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**Official Report
of Debates
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(Hansard)**

Monday 22 March 2010

Lundi 22 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 mars 2010

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 MEMBERS FOR OTTAWA–WEST NEPEAN AND LEEDS–GRENVILLE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table certificates of the by-elections in the electoral districts of Ottawa West–Nepean and Leeds–Grenville.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I have a letter addressed to Mrs. Deborah Deller, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

“A writ of election dated the 3rd day of February, 2010, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Douglas B. Shouldice, returning officer for the electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Jim Watson who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Ottawa West–Nepean on the 4th day of March, 2010, Bob Chiarelli has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated the 12th day of March, 2010, which is now lodged of record in my office.

“Yours sincerely,

“Greg Essensa

“Chief Electoral Officer.”

An additional letter reads as follows:

“A writ of election, dated the 3rd day of February, 2010, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario and was addressed to Barbara Mills, returning officer for the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Leeds–Grenville in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Robert Runciman who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted

and held in Leeds–Grenville on the 4th day of March, 2010, Steve Clark has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 12th day of March, 2010, which is now lodged of record in my office.”

It is signed, “Greg Essensa, Chief Electoral Officer,” and dated March 16, 2010.

Mr. Chiarelli was escorted into the House by Mr. McGuinty and Ms. Smith.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and to the House Bob Chiarelli, member-elect for the electoral district of Ottawa West–Nepean, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

Mr. Clark was escorted into the House by Mr. Hudak and Mr. Yakabuski.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have the honour to present to you and to the House Steve Clark, member-elect for the electoral district of Leeds–Grenville, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

1040

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It's my privilege today to welcome a few residents from my constituency. Linda and Stephen Morrin from Commanda are here today, and we're delighted to have them with us. As well, I believe Mary Beth Caliciuri is in the House. She is the mother of one of our new pages, Anthony Caliciuri. We welcome all of them to the House today.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to introduce the grade 5 class from Hawthorn Public School, in my constituency, to the Legislature. They should be here in the House around 11 o'clock.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a small entourage, including my wife, Deanna, a number of folks from Leeds and Grenville and my former employer, the mayor of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Frank Kinsella. So I'd like to welcome the group.

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to introduce my spouse, Randi Hansen, a number of my daughters and

some friends from Ottawa, particularly Howard and Anne Perron. They've been long-time supporters, and I'm very, very pleased that they could share this day with me.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to introduce the mother of one of our new pages, Ben Neilipovitz. His mother, Constance Neilipovitz, is in the public gallery. Welcome. I'm looking forward to having lunch with them today.

Mr. Dave Levac: My personal congratulations to the two newest members of this place.

I'd also like to introduce Mr. Robert Hornung, president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association. He's here along with Chairperson Gary Pundsack and other CanWEA members, including Justin Rangooni, today in the gallery. I encourage everyone to visit their reception at 5 p.m. in committee room 2 and learn about the great work that CanWEA is doing to expand our renewable energy opportunities in Ontario. Welcome to those in the gallery today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

As well, on behalf of the member for Oakville and page Alexander Bowie, I welcome his mother, Janette Bowie, in the members' gallery today. Welcome, all, to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to first take the opportunity to say how delighted I am to welcome Steve Clark to the Ontario PC caucus and his wife, Deanna, and supporters to the assembly. We are proud of the hard work he is already doing on behalf of the people he serves. Welcome also, Mr. Chiarelli, back to the assembly; we served together a number of years ago.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. On March 17, regulation 66/10 was posted on e-Laws, the electronic website. Regulation 66/10 slips a new tax onto hydro bills through the back door. Interestingly, within 24 hours and one media call later, the regulation mysteriously disappeared from the e-Laws website.

Minister, what is it about your new backdoor energy tax that you're trying to hide from the general public?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition, as usual, has it completely wrong. What we're talking about here is an investment that is being made in a couple of relatively new conservation programs, programs that I know the Leader of the Opposition did not support when he was in government, nor did his government support; programs which obviously the Leader of the Opposition continues not to support; conservation programs that are

giving to consumers the opportunity to find savings in their energy bills; conservation programs that are allowing us to move from dirty coal to cleaner sources of energy; conservation programs that are very much part of our plan to ensure that we have reliable, sustainable sources of energy now and into the future. The Leader of the Opposition obviously—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Nepean–Carleton, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and Lanark: Welcome back. It's nice to hear your voices. I would like to hear your voices a little lower, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I will tell the energy minister what's wrong. What's wrong is, your backdoor energy tax is taking more money out of the wallets of seniors and hard-working Ontario families. The minister didn't even try to answer my question about why you posted the regulation one day, and then, 24 hours later, it has slipped off altogether.

The minister surely must know that Ontario families are already struggling to make ends meet. Now they're going to be paying your HST sales tax grab on hydro; they're paying your new so-called provincial benefit tax; they're going to be paying for that sweetheart Samsung deal for 20 years yet to come, and now you want to slip in this new backdoor energy tax.

Minister, I'll ask you again: Please tell us, why did you put it up one day, and then, 24 hours later, it disappeared?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition categorizes this completely wrong. The fact of the matter is, conservation programs have been funded through the energy base for many, many years. Many of our programs do that. What we're talking about here are two new, effective conservation programs that are working. We're talking about \$4 a year for the average consumer. But with that \$4 investment, all Ontarians benefit, because if we were to do it his way, we'd have to invest in creating more sources of energy supply, which would be a lot less cost-effective than what we're doing now. He didn't get it when he had the opportunity to be in office and to make these decisions. He doesn't get it now. The most effective way to deal with our energy supply is through conservation.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the minister. Two straight questions and two dodges by the minister reading the same old talking points, refusing to answer the question about why they pulled down this backdoor energy tax within 24 hours. We'll release the regulation. We got a hold of it within those 24 hours. We'll send it out to the general public, because the minister is obviously afraid to do so.

Also, it says in that regulation that this will be a \$53-million tax grab from the pockets of hard-working

Ontario families and seniors. In fact, the original plan on your legislation was to apply it to gas companies as well.

I'll ask the minister, is your greedy energy tax grab for one year only, or do you plan on making this an annual grab from Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is categorizing this completely wrong. It's really important that we invest in conservation. It's really important for consumers who, under this plan, can save up to \$600 off their energy bill when they take part in the energy audits, when they take part in some of the retrofits—that we provide up to \$5,000 in rebates.

These are important programs that help move us out of dirty coal—which the Leader of the Opposition and his party fully support and want to keep us in—ensure that the lungs of our young people, our children and grandchildren, can be protected and preserved and ensure that we can move forward with our strategy to create new jobs, green energy jobs, which this program does. We're proud of this program. It's important that we move forward—

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

1050

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Three times I asked the minister why he pulled down that regulation within 24 hours. I asked if it was going to be an annual tax grab. He has avoided each and every one of these questions. This has all the appearance of yet another slippery and greedy tax grab from the McGuinty government. Let me ask the minister this, and hopefully we will get an answer: Why are you making utility companies do your dirty work of raising more tax revenue for something that the utility companies are not themselves delivering?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's nothing new with utility companies where, in fact, the rate base provides support for conservation programs. That's just good public policy, to ensure that those who are benefiting from the programs are paying for them. I get it.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition wouldn't be supportive of this, because he was never supportive of conservation when he had the opportunity. Their energy policy was a day-to-day event. It was a case of "cross our fingers and hope we can make it through our term with enough energy supply."

We're doing it differently. We're investing in green energies, we're investing in modernization of our nuclear units, and we're investing in conservation to ensure that we have a reliable and sustainable source of supply, not just to get us through our term like you tried to do but for future generations to benefit from, to ensure that we have—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what we're against. We're against your plan to turn utility companies into yet

another bunch of tax collectors for another Liberal slush fund program.

The minister has no idea. Working families are struggling to make ends meet. They're going to pay your HST sales tax grab, they're going to pay for your sweetheart Samsung deal for 20 years to come, and now you're nailing them with this \$53-million backdoor tax grab.

