good laws. Where there is a lot of grey right now is around the First Nations side, because, number one, 15 or 20 years ago—I would argue more than 20 years ago—there wasn't a huge amount of activity going on when it came to exploration in the far north; and number two, a lot of communities were not very organized towards trying to get revenue sharing and trying to get land use planning as far as how it would impact on our communities. So that's where we are at. We want to move forward with projects and we want to make sure that First Nations have a say in these particular projects.

Where are we with this legislation? I want to say up front that I find myself a bit torn. Is this legislation bad? No. Is this legislation better than what we have? To a degree. But does it get to us to where we've got to go? I think the answer is no.

I'm going to skip right to what I would normally say at the end of a debate, and that is, the section of the bill where the government reserves the right in the far north. Simply put, this legislation says that after you've done the exploration and you decide as a mining company that you want to bring a project online, and you want to bring a mine into production the First Nation must be consulted. There's going to be a process that will be determined by regulation as to how you bring First Nations in so that they're involved in the land use planning around what's going to happen at that mine, and hopefully within that process, identify potential for employment and for economic activity for First Nations. The First

Nations, by way of this legislation, if it is passed, would have that right, and I think that's a good thing.

The problem is the permission section of the law, under part XIV, section 204, of the bill. There is a section in there, under "Permission," which basically says, without reading the whole thing, that if cabinet feels that it's to the economic or social interest of Ontario to go ahead with the project and not finish the consultation with the First Nation, presumably because they're not going as fast as they should, the cabinet can override that section of the legislation. That's what's got First Nations quite concerned.

The minister is a colleague of mine and I respect him. I don't think he would end up using this section; I certainly hope he wouldn't. I don't think I would either, but who's to say whether a future Minister of Mines in Ontario, or a future Premier and cabinet, would decide that they're not as interested in trying to find ways to bring First Nations into the process; or not as engaged as I have been on this side of the House, along with Howard Hampton and yourselves, and that they would not use that section of the bill to usurp the rights of First Nations? Nobody in this House can tell me that that can't happen. So it begs the question, why is it there?

I understand why it's there by reading the legislation. It's a bit of an assurance to the mining industry, saying, "Listen, in the end, if the process is so long and so onerous and very difficult to go through, and the First Nations are really not co-operating, we've got something for you. The cabinet can act on your behalf." I would say that that is a bad thing, because that will bring uncertainty to investment in Ontario.

You know as well as I do, Colin Seeley, from Placer Dome—I was there when we negotiated the impact benefit agreements back in the early 1990s with Placer Dome for the Musselwhite project—and Jim Gowans at De Beers—I was there as we negotiated the IBA agreements with Attawapiskat—had a commitment as corporations. They said, "We're not going forward unless we get an agreement." And De Beers, to their credit, said at the very beginning of the Attawapiskat process—and that was some seven or eight years ago, I can't remember now; it may be as much as nine years ago—"We will not go forward unless the community ratifies an agreement," period. They understood as a mining company that if you don't have that, at the end of the day you will have a problem trying to bring future projects online with First Nations in that vicinity, and it will be very hard for them to work with First Nations on an existing project.

So I think the legislation has got to be clear. I think that particular section has got to come out. I think most—I would say the majority of the mining industry out there, De Beers, Placer Dome and others—understand the concept of bringing First Nations online. They've done it before. They know it's expensive and they know it takes some time. But they understand, from their perspective as a business, if you don't have the First Nations on side as willing partners and happy with the process and the outcome, it's going to be far more costly for them in the

long run should they bring that project online through work stoppages that could potentially happen because a First Nation says, "I'm not happy with what's happened here." You will constantly be in a situation of having blockades on roads and having disruptions in production because the First Nation is not onside.

You can't blame them. For some of you who've had the opportunity—I know some of you have come up with me to James Bay and a number of you have travelled there on your own. You're talking about very isolated and very poor communities—small communities of 400 to 2,000—who have no economic activity happening there whatsoever other than the school, maybe the hospital and the band office. That's about the only employment you can get. You can understand why First Nations are saying, "We need to have some ability to ensure, certainly to God, if there's going to be a mine that's established in our territory, that we are able to benefit from it."

What's happening today is that the First Nations are getting much more refined about learning how to negotiate those IBA agreements and much more demanding as far as what they want back from those projects. So if we go forward with legislation that gives cabinet wiggle room and the ability to override the principle of negotiations that have to happen to get an IBA, I think at the end of the day it's going to create more uncertainty and that's not what the mining industry needs.

I'll repeat something that Michael Prue, the member for Beaches—East York, said earlier because I think it needs to be said. Part of the sale on this bill is that the government is saying, "We've got a Mining Act that dates back to 1873, when the Mining Act was first brought in. It's old and we've got to make it better."