I think the minister knows he also has the ability for gas companies, under the Energy Act, to similarly increase taxes to support the Liberal slush fund. Minister, you're obviously trying to do this with energy utilities; is it true that the gas companies are next on your list?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Clearly the Leader of the Opposition has not learned anything since his days in government. Clearly he wants to take us back to the days of dirty coal. Clearly he wants to take us back to the days when the Minister of Energy couldn't sleep at night because he had to worry about whether there was going to be a reliable supply.

We're moving away from those days. He may not have the guts, he may not have the courage to make the strong decisions we need to make today to ensure that future generations can breathe healthy air in this province, to ensure that future generations have access to good, green economic development jobs and opportunities. We have the intestinal fortitude to move forward with these policies. We will lead, and the people of Ontario recognize that this is indeed the way to go.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what we haven't learned: We've had one single answer to five straight and direct questions to the energy minister. We got the same old talking points five times in a row. You didn't tell us why you took it off the website. You didn't tell us this would be an annual tax grab, and you didn't tell us if you're going to the gas companies next.

Let me try one last time. I have a new idea for the energy minister: Instead of raising people's utility bills by another \$53 million, why don't you instead use that money that you're giving out to the HST tax collectors in the \$45,000 in severance, not for missing a single day's work? That's a better idea.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the advice of the member opposite, but let me tell you this and let's be clear: We are not going back to the days of dirty coal. No matter how much you want us to go there, we're not going to do that. We're not going to pollute the lungs and the health of young people, the next generation and generations to follow. We're making the tough decisions today, decisions that are leading the world in green energy and building—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're making the decisions today that are leading to the next generation of jobs economy, building a green energy hub here in this province that future generations are going to be able to benefit from, ensuring that we are moving to alternatives from coal. What are those alternatives? Modernization of our

nuclear units, enhancing of our conservation programs. For \$4 a year, that's what this is doing: the most economical way that we can move forward to ensure that our supply needs are met for many years—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last weekend in Hamilton, Siemens International announced that they are going to be closing their doors in my community, and that's going to cost us 550 jobs. The Minister of Economic Development claims she was working with Siemens. My question is this: Will the government release the details of its final offer to Siemens?

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me say first off that we were not happy with the outcome of a competitive process that saw Siemens select a different jurisdiction for an expansion of an advanced manufacturing that Ontario does very well.

In direct answer to this question, all of the jurisdictions that were involved signed a non-disclosure agreement that would not allow us to speak with a whole variety of people that we would otherwise speak with. It was conditional on signing that non-disclosure agreement that we were allowed to go forward in the bid. That is why that kind of information wouldn't be public, or, frankly, it would be in the papers by now.

We'd be happy to talk about the work that we are doing today to secure the future for Hamilton and Siemens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whatever the government was trying to do, it failed miserably, and that's obvious. As a result, 550 families are wondering how they're going to be putting food on the table and paying the bills.

In tough times like these, we cannot play politics with people's jobs. Why didn't anybody in the mayor's office, anybody in the economic development office or the workers themselves get a call when the government learned that Siemens could possibly be leaving my community?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: In fact, officials from my ministry did contact people from the city of Hamilton, and we were able to exact key information that was required, things like development charges, information about adjacent lands and buildings that we knew could help to bolster the case that we were making to Siemens. We spent an inordinate amount of time trying to land that bidding process.

I'm not happy with the outcome. I can tell you that we worked very hard to do that. We are working very hard now to see that Siemens will maintain the 6,000 employees that they employ here in Ontario, not just in Hamilton but across their many divisions. They are an important partner for us. We want them to stay. We think there are future opportunities in Hamilton—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Don Valley East will please retract his comment and apologize.

Mr. David Caplan: I apologize and withdraw.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nobody is more unhappy than the 550 workers and their families who are going to be affected in Hamilton. When this McGuinty government found out that these good jobs were at risk, it could have pulled together Hamilton's economic development team, the workers and their union, and other parties to try to help to come up with a consolidated effort. Instead, they kept it to themselves, and now the jobs are gone.

On this side of the House, we've actually proposed measures to ensure that government works with local leaders, works with affected workers and their unions, and works with the companies at risk in advance, before we lose jobs. Will the government act openly with a plan to save jobs, or will they keep playing politics and failing us?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let's be clear: There are a number of factors that were involved in the decision that landed in the southern states instead of Ontario, one of those being Buy America. Where was the NDP in our Buy America discussion—

Interjections.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: —when we had to get that clause out of American legislation? That did not help us. It did not help us in Windsor, didn't help us in Hamilton, didn't help us in Welland. So when we come to the NDP and say we need help on our industrial—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Paul Miller: Which one? The "baloney" part? I withdraw it. I apologize.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Stand up and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I don't need help from the armchair member from Peterborough. Apologize.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My second question is to the Premier as well. In tough times, people want help to make life more affordable, but the McGuinty government seems determined to make life more expensive. The Premier is adding a new charge to hydro bills months before he adds a new 8% tax. What steps is he actually making to make energy conservation more affordable to the people in this province?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Energy had an opportunity a moment ago to speak to this, but maybe I can just reiterate some of the good points that he made.

The charge which my colleague is referencing, which the leader of the official opposition referenced a moment

ago, is 33 cents a month on the average bill. That cost goes to support two energy programs. One offers up to \$150 for a home energy audit—by the way, 348,000 Ontarians have already taken advantage of that particular program—and we also offer up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates. So far, 160,000 Ontarians have taken advantage of the home retrofit rebates. This 33 cents a month on a typical bill is going to help fund those programs that Ontarians are seizing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government is only interested in green initiatives when they can lift some green from people's pockets. The government quietly ended the sales tax exemption for Energy Star appliances, another way the HST is going to whack people.

If this government is genuinely interested in helping Ontario families make the right environmental choices, why are they making it more expensive to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure my honourable colleague heard what I had to say in my first answer, and I'll say it again: What we are doing, through this 33 cents a month on the typical bill, is paying for \$150 for a home energy audit and up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates. Those two programs, providing electricity users with \$150 and then, again, up to \$5,000, are where the savings are coming from.

We're allowing homeowners to make investments that reduce their electricity bill and we're helping to pay for the changes they need to make. That's how we're helping homeowners save money when it comes to the electricity bill. I think it's pretty obvious.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What's obvious is that only one in 100 people actually take advantage of the retrofit program because they don't have the money in their pockets to be able to pay for those up-front costs. That's the reality.

Here's what everyday people in this province face: When they open their hydro bill, they're going to be paying more. If they want to make the right choices, they're going to be paying even more. It's a slap in the face to Ontarians who are trying their best to conserve.

When will this government stop nickeling and diming Ontarians who want to go green?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's exactly what we are doing: We are helping Ontarians go green by paying for some of the costs connected with that. We'll pay up to \$150 for their home energy audit and up to \$5,000 in retrofit rebates; 348,000 Ontarians have taken advantage of the home audit program and 160,000 so far have taken advantage of the home retrofit program.

I think we've got a couple of winners here when it comes to these programs. We'll keep on finding ways to support those.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the only thing that happened

between the posting of the regulation creating the new backdoor energy tax and its disappearance from public access was that you gave a media interview on the subject. Thirty minutes after the interview, the regulation was gone, but the tax lives on.

Who ordered the regulation to be pulled and hidden from public access?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I guess my question to the member and his leader is, when was the last time you checked the website? It's there; it's there as we speak. You might just want to make sure that you've got up-to-date information before you stand up in this House and make those kinds of accusations.

The fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. The member from Halton.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister of Economic Development.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know the member, in his heart of hearts, would support this program—and I know he believes that consumers deserve to have the opportunity to save, on average, 23% on their energy bill by engaging in the home energy audit program, by engaging in the retrofit program, which can provide families up to \$5,000 in rebates.

These programs are working. They're benefiting 160,000 families through the retrofit program; 348,000 people have—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's typical of the way the Liberals do business. They put it up, they pull it, and they put it back up while members are being walked into the House here. That's the way they do business and that's the way they treat the public in this province as well. At 10:30 this morning, that regulation was not there.