Well, let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Ontario has found a whole bunch of mines over 100 years now and we're still bringing new mines into production with the existing act. So it's not like this act has to be gotten rid of because we're holding up mining production in Ontario.

You know as well as I do that we started up the first diamond mine in Ontario under De Beers under current act because the company said they would not go forward unless they had an agreement with First Nations. We've got Lake Shore Gold Corp. and others that are opening gold mines in my riding. St. Andrew is looking to reopen. Detour Lake Mine is in the process of permitting in order to go into advanced feasibility on that particular project. So we have all kinds of projects across Ontario that are going into production under the current act.

My point is, how much of a rush should we be in to pass this legislation? And should the government have said, "Listen, we don't have an agreement, so either we go forward and continue negotiations to get an agreement, so that we can bring in legislation," or do they decide to go ahead?

I advised the minister and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs way back on this whole process. I said, "Take your time. Do not go through this in a huge hurry and don't come out of it without getting what it is that is

going to get us what we need in the end,” because at the end of the day what are we getting? We’re still going to have some confusion and we’re still going to have First Nations that are going to be offside, and I don’t think that’s to the benefit of any of us here in Ontario or northern Ontario, quite frankly.

I say to the government, I give you some credit for moving the stick forward. I’m not going to stand here as the critic and say this is awful. I’d be disingenuous myself because some of the stuff that’s in here is stuff that I would have put in my own bill if I had been the Minister of Mines. So I say to the minister, job well done for some of the stuff that’s in here.

The requirement of having to have an agreement on the various stages of mining from the exploration end of it to actually putting the mine into production and having First Nations go through a process of negotiations is a good idea. It’s a good thing. It’s something I would have done. But the problem is, you have not, in the end, given First Nations the comfort they need in being able to say, “Whoa a second here. We’re not happy with the plan to come in that the company has. We want some modifications to it. We don’t feel that we have enough economic benefit from the project.” In the end, they will still be in a position of having cabinet decide for them what is good or isn’t good.

I say it’s a very, very different thing for First Nations, and we need to get that right. One of the amendments I’ll be thinking about bringing in—and I’ll tell you now—is one that basically strikes that particular section.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, hang on. I’m getting to that. I’ve got this all in order, so I will be there, Minister.

One of the things I’m saying to the minister now is that it’s going to be interesting to see what others have to say about the permission clause in this bill. It’ll be interesting to see what not only First Nations but others in the environmental movement and the mining community have to say about that particular section because I don’t believe it gives clarity.

1720

As I said, the government is going to have a process whereby, at every stage of mining, from exploration to advanced exploration to advanced feasibility studies and actual production, First Nations will have to be at the table with the mining company, and presumably the province, at one point, in order to go through a process to get an agreement, and if no agreement is had, there will be dispute resolution in this bill as well, and I can understand the logic for doing that.

Part of the problem—and this is what I talked about to your staff earlier when they came to brief us on this today, and I hope you got the word back from Bruce and others, because I have great respect for the people in your ministry—is that much of the detail about, first of all, what the process of negotiation is going to look like, the consultation, and the dispute resolution is going to be left up to regulation. So it’s a little bit of a blind man’s bluff. I don’t know, as a legislator, in the end, if what you’re

going to put into regulation is actually going to do what will make people comfortable within the mining industry and within the First Nations community, because it’s really a pig in a poke.

I talked to Bruce earlier today, and the sense I have is that the regulations are not going to be done until sometime in late 2009, and we’re expecting this legislation to pass third reading in the fall of 2009. So the legislation will be passed without our understanding and knowing what is in the regulation. One of the things the minister has to consider is having something that allows us to determine what the regulations will look like. I don’t think the committee needs to write your regs, but the principles of what needs to be in the regs have to be clearly understood before we get to third reading and before we vote for this thing at third reading, because without that, it’s going to be very hard to tell. We may very well end up with a really good piece of legislation that deals with the right of First Nations to be consulted on mining activities in their territory and, if it doesn’t work, having a dispute resolution mechanism, but both those things may not work well, depending how they’re drafted in the regulation.

I don’t want to assume that you, Minister, have an agenda where you’re trying to play the First Nations off. I don’t buy that for a second. I know you too well for that. You’re an honourable member. But it is part of the concern. And the bigger problem is—and I want you to think about this—you may end up, and this is the argument for putting it in the legislation, drafting regulations that suit the needs and the support of First Nations, myself and others, but what’s to stop a future cabinet from changing the regulation if they don’t like it? That’s the problem. It may very well be that you have great intentions to do the right thing, and let’s say I’m the next Minister of Mines and I want to do the right thing. But what happens down the road if somebody comes into the ministry and you get a Premier and a cabinet that is hostile towards First Nations? You know as well as I do that that can happen. We have a long history of hostility of provincial and federal governments towards First Nations, where they decide by right of cabinet to make a change to a regulation that would, quite frankly, foist something upon First Nations and the mining community that they may not want.

That’s why some of this stuff really has to be spelled out in the legislation, so that at least the cabinet of the future has to walk into this Legislature and stand before the House and before the people of Ontario to say, “Here’s what we are going to do,” in the open and have an opportunity for legislators to have a go at it.

From the First Nations perspective, you’ll understand, Minister, because you have been involved in the process for a while, as a northern member and somebody who represents First Nations but also as a minister who has been working with the First Nations on this issue—you understand as well as I that there’s a huge amount of misgiving and mistrust on the part of many people in First Nations towards provincial and federal governments

because of what has happened in the past. Some of that may be right or wrong, but that's the way they feel.

When the leaders of today in the First Nations community go to sell this—let's say that you get an agreement, and Stan Beardy and Stan Louttit and others go into their communities and they start to sell this. There are going to be a bunch of naysayers in the community—you know as well as I do; you listen to the Wawatay radio talk-in as I do, and if you understand Cree or Ojibway, you'd hear—there are going to be a lot of people saying, "This legislation doesn't spell out our rights as First Nations." Yes, there is a section in the law that recognizes the aboriginal rights of self-governance inside this legislation and that the rights under the Constitution have to be respected. It's there. I acknowledge it; I see it. But the other clauses, without having it properly spelled out in the legislation what the intent is, and that permission clause, are going to give a lot of people discomfort when it comes to giving this thing the type of support it should get. So I'm not clear in my mind that we've actually met the stated goal, but it is a step in the right direction.

As I said, I find myself torn because I want to support this, but I'm very much afraid I'm not going to be able to at this point unless we get some of these amendments. I still have to talk to a number of people within the communities that I represent in the mining industry, the First Nations and others before I come back with it, because the bill was just introduced on Thursday and here we are, on Monday, having this debate. I wish we would have had a little bit more time so that we would have been able to do a better job of preparing for this in the Legislature today.

I just want to point out one thing that I raised with your staff today, and it's something that we need to think about: These new rights that First Nations will have when it comes to being consulted on the various steps in the process will apply only after the bill is passed. So if somebody is now in the process of advanced exploration, we need to clearly understand what rules they're going to fall under. My understanding of the way it's going to work is that if you're currently in the process of bringing a mine to production, and you're doing that under the current act, the rules that you started out with are going to be the rules that'll apply to you as you go into production. So if you've got your mine closure plan done, you will fall under this legislation that we currently have, and only after the passage of this legislation—royal assent—will the new rules apply to new projects, not those that have already been approved under previous projects. I think we've got to give that a little bit of thought. You probably have thought about it a bit. I would imagine you've had this discussion with your officials, but what we need to do is make sure that we don't send a signal of uncertainty to industry when it comes to those that are currently in the process. I think we're going to have to give that a little bit of thought.

Let me get to the other part here, the issue of subsurface rights. This is a different issue around this bill. One of the things this bill does is try to address an issue

that has been a real issue, especially for those people living south of the French River. About 2% of the land south of the French River is private land to which the crown owns the mineral rights. So there's been an issue, a real issue, on the part of some exploration companies that decide there's a claim that they'd like to stake. They go on the person's land, they don't get the permission, and they stake the claim. In some cases, they do a bit of exploration and the property owner finds out that somebody has been mucking around on their land and there's been no permission. The government's response to this is to say, "We're going to withdraw all of those private lands in southern Ontario that don't own the mineral rights from the ability to be explored." Again, that's 2% of the land mass.

Two points: One is, you know as well as I do that in the exploration business, you need as much land as possible to be open to staking so that you have a better chance of finding a mine. If the issue is people who were not getting permission to get access to the land, maybe what we need to have in the legislation is a process by which permission could be sought. At the end of the day, if the private landowner says, "No, I don't want you here," make that the decision of the private landowner. But for those people who say, "You know what? Maybe I do want to get into an agreement with a mining exploration company that thinks there may be some form of mineral potential under my property," they won't have to go running back to the Ministry of Mines to take back out of the system land to be explored. Because my understanding is, you're going to be able to apply through a process—that the land that's taken out of circulation will be able to be brought back in if there's an application made, that the minister may put it back into circulation again. That's my understanding.

So I think it's a bit of an odd situation, and it seems to me that what we could have done is had legislation that says that a private property owner who doesn't own mineral rights will have the right, just as a First Nation would have the right, to either agree or not agree that a project goes forward. If the property owner says yes, then you go through the necessary process of land use planning—which means to say, neighbours and all that have to be consulted etc.—and then the mine goes forward. If not, it doesn't go forward if the property owner doesn't want it to.