Minister, the regulation that we retrieved from e-Laws before you pulled it contradicts what you've been telling the media. You say it's for one year, but the regulation calls for the tax to be reassessed at the end of the year. Did you order the regulation to be pulled so that the public wouldn't know about the new hidden tax, the backdoor tax, or was it just so you could take the time to get your story straight?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll say it again: The regulation is on the site. Check. It's there.

It's funny how you talk about changing positions on things. I remember—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What happened to your belief when you said in this Legislature not long ago—in fact, it was February 23 of this year—that there's no question

that conservation is important? You talked about reducing your own usage in your home. You said that it's an important thing and that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

The member from Renfrew knows the rules. If he's not satisfied with the answer, following question period, he can put a late show in.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: You said, "I think that is an important thing, and I think there are some gains to be made out there today in that part of this act," and you were referring to the Green Energy Act. You supported it just a few months ago. Why are you all of a sudden opposed to conservation? Why do you want to deny your constituents the opportunity to save up to 23% on their energy bills? Why do you want to deny Ontario consumers the ability, through this conservation, to be able to—

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

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Children and their parents gathered on the lawn of the Legislature on Friday to ensure that they won't lose their child care in the coming year. Will the Premier commit to keeping those child care spaces open or does he plan to tell parents that there are going to be 7,600 less spaces for their children here in Ontario next year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague understands that she's talking about children for whom we have extended the benefits for child care, which had originally been funded by the federal government.

What I would ask my honourable colleague to do would be to join us in the overtures and the efforts that we continue to make vis-à-vis the federal government to encourage them to continue to assume that original responsibility so that we can, in fact, have the funding in place to provide the child care that I know that we all support for those children involved.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have 11,000 signatures on petitions from parents who disagree with this Premier. Parents don't want the blame game. They know that constitutionally, it is this government's—the provincial government's—responsibility to provide for child care funding. They want quality—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They want quality public child care for their children—children of all ages—that's not going to actually bankrupt them. That won't happen unless this Premier acts. Will he commit to keeping those child care spaces open or is he telling mothers and fathers across the province to quit their jobs and stay home with their kids?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague does not have to convince me about the value of good-quality, affordable child care for our families. She knows where we stand on these kinds of things broadly speaking because we're moving ahead with a new \$1.5-billion program to provide full-day learning opportunities for our four- and five-year-olds—the first program of its kind in North America.

Again, my colleague is referencing spaces that were originally funded by the federal government. We stepped in to extend that funding because it was about to run out. Again, I call upon my colleague to join us in the efforts that we are making to convince the federal government that they should restore that funding on a permanent basis.

1110

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, my constituency of Ottawa West–Nepean is home to one of the largest senior populations in Canada. These seniors have faith, as I do, in our system of public health care. But over the last four or five weeks they have seen and heard mixed reports about hospital budgets and service cutbacks, particularly at our community hospital of Queensway Carleton. Many of these seniors are concerned, even though the hospital has an impeccable record of patient care and financial management.

Minister, can you give assurances that the level of patient care will continue at the Queensway Carleton Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the honourable member very much for his question. I welcome him back and I congratulate him on his victory.

The first thing I want to say is that our government is absolutely committed to providing quality health care for all Ontarians within this province. In stark contrast, the first thing the previous government did when they were elected was cut funding to Ottawa hospitals by \$57 million. They shut the Grace Hospital, they shut the Riverside Hospital, they tried to close Montfort and they tried to close the pediatric cardiac program at CHEO.

In contrast, our investments at Queensway—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

In contrast, our record is clear. We've increased funding to Queensway Carleton by almost 60%. Our wait times have come down dramatically. Knee surgery is down by 440 days; hip surgery is down by 188 days—

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

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: That is good news about the Queensway Carleton Hospital in Ottawa.

Last year, about 65,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Ontario. Specialized care and short wait times are absolutely essential. The \$35-million Care

Grows West campaign in Ottawa supports expanded cancer care at the Queensway Carleton. The campaign chair, philanthropist Dan Greenberg, and his family donated an incredible \$11 million to this campaign, knowing the urgency of increased cancer care in our community.

Could the minister please tell this House how the government is providing advanced-level cancer care for patients at the Queensway Carleton Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that our government has worked very hard to ensure that Ontarians who are fighting cancer get the care they need as quickly as possible, as close to home as possible. To help achieve that goal we've invested \$82.5 million for the construction of the Irving Greenberg Family Cancer Centre at Queensway Carleton Hospital.

This centre will help reduce wait times and provide personalized care for an additional 1,300 cancer patients each year. It will focus on breast, prostate and colorectal cancer—three of the most frequently diagnosed forms of cancer in Ontario. This new centre will create 60 new clinical jobs that will start serving patients in early April. It will house three radiation treatment machines, two clinics and 33 chemotherapy spaces.

This centre is a very important part in ensuring that Ontarians fighting cancer—

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

ENERGY RATES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The McGuinty Liberals have to be hearing the same thing that we are in the opposition about the HST and how it's just a \$3-billion tax grab. It can't be easy for them to travel the province trying to sell a tax hike of 8% more on home heating, on gas, on haircuts, on autism therapy, especially since it makes things a lot harder for Ontario families.

At the end of last week the Premier just made things a lot harder for Ontario families by signing a regulation that slips a massive \$53-million tax on energy bills. So we have a question for you: Is that why morale over there is lower than a gutter snake on a backcountry road, or is that why George Smitherman was gang-tackled, or is it both?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's obvious to me that the Conservatives never got it when they were in power, they still don't get it. The fact is—and don't take our word for it. Talk to energy experts around the world and they will tell you that the most efficient way to manage energy supply is through conservation. Your critic used to get it. He did in February; he obviously doesn't get it today. He's on a different learning curve than the rest of us.

The fact is that if we can reduce our overall load and if we can reduce our overall maintenance of the system, we're saving all Ontarians dollars. This is smart investment. It's something that will ensure that all families will have an opportunity to find savings on their energy bill through conservation. It just makes sense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: While that minister plays hide-and-go-seek with taxes, our critic has been hard at work on the energy file and energy conservation. At no time did he ever suggest that we shouldn't be conserving, and that's something that he needs to clarify in his supplementary response.

There was no news release last week to announce the \$53-million tax grab through the back door. In fact, last week, after the throne speech when we asked them what they were going to tax, what was the new surprise, they didn't respond. In his lecture on the HST to the Stratford and Area Builders' Association on the day that the regulation was posted and in his speech today to Toronto business people, there was no mention by the revenue minister that there was going to be another surprise back-door tax that wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. That is this \$53 million.

We want to know: Was the regulation pulled because they didn't tell their caucus about this secret deal?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member should know that conservation programs have been paid for by the rate base for a very long period of time. The majority of conservation programs that have gone forward are paid for by the rate base because in the end, they're paid for by the very people who are going to accrue the savings by taking advantage of those programs.

This is just good public policy. It ensures that families have the opportunity to engage in these very important programs. It ensures that we're making the most cost-effective investment we possibly can to deal with our energy-supply challenges. These are decisions that the party opposite failed to make when they were in power. These are challenging times; these are challenging decisions. But at the end of the day, we're building a system that's reliable, we're building a system that's sustainable and we're building a system that's affordable to consumers. That's what Ontarians expect—

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

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I have repeatedly asked for assurances that this government would not cut the special diet supplement from Ontario Works and ODSP recipients who need it. I have received no such assurance from this minister. The public is worried. The editorial pages across Ontario are warning us that cutting the special diet supplement is wrong-headed, cruel and will deepen the poverty of people with diabetes, heart disease and other illnesses.