But here's the really interesting part: The government has a different rule for northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, I believe less than 1% of land is private property, where an individual or a company owns it, but there's no subsurface right. The crown has the subsurface rights—in other words, the mining rights, as they're commonly known. The difference in northern Ontario is, those lands will not be taken out of circulation and removed from staking. They will stay within the ability to be staked, but it will be the right of the property owner to ask for it to be taken away.

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I say to the minister: Be careful setting up legislation where, depending on where you live, you have different

treatment under the law—where northerners get one treatment and the southerners get the other. You know that game. I look at your colleague the member from Algoma–Manitoulin; we understand how northerners feel about that in the first place. I think that is a bit of a dangerous road for you to go down, both politically and legislatively.

I think the right approach—and again, I want to hear people at committee speak to this. If I'm wrong, come and tell me. I'm sure Mr. Brown will tell me I'm wrong. I'll accept that right now. You're probably—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that's what I figured.

Anyway, I want to hear from property owners and others: Would it have been better to say, "Never mind; we'll treat all private property owners in the province the same"? First of all, the rule would be that if you own property but you don't have the subsurface rights and somebody wants to go out and stake, it can be done with your permission. In other words, the property owner would be the one to decide. If the property owner says no, so be it. If the company wants to try to buy the person out for a larger price, maybe that will be an enticement to get permission, but it becomes the permission of the property owner.

The biggest thing is that the rule would be the same for southern Ontario as it is for northern Ontario. Having a dual system where the northern subsurface rights are treated differently than those of southerners is not a good thing for us to be doing and, at the end, is a bit of a divisive issue for us in northern Ontario, because most people will not understand this in detail, as we do. All they'll see it as the north being treated differently than the south, and I don't think the government should be going down that road.

It will be interesting to hear what people have to say when they come into committee, so that we have a process where we can say, should the legislation stay the way it is, or should we have one treatment for north and one for south and a proper system by which to give the property owners some say about whether development happens or doesn't happen on their property?

The other thing is—and I know this is a bit of a stretch, but I want to give you the scenario. I might be wrong on this one; I'm perfectly willing to admit that I might be wrong sometimes. One of the things that occurred to me is that in southern Ontario, we have salt mining, and there is potential for mining in southern Ontario in different places. It just happens to be that most of the exploration is done in the north because there's a better potential for finding minerals in northern Ontario than there is in the geology of the south, because of the formation of the rock. That's not to say that there's no potential whatsoever in southern Ontario.

One thing I'm curious about is if, let's say, a mining explorationist were to find some sort of mineral potential somewhere in northern Ontario under private property, does that mean that they will never be able to develop that property? That's my read of the legislation—unless

there's an exemption. I don't know if there's an exemption the other way. All I'm saying is that there may be times where people will want mining activities to happen in their area because of the economic benefit that a mine might bring to the community. For example, where I come from in Timmins and where my colleague Madame Gélinas comes from in Sudbury, if it wasn't for mining, a big part of our life and our community would be non-existent. We understand that mining nowadays, in the year 2009, is much more sustainable, safe and environmentally conscious than it was even when I started working in the 1970s.

The minister may know—actually, you do know because you were there—that my cottage is out on Kamiskotia Lake, which is the worst example of what not to do when mining. You will know the story well because your ministry, with you as minister and your predecessors, dating back to when I was at the ministry, has been putting money in to do reclamation on that mine site, because it is the worst environmental disaster that we've seen in the province probably in the history of mining.

Just for members to know, the story was that during the war in the 1940s, the Canadian government needed to have copper, and this particular mine had an ability to get copper. So they fast-tracked the permit and allowed it to go into production without going through the due process of making sure they had proper tailings dams constructed etc. The mine operated up until the 1950s. You crush the rock, you get the rock from underground, you skip it up to the surface, you crush it, you put chemicals in it and eventually you get the copper. What's left is normally discharged into a tailings pond, and it's treated and contained. What they did in this particular one was they just allowed it to jump over the side, as they would say. As a result, an entire area was polluted. And how much money have we spent there trying to fix that now? Forty five million dollars—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's more, eh? We, as taxpayers, through the mine reclamation fund, have had to spend over \$45 million—I forget what the exact number is—in order to rehabilitate that site. That's a really good story. It's an excellent story about how we, as a province, got it right in the early 1990s by putting in place the mine reclamation act that allowed mine closure plans to be put in place to ensure mines don't do that in the future.