Again, will this minister tell the House today that the McGuinty government will not cut the special diet allowance?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I guess that you will have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget. But one thing I can say is that this government has been

addressing poverty since we have been elected. Since 2003, we have increased social assistance by 11%. We have created a cabinet on poverty and we are working to help reduce poverty in Ontario. We have invested in the Ontario child benefit—\$1,100 right now, and by 2013 it's going to be \$1,310. We also have a low-income dental plan in place and we have more affordable housing. In the supplementary, I will continue to let you know what we have done to reduce poverty.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Again the minister refuses to answer a very simple question and a very important one. I asked this question on behalf of the tens of thousands of Ontarians who depend on this supplement to try to purchase healthy food to address their medical needs. I also speak for the countless people and organizations who care deeply about the elimination of poverty, people like Doris Grinspun of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, who says, "Cutting the special diet allowance program would be catastrophic for individuals and families in the short term and increase costs to the health care system in the long term."

Has the Social Assistance Review Committee recommended this drastic action, or is the government taking this action unilaterally?

1120

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I will say to the member that you have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget.

Special diet has been a concern of ours. When we came into power, this special diet budget was around \$6 million. Today, it's over \$200 million. So we have to look into it. We have the Auditor General who wrote a very critical report about special diet, and we are looking into it. We'll have to wait until Thursday to see what will be in the budget or not.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Earlier this month, the minister, along with the Ontario Power Authority, announced a series of contracts, mostly solar, under the feed-in tariff program of our Green Energy Act. I understand that a major participant in this first round of programs is Loblaws, which truly demonstrates the wide-ranging support and interest that we are receiving across the province.

With such great demand to participate in this program, I know there surely must be some difficulty in ensuring as many communities have the opportunity to participate. Would the minister share with this House the distribution of contracts across the province and specifically what projects are in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased to respond to the member's question. Indeed, he is right. A couple of weeks ago we made a very important announcement, and it was terrific to see the widespread take-up and support for this important program. We announced that over 500

projects in 120 communities will be receiving contracts under the feed-in tariff program. We're talking about farmers; we're talking about schools; we're talking about hospitals; we're talking about large-scale retail and commercial operations. All kinds of individuals and businesses across the province are engaging in this green energy revolution. I think I can call it that. These projects, in total, will produce enough energy to power 13,000 homes.

In the member's riding specifically, there are four projects—three hydro, one solar—that are receiving contracts. These together will generate about 765 kilowatts of energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: With the Green Energy Act and initiatives such as the closing of coal-fired plants, the government has demonstrated a commitment to becoming a North American leader in green energy. We all benefit from better, cleaner air, and we are at the forefront of a growing industry.

Wind energy has been a topic of considerable discussion. As a matter of fact, I have the largest wind farm in Canada at Prince township in my constituency. I know that the Canadian Wind Energy Association is here today.

Residents of Algoma-Manitoulin can appreciate the drive towards generating a clean, renewable energy supply, but they also want to know that we are taking their concerns surrounding wind power seriously, and they want to know that we are making progress on getting this clean energy supply online.

Would the minister tell the House what he and his ministry are doing in taking their concerns into account—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me say first and foremost that absolutely, we take the concerns that are expressed to us very seriously. We know there's some anxiety, as there often is with new things that come forward, particularly with wind turbines. Our Green Energy Act ensures that environmental safety concerns are being addressed. I know our Minister of the Environment is very much engaged in these issues.

The fact of the matter is, there is no recognized research indicating health effects on people from wind turbines. That being said, we will be constantly monitoring the situation. As I said, I know the minister is very engaged in ensuring that that monitoring takes place. We already have stringent noise regulations in place. We've put in place very important setback requirements. But let me tell you what kind of progress we have made.

In 2003, there were just 15 megawatts generated by 10 turbines. Today there are about 700 turbines generating 12,000 megawatts. That's an 80-fold increase over—

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

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, your recent

last-minute announcement for one-time funding to the struggling children's aid societies across Ontario left most saying the cash injection just wasn't enough. However, closer to home for me, the Halton Children's Aid Society is still saying, "Where is ours?"

Mr. John O'Toole: That was hush money.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The Halton Children's Aid Society receives—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham will withdraw the comment he just made.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, please stand.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: However, the Halton Children's Aid Society is still saying, "Where is mine?" The Halton Children's Aid Society receives less than half the provincial average, some of the lowest per capita funding in the province.

Why hasn't the Halton Children's Aid Society received one red cent from this funding announcement?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the work that we've been doing over the past many months to bring stabilization and stability to children's aid societies across the province.

As you know, we were able to announce an additional \$26.9 million in one-time funding for some CASs to get them on more stable footing, and we did that because we continue to work very closely with all children's aid societies across the province. In fact, I know that I'll be speaking to the Halton Children's Aid Society later this week.

We are continuing to work in partnership with the commission to promote the sustainability of children's aid societies, to get better outcomes for kids and ultimately, to have a system that will be there in the long term to protect kids and to do the work that is being done every day in communities across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Again, there was no answer, Madam Minister. This is short-term money. There is no solution; it's a band-aid. All that happened here was that children's aid societies that had even less than Halton were equalized so that all children's aid societies don't have enough to do their business.

Your government provided assistance to Halton children's aid, and then you said to them, "Get the rest on your line of credit." This does nothing more than to provide that band-aid solution. They originally predicted that they would run out of money in March 2010.

As you know, cost reductions mean cutbacks in services, and in this case, to the most vulnerable children and families in Ontario. The families and children of Halton deserve better. Will you put your money where your mouth is and provide the Halton Children's Aid Society with the money they deserve to do their work?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member opposite would know, children's aid societies over the past num-

ber of years have received increases in funding. We continue to work with them to find a mechanism to ensure that children's aid societies are on stable footing.

Halton's CAS funding is up 32% since 2003. Halton's CAS, like all other CASs and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, knows that the work we are doing at the present time is to stabilize the system and to get us through to the end of the year so that we continue to have the conversation about the long-term, sustainable approach to children's aid societies across the province.

The commission is working and travelling across the province. Our ministry works closely with all CASs, including Halton's CAS, and we continue to ensure that no child will be at risk and that the work will be done in communities across the province. That's the work that we do every day and continue to do.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Finance. A few weeks ago, the minister said he would bring in further pension reform this session. Like the Arthurs report, pensioners have been asking for an increase in the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500 a month, and in these difficult economic times all pensioners want security from stranded pension plans being wound up. They want an Ontario pension agency, but there was no mention of further pension reform in this government's throne speech.

Will there be further pension reform in the spring session and will an increase in the PBGF fund and an Ontario pension agency be included in this package?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, there will be another piece of legislation. The member opposite is correct. Professor Arthurs, as one of 144 recommendations, recommended increasing the coverage of the PBGF, but he also recommended paying for it. He also said that we have to determine what the costs are and how much that would cost workers and employers. He was very concerned that, in anything we do, number one, we not disincite employers from offering pensions, or number two, disincite employees from contributing to those plans, so it is important that we get this right.

We will continue; as I say, we have a bill before the House now. We will be bringing forward further legislation. We will be talking with all Canadian governments about the need for overall pension reform in Canada to assure our seniors and future seniors that we'll have a brighter and better future for everyone.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I've asked the minister repeatedly to fully step up to the plate on the pensions file and bring in reforms that provide pension security for all Ontarians.

The NDP has produced an Ontario retirement plan that would provide workplace pension coverage for the 65% of Ontarians without such pension plans. When will this government introduce an increase in the pension benefits guarantee fund to \$2,500 per month for all pension plans

and introduce an Ontario pension agency like that which is now operating in Quebec to manage and grow all stranded pensions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member references the NDP proposal, which is one of a number of proposals we've seen. I think the member would acknowledge that it would be important to decide how it's going to be paid for. I think the member and his colleagues would probably agree that we don't want to inadvertently disincite people from saving for their retirement. That is one option that's available. It's the view of this government that we need to canvass, in a very careful fashion, all of the options available.

The second point I would make is, we do believe that it is in all of our interests to have a national or a pan-Canadian response to the circumstance. We want to ensure that we incent both employers and employees to do more to prepare for people's retirements as we move forward.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In February, I attended the annual meeting of the Lambton county Farm Safety Association in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. This local organization reminded the farmers in attendance that each year, an average of 115 people are killed and at least 1,500 are hospitalized for farm-related incidents across Canada.

This past week was Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. Agricultural Safety Week reminds us how important it is to have continued improvement of our farm safety record, year after year.

I understand that the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association launched a new national three-year campaign with the theme "Plan. Farm. Safety." Minister, what kinds of initiatives are being undertaken by your ministry to raise awareness and promote farm safety here in Ontario?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. My ministry has been working with the Farm Safety Association for over 10 years. Our goal is to reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and illnesses at Ontario farms, horticulture and landscape operations.

Canadian Agricultural Safety Week gives us the opportunity to reflect on work we have done over the years to improve our farm safety record. My ministry is providing the FSA with \$120,000 annually. In partnership with OMAFRA, the FSA is working on a number of safety initiatives this year, such as publishing articles on workplace health and safety issues in Ontario Farmer, the farm accident rescue program, and safety days, a summer camp program for over 1,800 Ontario children which focuses on farm safety.

I'm very pleased to report that farm-related incidents have been on the decline over the past—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Minister, the warn weather we experienced last week reminds us all that across Ontario, farmers will soon be hard at work in the fields preparing for another season of food production. Agricultural workers play an important role in that production.

A large number of my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex are farmers and farm workers. They face dangerous hazards on the job each and every day. Unfortunately, many of these risks are associated with this type of work, especially when farmers and farm workers are faced with the pressures of unfavourable weather conditions and time constraints. I'd like to know, Minister, if you can tell us what our government is doing to improve the health and safety of agricultural workers.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I would ask to refer this to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First, I would like to thank the member for the question, and I'd like to thank the minister for her continued support of agricultural workers.

In June 2006, my ministry extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to cover farming operations, and since then, farm workers have shared the same rights as the rest of the province's workers. Furthermore, farming operations are now fully integrated in the ministry when it comes to the health and safety programs that we offer. My ministry has approximately 100 inspectors who are specially trained in issues specific to agricultural operations, and we've doubled the number of farm inspections over the last number of years. All of this has led to stronger protections for our agricultural workers.

My ministry will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as well—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to ask my first question as member of provincial Parliament for Leeds-Grenville.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, a lack of proper funding at the Brockville General Hospital in my riding has meant the elimination of 15 acute care beds and 17 staff positions, including front-line health care workers. My question is: Why would the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care say these cuts were justified?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by congratulating the member on his victory and welcoming him to this very special place.

Since we were elected, we've made significant investments in health care. We've increased hospital funding from almost \$11 billion to \$15.5 billion; that's a 42% increase in hospital funding alone since we took office. This year alone, it's a 4.7% increase to hospitals.

However, hospitals are aware that that rate of funding increase simply will not be able to continue this year.

They are working very hard with the LHINs to come up with plans so that they can continue to improve health care as they make sure that every dollar they spend goes to better patient care.

When it comes to Brockville, I'll be happy to talk about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: At the same time that the cuts were being announced at the Brockville General Hospital, the McGuinty government found \$3 million for the Cornwall Community Hospital. The CUPE president at Brockville said, "Our problem is we're not a Liberal riding."

During the by-election, the Liberal candidate said that he would have the health minister visit the riding within 100 days of his election. Despite the outcome, will the health minister come to Leeds and Grenville so she can see that funding the Brockville General Hospital is as important as funding Cornwall or Toronto Grace?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, and I appreciate the invitation.

I look forward to having the opportunity to talk to the member opposite about some of the improvements that we have made in his area since we were elected. In stark contrast, when his party was elected back in 1995, they cut funding to the hospital by \$5 million.

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They can hoot and holler all they want, but I tell you—

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Those cuts hurt families. They cut almost 10% from the Brockville General Hospital budget.

In addition to increasing funding at the hospital, we've invested in community-based care: five family health teams in the riding of Leeds–Grenville are providing care to 40,000 patients, including 6,600 who previously did not have access to primary health care. These are important investments that we're making—

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. Premier, when will your government present a climate change plan that meets your promised targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: As this member well knows, we've done an awful lot with respect to climate change over the last six years. We've got the most ambitious transit plan in the province of Ontario; that's going to invest \$15 billion. We have just passed cap-and-trade legislation that will put limits on the major emitters of greenhouse gases in Ontario.

We have done an awful lot. Much more needs to be done. We want to make sure that greenhouse gas emissions are going to be reduced in the years to come, and our climate change action plan that was introduced a number of years ago is making that happen.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In fact, the report from the minister himself showed that they're not meeting their targets, and they don't have a plan to meet their targets. In fact, after 2014, emissions rise, and they're going to miss what has to happen by a significant margin.

The question for the Premier is: When will you actually bring in a plan that gives us what you promised you'd give us? Will you keep that promise?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, we are doing something here in Ontario that no other jurisdiction in North America or indeed around the world is doing, and that is, we're closing our coal-fired energy plants. That is going to get rid of some major greenhouse gas emissions, which is absolutely necessary for us to meet those goals.

Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in general are the issue of this decade, and the entire world needs to get together in order to get this done. We are doing our part in a number of different ways in Ontario to actually make it happen. We invite the member and his party to play along with us, work with us and make sure that we actually meet those targets as we go along.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The province is working with Ontario municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe area to make sure their official plans conform with the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe area. It's a hugely important exercise. The growth plan conformity exercise will rationalize the use of land, infrastructure and services. It will protect ecosystems and community health and ensure community sustainability. It's a very detailed and time-consuming process. Minister, what's the process behind the conformity exercise?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question from the member for Willowdale. The Places to Grow Act, as he may know, requires municipalities that are located within the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan area to bring their official plans into conformity. In short, an official plan describes, as I think most of us know, a municipal council's policies on how land in that community should be used.

A municipality's official plan is created by the community with input from groups and individuals within that community. This approach ensures that future planning and development will meet the specific needs of each local area. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing works closely with the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and other partner ministries to ensure effective implementation of the growth plan policies and municipal plan conformity exercises.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: A number of municipalities have already gone through the process of conforming to the 2005 provincial policy statement. Recently, you attended the Ontario Good Roads Association and ROMA conference here and said that the province will be reviewing the provincial policy statement.

Minister, how will the municipalities or the other many stakeholders who have a keen interest in this conformity process participate in the review of the provincial statement as well? I think it's an important issue for people here in Toronto, especially in Willowdale.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is correct: I was given the opportunity to announce a five-year review at this year's Ontario Good Roads Association/ROMA conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with the organization of the conference and all the municipalities and stakeholders who participated. They have all contributed to the success of the Ontario Good Roads Association/ROMA organization, and I look forward to meeting with them once again next year.

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the provincial policy statement is providing effective policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and to determine if changes are needed to those policies.

You may wish to visit my ministry's website at www.ontario.ca/mah in the near future, as there will be information—

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

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome Julia Morton-Marr, Georgina Bencsik and Melinda Rooke, along with members and students from the United Nations Association in Canada-Toronto, and the International Holistic Tourism Education Centre, who are here today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, to launch their peace and sustainability education initiatives. Welcome, all.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The changing of the seasons:

In the warmth of spring
The world comes to life
Emerging from winter's
Cold, brutal strife

Adults on patios,
Children on lawns,
Windows, be open!
Winter jackets, be gone!
But this year, it seems,
Something is missing.
Enjoyment replaced
By buzzing and hissing
Cluster flies here,
Ladybugs there.
Fragile gardens
And flowers beware!
Hornets at picnics
Ants in the kitchen
Little ones scratching
And stinging and itching
Wasps at the playground
Grubs in the field
Free to harass us
We carry no shield
And weeds that strangle
Weeds that spread
Once veggies and flowers
Now crabgrass instead.
And who do we thank
For this season gone wild?
Who welcomed the foes
Of gardener and child?
'Twas McGuinty and company
With their pesticide ban
Another decree
Without long-term plan
They ignored the good science
Rode the emotional wave
Told us how to choose
How to live and behave
Time and again,
They forbid and exclude,
Choosing for us our pets,
Our tools and our food.
And with every ban
They lose more and more votes
As more legislation
Is crammed down our throats
They don't see it now
But this controlling ambition
Will send them across
As the next opposition.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

Mr. Jeff Leal: The residents of Peterborough were very proud during the Olympic gold medal game between Canada and the United States, not just because Canada was playing, but because our community had a direct impact on the game. No less than five players and coaches were products of the Peterborough minor hockey system and the Peterborough Petes organization.