In fact, if you look at all projects that have happened since the early 1990s, we see quite a different story when it comes to how they impact the environment. In a place like Timmins, Lake Shore Gold, which is now building a mine just south of Timmins by the 144—you wouldn't even know there's a mine there unless you drove into the bush and saw the headframe. If they ever did build a mill there, it would be like everything else that we see now: There would be a footprint on the ground that would have some effect on the environment, no doubt, but the effect would be pretty minimal.

To prove this, I invite people to take a look at what happened at Detour Lake. Detour Lake came into pro-

duction in 1983 or 1984. It was a huge mine that ran up there for about 15 years. It was closed under the mine closure plan. I invite people to get on a plane and fly over that mine and see if you can find it. You wouldn't even know it was there. The entire site has been rehabilitated. The tailings, the mine structure—everything has been taken down. The hydro lines were taken down. Ironically, now they're going back. That's good news. But the story is, we've actually done a pretty good job. When people come to my office from the environmental community and others and say, "Oh, God, you've got to hate mining. It's terrible," I say, "Hey, come and take a look at Detour Lake." Was it terrible? Damned right, it was terrible. Take a look at the Kamiskotia mine, and take a look at the Matachewan project, the old Hollinger project, the old McIntyre mine. Those were some pretty bad examples of what not to do. But with the regulations that we have today and the legislation such as the mine reclamation act mining is a much safer place to operate.

My point, as it relates to this legislation, is that the First Nations will have a right to be consulted on that whole process of mine reclamation, which I think is an important step. But in the end, it's an interesting part of the debate.

Succinctly put, subsurface rights for private owners: I think we need to look at that again. Maybe there's another way of fixing this so that everybody is treated the same.

The other part is map staking. Boy, oh, boy, you're going to get my dander up with that one. We know the politics of this, Minister. You and I have been around northern Ontario, along with your colleague, long enough to know that prospecting is almost a way of life. It's in the blood of many people in northern Ontario. So people understand what we're talking about when we talk about map staking. Currently, if you want to go out and stake a claim, you've physically got to go in the bush. If you decide that you want to be an explorationist, you will hire a prospector or you will be a prospector yourself, you'll go into the bush, you'll delineate your claim by staking it physically, and then you'll go to the mine recorder's office and record the claim. And then all of the work that happens after that is subsequent to that staking activity happening. That means you've got to hire somebody to do it for you, you've got to do it yourself, you've got to get line cutters, you've got to get other people in the bush to physically do the staking work that needs to be done. Often, the job goes to First Nations people. I know in your riding, as in mine, that's the way of life of many First Nations people. They go work for a mine exploration outfit and they do staking on behalf of the mining company. We are now saying we're going to get rid of that and we're going to go to map staking, which means that you will only have to go look at a map and say, "Isn't that an interesting spot? I will register that as a claim to me." The problem is this: Who's got the money and the pockets deep enough to lock up how much land? If you don't have to physically go in the bush and hire somebody to go in, the staking is going to be done by

somebody sitting here on Bay Street who's going to be looking at a map and geological information, and they're going to start deciding what it is that they're going to lock up as far as land that they can stake for themselves. The potential is that you could end up having large tracts of land taken out of circulation from all other mining explorationists and be tied up by a couple of mining companies.

A lot of this is left to the detail of regulation. I spoke to your officials today, and they said, "Don't worry. We're going to cover that off in regulation." Well, okay. I want to see them regulations. Before we sign on the dotted line here on the third reading, we need to know how you're going to deal with map staking, because you could potentially end up in a situation where a couple of companies have deep pockets and have the will to wait it out and say, "That's potentially interesting but the technology of today, with aerial surveys and geophysics, says there might be something there; I'm not quite sure." If I've got a \$5-million or \$10-million exploration budget, where do I spend it? I'm not going to spend it in a place where I've got a hunch. I'm going to spend it in a place where I've got a really good idea that something is there. So there might be a temptation on the part of some companies to say, "Those are interesting. Let's do the minimal work that we have to do every year. It costs us a few bucks. We'll hang on to it and we'll put it in our exploration plan for the next five or 10 years." Meantime, nothing is going to happen on that land because you can't get access to it. They have locked the ability to do any exploration by virtue of map staking it and doing the minimal amount of work they need to do to hang on to the claim.

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So I just say to the minister again, I want to see the regs, man. The regs have really got to come in. Depending on how you frame the regulations, there is a potential for land to be staked by people far away from northern Ontario. Again, it's going to lend itself to this sense that people have in the north that all these decisions are being made by people in southern Ontario. We need to have a little bit more control about what happens in our backyard.