Corey Perry was born in Peterborough and played minor hockey up to Bantam AAA. This talented young man caught the eye of the Londonites and, in 2001, was drafted fifth overall to London, where he played until 2003, when he was drafted by the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim.

Chris Pronger played two seasons in Peterborough with the Petes before being drafted to the Hartford Whalers, and was named to the all-rookie team after playing his first year in the National Hockey League.

Eric Staal, born in Thunder Bay, caught the interest of the Petes organization, and was drafted by them at the age of 16. Under the excellent coaching of Dick Todd, Eric honed his skills, averaging at least a point a game during the 2001-02 season. Eric was drafted by the Carolina Hurricanes, and his NHL career took off.

Jamie Langenbrunner, who played for the United States in the gold medal game, played two seasons with the Peterborough Petes, after being drafted by the Dallas Stars straight out of high school. During those two years, he accumulated 190 points in over 124 games.

On the bench, those watching that game saw another product of the Peterborough hockey system. Steve Yzerman played two seasons for the Petes before being drafted to Detroit, where he played 22 seasons for the Wings.

There wasn't anyone who watched that gold medal game who wasn't proud of each and every player who contributed his skills and talents. For those of us watching from Peterborough, it was a very proud moment.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to recognize that Sunday, March 21 was World Down Syndrome Day. The third month and the 21st day were chosen to signify the uniqueness of Down syndrome as the tripling of the 21st chromosome.

The annual observance of this day aims to promote awareness and understanding. The goal is also to rally support and recognition of the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with Down syndrome. Worldwide, one in every 733 babies born has Down syndrome.

Canada celebrated World Down Syndrome Day by premiering a documentary called *Tying Your Own Shoes*, which provides a glimpse into the exceptional mindsets and emotional lives of four adult artists with Down syndrome. The personal stories of Matthew, Katherine, Petra and Daninah are shared in the documentary. They include discussions on families, relationships, workplaces, experiencing loneliness, and their ambitions and desires.

The film is a humorous, heartbreaking and matter-of-fact story about the challenges and rewards of living with Down syndrome. These four individuals also recall some important childhood memories and discuss what it's like to grow up as a person with Down syndrome.

I want to thank organizations like Community Living Ontario and the Down Syndrome Association of Ontario that have made a difference in our province, dispelling

stereotypes, providing accurate information and raising awareness of the potential of individuals with Down syndrome.

MIHIR GHOSH

Mr. Michael Prue: It is with great sadness that I rise today to talk of the death of my friend Mihir Ghosh. He was more than my friend; he was, importantly for our community, an activist who embraced multiculturalism and taught us all to appreciate it.

He planned and organized every East York Day for the last 20 years, and he planned and was present at every swearing-in ceremony for new citizens that we held in our community.

He brought together people of different cultures, religions and languages. He often told the story, when they were present, of his leaving India at a young age to find fame and fortune, travelling first to Germany and later to Toronto. But it was here, he said, of all the places he ever lived, that he found a place that he could call his home.

He was the president of the East York Lions. He recently retired and went back to India to visit relatives and friends. He sent me a postcard, which I received only about 10 days ago. The next day, I received a message—the sad news that he had suddenly passed away.

To his wife, Jharna, and his children David and Anita, we send condolences, but more importantly, the knowledge that he made a profound contribution to the harmony and understanding in our community and to the Canada he so loved.

EDUCATION

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Our government understands that Ontario's prosperity depends on creating the world's most highly skilled and well-educated workforce.

We've already made a lot of progress improving our public education system. For example, class sizes are down, test scores are up and our graduation rates have increased. Now, our Open Ontario plan will help us take the next steps.

For example, we're introducing a full-day kindergarten program for four- and five-year-olds, the first of its kind in North America. This program will start our youngest students off on the right path to success.

We're opening up new opportunities in our colleges and universities. We will increase post-secondary education spaces for an additional 20,000 students this year alone.

We're also creating a new Ontario online learning institute to give Ontarians an opportunity to learn online from our best professors and teachers. And we're going to open up Ontario to 50% more foreign students, who will bring new ideas and generate more revenue that can be reinvested in our colleges and universities.

These initiatives will allow more Ontarians to receive the higher education and training they need to succeed in today's knowledge-based economy.

I am proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

BROCKVILLE MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Steve Clark: Just days after the by-election in Leeds–Grenville, Royal Ottawa Health Care Group CEO and president George Weber was quoted that there is a “clear impasse” hindering possible developments at the Brockville Mental Health Centre. He later said, “We need some political support to break the impasse. I am not giving up.”

1310

The proposed secure treatment centre for women can be created at the Brockville Mental Health Centre site, where 160 staff are now losing jobs due to the closing of the transitional unit. This would save the province money, improve treatment for people who need it and give a job boost to the local economy.

Earlier today, I asked the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care whether she would visit Leeds–Grenville within the next 100 days. I urge her to agree to visit Leeds–Grenville and commit to meeting with the Brockville Mental Health Centre and to support this project.

I also call on the minister to put a moratorium on the bed closures at the Brockville Mental Health Centre so that we can keep those jobs and build on the success and expertise we have on-site.

My riding of Leeds–Grenville has waited months for an answer from the Minister of Health. We’ve also been waiting over seven years for the Premier to make good on his promise for new jobs at that site.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: For the past eight years the York Regional Police, in partnership with the community, have gathered to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

March 21 was the day the Sharpeville massacre occurred. In 1960, approximately 7,500 anti-apartheid demonstrators marched peacefully to the police station in Sharpeville, South Africa, to protest a law that required all black Africans and people of colour to carry a passbook to travel within the country. During this rally, police opened fire and killed 69 demonstrators, including 10 children. In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 a commemorative day, in memory of the Sharpeville massacre.

Collectively, we stand together against racism and all forms of discrimination while we celebrate the vibrant diversity of our communities. On April 11, 2010, the York Regional Police, under the direction of Chief La Barge, will be hosting this year’s celebration at Milliken Mills High School, themed “We Are the World,” with Ashaw Noorhasan from Rogers TV as the master of ceremonies.

I would like to thank some of the participating organizations who will be taking part in this year’s commemorative day: the Markham African Caribbean Association, Sandgate women’s shelter, the Buddhist Association of Canada, the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham, the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians, Fuerza Latina Community Services and COSTI Immigrant Services.

MAX KEEPING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: What an incredible person I have the honour of paying tribute to today. I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that almost everybody in Ottawa knows Max Keeping well enough to consider him a friend, even if they have never met him.

There’s no doubt that he deserves every bit of this celebrity status in our community, not only for his trusted presence on Ottawa airwaves for the last 45 years or as the mainstay of CJOH News for 38 years, but as the face, voice and champion of charity and good causes in our community, from food banks to the United Way, youth sports programs and scholarships to juvenile diabetes, and of course, the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario, which has named a wing in his honour.

If that doesn’t move you, consider the numbers: Max makes more than 200 personal appearances annually on behalf of charities, service groups, fundraisers and the like—that’s on top of a full-time job.

If that doesn’t do it for you, consider this: By 2004, Max Keeping had helped raise \$100 million for good causes in eastern Ontario and western Quebec—\$100 million and counting.

Max is a member of the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario, has an Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, a Gemini Humanitarian Award, a Canadian Association of Broadcasters Gold Ribbon for outstanding community involvement, the keys to the city of Ottawa, and dozens of other awards and tributes.

As Max Keeping steps away from the news desk this Friday, he will become CJOH’s community ambassador, a fitting role for our community icon.

Max Keeping, best of luck, but most of all, thank you.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Reza Moridi: Spring arrived this year on March 20 at exactly 1:32 p.m. eastern standard time, which also marks Nowruz. Nowruz, which directly translates to “new day,” marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the calendar year in Iran and Afghanistan.