I understand why you did map staking, because it fixes your problem of having somebody go into a First Nation and staking ground without the First Nation ever knowing. So I understand why you did it, I understand the logic of it. I've been around this long enough to know it's one of the potential fixes around First Nations all of a sudden getting unexpected guests arriving on their territory and staking claims such as we saw in K-I and other places that have led to much confrontation. So the idea would be that the explorationist can stake it by map but there would be a requirement in this legislation that you would then have to have a discussion with the First Nation and every step of the process there would have to be a negotiation with the First Nation as to what is going to happen on that land, how it's going to happen, what the benefits are for the community etc. So the map

staking is to get around that first problem of having somebody just show up all of a sudden on your land. Because the real issue—and this is really the tough one, I think, that you have to face in this legislation. On the one side you've got people who are traditionalists, such as myself and yourself and others, who enjoy the way of life in northern Ontario and understand that staking is part of what people do; it's a career in itself. On the other hand, you have to find a way to get around having people show up at the doorstep of First Nations unannounced. So how do you fix it? The minister decided, and I can understand the logic, to go to map staking, but I think this, not properly done, will lead to a few people potentially controlling huge tracts of land, and I'm not so sure that's a really good idea in the long run. So the map staking point I think we need to take a look at again when it comes to that.

There was another point I wanted to make about map staking, pardon me. I'll have to come back to it because I forget what it is; I never write my speeches down.

The other thing I want to talk about is the powers of the inspector. This is the interesting thing. As I looked at the legislation on Thursday, when I got it—I started reading it before I came into the House, and I read it in detail over the weekend—there is a huge section that gives powers to go into a mine property and do inspections. I have to believe the reason you are doing this is to try to make the legislation—how would you say?—work with other pieces of provincial legislation under the Ministry of Finance and others in order to determine what it is that mining companies have under the ground and what they've pulled in order to figure out what your royalties are.

Let me explain this in a simple sense, because the minister and I know what we're talking about and I'm speaking a bit of a different language. Here's what it is: Mining companies have to pay royalties, and the royalties they pay are based on the amount of ore they extract from underground. That's one portion of the tax you pay. So if you're a gold mine and you extract X amount of ounces, the province of Ontario gets a royalty based on how many ounces you've extracted from that particular property; and if you're a diamond mine, the same. If you're a diamond mine, you pay royalties based on how many diamonds you've extracted from the property. What we have in this legislation is a section under "Inspections" that gives a huge amount of power to provincial inspectors under the Ministry of Mines to enter the mining company property and to physically get access to absolutely any record, any time of the day, without warrant. I've got to ask a question: How many mining companies, Minister, have not properly reported their royalties? I think it's zero; I really do. Because it's not in their economic interest to falsify the records when it comes to royalties, for all kinds of reasons, because they're also financed. As they go out to the markets in order to get money, they have to list, "This mine produces X ounces per year." If you lowball that number, your mine is worth less money, so it's valued dif-

ferently and it means you can't go to the market and get more money, because it has less value. So it's not to your advantage, as a mining company, to say, "I'm going to lowball and I'm going to lie about how much gold or diamonds or whatever is extracted from the underground." There's no upside for a company to do that. Yet in this bill, there's this whole section on inspections that says that an inspector of the crown can walk into a mining company, can do that at the mine, can go in the underground, can come to Bay Street, can look at computers, can seize equipment, can copy all kinds of records—they have complete access to all of the financial records and all of the data, including the geological data that that company has.

I ask myself, why do we need this? The answer I got from the briefing today was, "Oh, this is only to make us"—not "compliant;" what is the word I'm looking for?—"to make it that the laws of the Ministry of Finance are the same as they are over here." That was the answer to the question.

I have to propose the following. There's not a lot that's known about diamonds. I call this the De Beers clause. That's what this is, right, Minister? It's a De Beers clause. He's not going to say. He's good, I have to say.

I think that this is because Ontario does not know a lot about diamond mining, because we've never had diamonds in Ontario. The regime, as it was set up at the Ministry of Mines before, was around precious metals and base metals, which is a different type of mining. Valuation of diamonds, as far as quality goes, is very different. It's not like you get an ounce of gold and it's worth \$963 an ounce. You get a 10-carat diamond and that could be worth a whole bunch of different values, depending on the quality of the diamond.

The diamond industry is a fairly secretive industry, for their own reasons, right or wrong. There is a lot of information that they don't want to share with other mining companies. Frankly, De Beers has been pretty good over the years at managing the market fairly well so that they can keep the value of the diamonds up.

I think that the government—wrongfully so—is saying, "We need to give ourselves the power to walk into the De Beers operation and look at any record that we want in order to make sure that they're not hoodwinking us when it comes to royalties." I say to myself, what would be the upside for De Beers to do that? Why, then, would the government need this right in the legislation, in order to walk into the pit, the sorting rooms, the mill, the head office—you can walk into Jim Gowans's office and open his desk, under this legislation, and say, "What's that thing in the corner pocket of your desk?"