Nowruz is celebrated and observed by over 300 million people around the world. Most notably, it’s celebrated in Iran, Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and other parts of the world, including the Middle East, parts of central Asia, south Asia, northwestern China, the Crimea and some ethnic groups in Albania, Bosnia, Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia.

I am proud to inform my colleagues that Nowruz has now been recognized by the international community.

The UN General Assembly, in 2010, recognized March 21 as the International Day of Nowruz, describing it as a spring festival that has been celebrated for over 3,000 years. Nowruz was officially registered on the UNESCO list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2008, this House passed a motion and proclaimed the first day of spring as Nowruz in Ontario, and in 2009, the House of Commons proclaimed the first day of spring as Nowruz in Canada.

May this Nowruz bring prosperity and peace to people around the world, and freedom and democracy to the people of Iran.

Nowruz-etan perooz.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SEPARATION DISTANCES FOR NATURAL GAS POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Flynn moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants / Projet de loi 8, Loi établissant des distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel.

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. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to introduce this bill, which would ban the construction of natural gas power plants unless the facility is at least 1,500 metres from any land that is zoned for residential use, or any land on which an educational facility, day nursery or health care facility is located. It creates a defined separation distance between natural gas plants and communities. Ontario, then, will be able to reduce health impacts of power plant emissions such as PM_{2.5}, and will minimize the safety concerns associated with locating these facilities near homes and schools. The bill is designed to make Ontario a leader in safe energy, and I ask all members of the House to support it.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committee membership changes.

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

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committee: on the Standing Committee on General Government, Mr. Moridi be replaced by Mr. Chiarelli, and Mr. Yakabuski be replaced by Mr. Clark.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm a bit surprised with petitions here today, but I have one from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy" and use "every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services;" health services; "veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and" last and certainly not least, "funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of ... \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to Alexander, one of the new pages.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Save Our Child Care! Ontario Faces Dramatic Cuts to Subsidies.

"Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

"Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

“Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

“(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

“(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name, and Ben will bring it down.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, sent to me courtesy of Dr. Nguyen from Eglinton Avenue in Mississauga. I especially want to thank those people from Oakville, Mississauga, Toronto and as far away as Tweed who have signed it, noting particularly Robert France and Constance Ferrell, both of Mississauga.

It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA 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 better 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 very pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Snigdha to carry it for me on her first week in the Legislature.

POWER PLANT

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

“Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired

electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location on ... Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and pass it to my page, Leah. I want to just mention that there are thousands and thousands of signatures on this petition.

CHILD CARE

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

“Save Our Child Care! Ontario Faces Dramatic Cuts to Subsidies.

“Whereas, in the 2006 budget, the McGuinty government allocated \$63.5 million for child care for each of the next four years. Each year since, \$63.5 million went to support our vital child care services;

“Whereas, if the province does not continue this funding in the 2010 provincial budget, municipalities will have no option but to make dramatic cuts to child care subsidies, destabilizing the entire system;

“Therefore, be it resolved that in the 2010 budget we call on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

“(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs; and

“(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure that the child care system remains stable and sustainable.”

I’ll send that down with Diana.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I’m pleased, on behalf of my seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, thanking Olga Alexander of Ottawa for having sent it:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craitor.

"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..."

It contains a number of other specific subsections of the bill and concludes, "We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

On behalf of my seatmate from Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Eric to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a number of people in my great riding of Oxford, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% 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 home sales over \$500,000; and

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

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

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

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

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition wholeheartedly.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents in the riding of Durham do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% 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 home sales over

\$500,000"—in fact, it actually applies to ones under \$500,000;

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

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

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

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

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Ben, one of the new pages.

TAXATION

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

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% 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 home sales over \$500,000; and

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

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

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

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

I agree with that petition and will affix my signature.

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TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: arena ice, soccer and baseball field rentals ... gas at the pumps ... home heating oil and electricity; gym fees; golf green fees; ski lift tickets; movie, theatre and ... admission fees; Internet services; cellphone bills; boat rentals, fishing licences,

charters and wood for the campfire; home renovations; and real estate transactions;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I affix my name in full support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 11, 2010, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: In reference to the throne speech, this government’s throne speech vision is so rooted in giving up control of Ontario’s economy to large outside interests that it should be called “sale-a-vision.”

For example, why sign on to the Harper government’s buy-American deal when it will tie the hands of the provincial government and municipalities from using local tax dollars to create local jobs? Why forbid OPG to be the leader in renewable energy and then invite foreign giants like Samsung and the American giant NextEra Energy into this province? Why privatize Ontario’s crown jewel corporations when it is existing provincial policy that is preventing the crown corporations from using their expertise and resources to create jobs in Ontario?

If taken to the extreme, crown asset privatization would worsen future deficits by removing the more than \$4 billion of annual revenues that crown corporations currently contribute to the provincial treasury. In exchange, as privatized enterprises, they would pay \$400 million in provincial corporate income tax and \$600 million in federal corporate income tax, leaving \$3 billion of after-tax profits for the private owners.

Ontario taxpayer money should be used to create jobs for Ontarians, processing our resources right here in Ontario. Ontario needs a comprehensive program that would ensure that, whenever it is economically feasible, provincial and municipal procurement projects give preference to Ontario- and Canadian-made products and projects. We also need a policy that insists that, whenever feasible, Ontario resources are processed here in Ontario.

An effective “local tax dollars for local jobs” program would allow smaller and mid-sized Ontario companies to achieve the scale they need to export and successfully compete in global markets, creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians. It is crucial that any “local tax dollars for local jobs” program be cost-effective and not be a burden to the taxpayer. Therefore, the price premium for Ontario-

made goods would be limited to 10% above non-Canadian products and 5% for Canadian-made goods manufactured outside of Ontario.

The harmonized sales tax, corporate tax cuts and tax giveaways to profitable banks will not—I repeat, will not—create jobs. High-wage, good-quality jobs can be created by carefully targeting financial incentives towards quality investments in plant and machinery, computer technology, new employment and skills training. New Democrats believe in creating a pro-investment tax regime, a tax regime that directly rewards job-creating investments in plant, machinery, information technology and workplace skills. The government’s harmonized sales tax inputs will cost the treasury \$4.5 billion annually, and its corporate income tax reduction will cost the treasury \$2.4 billion annually. The NDP simply doesn’t believe that these tax cuts are the best possible use of nearly \$7 billion per year. A more targeted use of nearly \$7 billion—in fact, far less money—would create many more jobs. In particular, the creative and timely use of tax dollars for new investment and new hiring in Ontario, as is done in Quebec, Manitoba and other provinces, is a far more effective way of creating jobs.

Additionally, Ontario must create more value-added jobs in the forestry and mining sectors. A value-added strategy in forestry would mean more jobs making hardwood flooring and doors, engineered wood products, cabinets and furniture, and less unprocessed lumber being shipped out of our province. Whenever possible, the processing of Ontario resources, particularly wood and steel, should be done in Ontario, not in outside jurisdictions.

Another issue very close to my heart: There was no mention of any government plan to expand pensions to the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace-based pension coverage in this province. The Harper federal budget made it clear that the federal government is not going to move to expand pension coverage. Therefore, we believe there is an important role to be played at the provincial level in greatly expanding workplace pension coverage.

The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead with other provinces and develop a workplace-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage. The NDP has proposed such a plan, the Ontario retirement plan. Under our plan, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the ORP. But the plan is not mandatory; if you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don’t have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan.

The throne speech also made many health care promises, such as continued drug reforms, legislation to make health care providers and executives accountable for improving patient care, funding that will follow the patient and greater choice in where to access their treatment, the creation of an independent expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines, and a review of the Public Hospitals Act to

include expertise of community partners and health care professionals. But the changes the government speaks of could be profound and have a devastating impact on patients.

Ontarians are concerned that their community care is threatened. There is no justification for the government's secretive approach to health care reform. If they have a good idea, why won't they share it with Ontarians, with the experts in the field and with the opposition? What are they afraid of?