I just think that this is wrong-headed. I don't think that, as a government, you should be taking the position of giving yourselves this kind of extraordinary power to go into a mine operation and do this.

Again, it will be interesting to see what is said once this finally comes back into committee. I can tell you that we're going to get a few people speaking on that par-

ticular issue, and I'd be interested in seeing what the government has to say in regard to this particular part.

The last thing I want to speak to is the consultation process, as far as the technical part of the bill goes. What you've now got inside this bill is that there's going to be a process by which First Nations will have to be contacted every time—excuse me, I already spoke to the consultation process. That's not what I wanted to talk about. Sorry. I wanted to get to prospecting licences. Excuse me. That's where I was going. I forgot to write that point down, but that's what I did want.

Mr. Dave Levac: Start over.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm not starting over. I don't believe in repeating speeches. I've recycled a few too many here, over the years.

I just want to say that the government has done something in this legislation, and it will be interesting how the prospectors see it. We're an old bunch of conundrums, us old guys, right? We don't like change too much. Politicians or prospectors, it's the same. Somebody who has been out there and prospecting for all of these years feels that they know what they're doing.

What this legislation is going to call for is that you're going to have to get a prospector's licence. You will also need, if I understand the legislation correctly, a licence for the other parts of exploration ahead of that. But for the prospectors specifically, they will need to go through a course in order to make sure that they understand what the rules of prospecting are generally, how the legislation works and what their responsibilities are vis-à-vis First Nations.

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I can understand why you do that. There's a logic to that. You want to make sure that the people on the ground understand what the rules are. It'll be interesting to see the reaction of the prospecting community on that one, from those people who have been in the business for 25 or 30 years. I would imagine there's going to be a lot of pushback on this particular one. I note in the legislation that there's an ability for the minister to grandfather those prospectors who have been in for—how many years is it? I think it's 10 years or five; I can't remember. Anyway, we'll talk about the details later.

It'll be interesting to see how that's applied, because there are two things you're going to have to do. One of them is, you've got to make sure they understand what the process of consultation is and what the requirements are under the law, at the same time respecting the years of experience they have in prospecting. They may feel they're adequately prepared and you may feel they're not, and it may cause some conflict for some of the prospectors. So it'll be interesting.

My point is, I'm going to be looking forward to seeing what prospectors have to say about that, and specifically the issues around grandfathering, so that we respect those people who have been in the business for years and don't put ourselves in the position of saying, "You've been in this for 30 years, but I know better than you." So I think we need to take a look at that.

Madam Speaker, there's about enough time for questions and comments. I would thank you for having the patience of listening to my presentation, and I look forward to committee.

Last point: Make sure this bill travels. I want this bill to travel to those mining communities, such as Kirkland Lake and others. We need to do properly this summer so that people get a chance to speak.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for Timmins–James Bay. I listen intently, as he knows, and I appreciate his great concern and knowledge about the mining sector. I wish I had more than two minutes to comment, but we'll have many discussions over the next little while.

I do think there is a quality, though, may I say, which I think he might even acknowledge, to some degree—and he struggled with it—of trying to have it both ways. In other words, you certainly expressed concerns about the process that we need to go to to have an appropriate, respectful relationship with our aboriginal partners and communities, at the same time understanding the need to be able to provide clarity and certainty to the mining sector. I think that in and of itself presents some challenges, which is why we worked so hard on this legislation to find that balance. There are various elements of every issue he touched on that I'd like to comment on. May I say that our goal was to find that balance, and we certainly believe that, in many ways, we have done a good job of finding it.

For example, the discussion around the permission clause, as you put it: Your interpretation is that it's being put in place to basically avoid the consultation process or stop it. I don't interpret it that way at all. The fact is, the scenario I can see developing is, you've got an opportunity for mining development, you've got support for the First Nations and you want to move forward, but the community land use plan is not in place yet. I see that that may be a situation where you may need to be able to say, "We need to move forward on this opportunity. It's in the social and economic interests of Canada." You tend to see it as a clause to be used to stop consultation. This clause would not, in any way, stop the requirement of consultation. That's something that I think I need to say.

I am running out of time, but I appreciate your thoughts on it. We'll have more discussions about this, but I very much appreciated your comments. They were very well informed, as always.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I concur with one point: The member from Timmins–James Bay indicated that this legislation was just introduced on Thursday. It is difficult to get up to speed and to fully appreciate what's going on here. I'm still working on the toxics legislation and what impact that legislation will have on the mining industry. That's legislation that's modelled on the state of

Massachusetts, which I don't think has a very significant mining industry. So I'm a little concerned about that.

I do appreciate Minister Gravelle stressing the importance of mining, and he previously talked about the importance of consultation. I attended one of the Toronto consultation evenings—probably last September, early fall. A lot of people were there from Haliburton county, as I recall, concerned about the potential for uranium exploration. We know much of this seems to deal with nickel, copper and gold.

The member from Timmins–James Bay mentioned the north-south division. Some of my questions—does this legislation have any impact on the gypsum mines in my area? Caledonia and Hagersville are gypsum mining towns, essentially, in my riding. I've lived next to a very large aggregate gravel pit since the 1950s; it's south of our farm. We have no intention of that kind of quarrying to go up Crabapple Creek into our land. We have a number of gas wells on our land; the natural gas industry is very important in southern Ontario. The area I live in has more holes punched in the ground than Saudi Arabia, because we've been drilling for natural gas since the 1840s and the 1850s. I think of the oil industry—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member for York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I love to do a couple minutes on this particular bill because I truly enjoyed the rendition by the member from Timmins–James Bay and our own minister from the north, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. When I wanted to tease my colleagues, I would say I was going north to my riding. They would look at me with funny eyes and say, “You're going north? Where's your riding?” I would say, “Well, it's south of Steeles,” and they'd say, “Oh, my goodness.”

But truly we have seen a bill that is a first, and in the words of the minister, it's not the last that we have seen of this particular bill. As he says in his own words, this has got a long way to go, and I'm sure that we will see a lot of input as the bill move along.

Picking up on the last comment by the member from James Bay, that both of them come from the north, yes, I would say they are the specialists when it comes to the north. I have to say there should be no concern for those prospectors that want to obtain a licence. If we want to go fishing—and we had a chuckle with the Attorney General. If you want to go fishing you need a licence, so if you want to go mining, you need a licence. Instead, you go fishing for something very much more valuable: for gold and silver and whatever.

But I truly enjoyed the minister here giving this wonderful rendition as to the vastness and the richness that is northern Ontario. And I have to say that if Bay Street is to Canada what it is in the financial world, then northern Ontario is the mining capital of Canada. I think we have to really appreciate what the minister is trying to do with this particular bill. It is the first time that something such as this is happening on a comprehensive basis, and I'm looking forward to seeing much more of it.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I enjoyed listening to the member speak. He certainly knows his business about the mining industry, and it's always nice to listen to someone who is speaking knowledgeably about a subject, which happens far too little around this place.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would like to speak about apples, myself. I could cover that subject; this is not my forte. But the comments that he makes about claim staking and map staking and the conflicts between the two and what happens if somebody claims something on a map staking at 9 o'clock in the morning and somebody wanders through the bush and says they made that claim at 8:30 in the morning—which one has precedence and where is the dispute settlement mechanism?

The other one that the member from way up north there brought to my attention was the secrets that people have in the mining business—I mean, it's huge. Having government come in and have a look at your books as to what you took out of the ground, where you took it out, how much more is there, having access to your records—I would think that would give mining companies huge pause if they were looking at locating in Ontario, if they were trying to choose a place to mine, whether that choice revolved around Ontario, Labrador or B.C., South America or Africa. All of these companies basically have capital—capital to make these things work—and capital has wings. Capital goes to the place in the world where you can have the highest return on it. We've got to make sure that Ontario remains a very friendly place for people with capital.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from way up north in Timmins–James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: From all the way up north here, I want to say to all of you: Thank all very much for having a great time and speaking to my bill here. I just want to thank members for their comments. I tried, as much as possible, to be somewhat analytical in my presentation here today. I'm going to be looking forward to this bill going to committee. The minister has indicated that, yes, this bill will travel and we'll have the opportunity in places like Kirkland Lake and other places where there are mining activities happening so that we can hear from those people who are most affected: First Nations, people who are involved in the mining industry and environmentalists, so that we can really do what needs to be done with this legislation.

I want to ask again, is this a step in the right direction? Yes. Does it get us to where we want to go? I don't think so. I think we need to fix a number of the parts of this bill to give people comfort, especially First Nations, when it comes to being able to really get a sense that they can negotiate a good deal for themselves when it comes to the benefits of mining. More importantly—I shouldn't say “more importantly,” but equally importantly, we need to make sure that the mining industry has a certain com-

fort and clarity about knowing what the rules are, because if you do that, it's a lot easier to attract investment here in Ontario. And for the environmentalists, at the end, which we all are—if you're First Nations or if you're a member of this Legislature or you live in northern Ontario, we're all environmentalists and we need to make sure that this bill properly reflects the best practices possible to make sure that we protect our environment for now and into the future.

With that, I would like to thank the members for having commented on my speech.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow, May 5, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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 (PC)	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	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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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

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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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**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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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
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
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Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
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