New Democrats have substantial concerns about the shift in hospital funding. We are gravely—I repeat, gravely—concerned that this government is choosing to further pursue a failed model of competitive bidding and private care, just like they did in home care and just like they have done with our P3 hospitals, which have delivered less for more public money. Ontarians need the highest quality of patient care that is available to families close to home. What will these changes mean to our families?

Drug reform is likely related to generic drug reform. Previously, Ontario capped the rebate that pharmacies could receive from drug manufacturers, as well as capping the price for generics. Currently, the price point for generic drugs is capped at 50%. The government is likely looking at lowering this cap to 25%. The government is likely looking at lowering this cap another 10% in future months. This is a contentious issue that has infuriated the pharmacy industry, broadly speaking. In general, these reforms are positive. They lower costs and do not directly impact patient care. However, the decrease in pharmacists' fees will likely have a negative impact, especially on smaller and independent pharmacies.

We really have no clue what improving provider and executive accountability may be about. The government must explain what they mean by this statement. If it is Ombudsman oversight, we applaud this move. New Democrats have repeatedly called for this fundamental shift toward transparency and accountability. A more likely scenario would signal a move toward linking health care provider and executive pay to patient care and outcomes. There have been rumours of executive bonuses tied to patient outcomes—a scary thought, Speaker.

The NDP believes in care based on quality and not profit. As we all know, the devil is in the details. The government must come out with its plan for health care provider and executive accountability sooner than later. We are gravely concerned about these issues and the possibility that we are shifting toward a competitive model of health care. Heaven help us if we go that way.

1340

The government has not yet released the details of its new hospital funding model, and is not expected to until the March 25 budget. What we know, so far, is that it will be related to the health-based allocation model, HBAM, launched in 2007 with the creation of the LHINs.

HBAM was supposed to take into account the health needs of a region. However, the HBAM has always been

a sorely inadequate tool that measures current use and not the true need of the population, i.e. it is terrible at taking health equity issues into account and tends to reproduce the existing issues with the health care system. It appears there will be greater pay for procedure-based funding, like the wait times strategy, and financial incentives to better-performing hospitals—I'm not quite sure how that's going to work. We would hope that they would be uniform throughout the province and they'd all provide the same care, not care based on funding.

New Democrats do not know the full plan for this new hospital funding system, because the government has been rolling it out in pieces rather than sharing its plan with stakeholders and the opposition. Ontarians do not know what is in store for them or their hospitals. This is an inexcusable way to launch a new model of hospital funding. What about transparency and consultation with the public? Where is it? I don't see a lot of it. We have grave concerns about this plan.

HBAM has proved to be a useless tool for Ontario's health care system. It does not take health equity into account, and it reproduces the problems we currently have with our health care system in terms of both under- and over-utilization of hospital services.

Procedure-based funding compartmentalizes the needs and health care issues of Ontarians. It has created a bottleneck of services in our hospitals. We want excellent patient-based care, but we need to understand the system as a whole and not just pick out the procedures and health care facilities that will garner the most support.

This system will have a devastating impact on smaller and rural hospitals, the very ones that have been hurt by the already occurring cuts, i.e. Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Burk's Falls. We do not want a health care system that picks winners and losers. We need consistent policy and planning.

New Democrats have long supported research and clinical guidelines, and perhaps the independent expert advisory panel is expected to do that. Again, this aspect is very short on details.

We all must ask: Is this just a smokescreen for introducing a series of competitive mechanisms into our system, or is this actually a move toward higher-quality care? Good question.

We need to know how any new system of clinical guidelines will fit within the existing framework. What about the existing avenues for expert advice such as the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences? This has been in existence since 1992 and is the body responsible for clinical guidelines. Why the change? What will this mean for Ontario?

New Democrats have proposed changes to the Public Hospitals Act dozens of times in the last number of years. Every time, this was rejected. So a review of the Public Hospitals Act is an interesting concept that's being brought forward. This is a vital move if we're going to take on some of the issues occurring in our hospitals. However, again, we need to see the details of this and ensure the government is actually serious about tackling these issues head-on.

Will the government finally go far enough and recognize the contributions of all health professionals and community health partners? Stakeholders such as the RNAO, ONA, Ontario midwives etc. have long asked for changes to hospital advisory committees. They have told this government time and time again that if Ontario wants to get serious about full collaboration in our hospitals, the full spectrum of health care providers must be represented on these advisory committees. There can't be hand-picked people on these boards. They have to involve all the people who work in hospitals: staff, doctors, scientists, researchers—everyone.

Will the government clarify what they will be reviewing in the PHA? We'll be looking forward to that and looking to see what they do about it. Or will this be just a quick move to ram through whatever hospital funding changes they are pursuing instead of dealing with the underlying issues? I hope not.

Poverty reduction was central to the 2007 Liberal platform. They talked about reducing poverty in our province. The 2007 throne speech stressed opportunity for all, saying that opportunity "does not mean more prosperity for some and more poverty for others." There's a little bit of a turnaround, I'd say, on that little promise. Three years later, more and more Ontarians are losing their jobs and falling into poverty or are a paycheque away from living in poverty. Ontarians, more and more, are turning to food banks in record numbers. The waiting list for affordable housing has hit record numbers. The waiting list for regulated child care is now longer than it ever was.

We are facing higher student tuitions and higher student debt than ever before. Schools are forced to fund-raise for basic supplies for elementary classes more than ever before. And what about the schools that can't afford it? What about the areas where the economy is dead and they haven't got enough to help the schools? What do those people do? They don't live in rich areas.

The volunteers for their support for poverty reduction: We'd like to thank the volunteers for their support.

To pretend that full-day learning, on its own, will magically lift children out of poverty is ridiculous. To pass the buck to the federal government on child care—where is the provincial government's action?

There's nothing on child care, nothing on affordable housing, nothing on minimum wage, nothing on income security, nothing on increases to child benefits or to social assistance. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Clearly, the McGuinty Liberals' legacy is not going to be a bright one. According to a Toronto Star editorial, a particularly disappointing note is the absence of a progressive agenda to help Ontario's most vulnerable.

Far more must be done, including increasing access to affordable housing and daycare. The government's virtual silence on these issues suggests that increased investment is unlikely in the upcoming budget. If so, it's short-sighted. Poverty reduction was simply left off the table in the 2010 throne speech. That is unacceptable.

The government still has a year and a half left in its mandate, and its mandate clearly included a commitment to reduce poverty. Without a comprehensive set of measures, poverty won't be reduced. It's increasing day by day. It is irresponsible for the government to abandon its election promise to reduce poverty.

Our solution? Ensure fair wages for all Ontarians; increase the minimum wage to \$11 an hour and index it to inflation; invest in stronger employment standards; ensure that all Ontarians have the education and basic resources to participate in the new economy; freeze tuitions; ensure access to affordable housing; invest in good-quality affordable child care, starting with an investment of \$63 million to save the 7,600 child care spaces threatened with closure; and create more equitable, safe and inclusive communities by ensuring strong and supportive social assistance programs rather than the current punitive approach that locks up families in cycles of poverty.

Our world faces unprecedented economic, environmental and social changes ahead. We must transition to a new clean, local production economy. This will help our province, the country and the world move more efficiently. Ontario must be a leader and builder of solar panels and wind turbines, but the McGuinty Liberals' real commitment to the environment and to building a strong and green economy was sadly lacking in this throne speech.

Reiterating its promise to close coal plants means nothing on the same day as it revealed that the government paid OPG over \$400 million in 2009 to keep these plants open. I think you're kind of talking out of both sides of your mouth.

On climate change, the McGuinty government is missing its targets for greenhouse gas reduction, but there's no plan in the throne speech to address this shortfall. Neither is there an expansion of energy conservation or targets for green energy. The government's vague promise to promote the export of clean water technology rings false when it has done such a poor job in providing clean water to the First Nation communities in our own province or significantly protecting vulnerable bodies of water like Lake Ontario and the dumpsite 41 aquifer, another example. More handouts to profitable multinationals like General Electric and DuPont, with no strings attached, will not create green jobs now.

The government's willingness to allow unbridled staking of boreal forest land as a part of the Ring of Fire mining initiative also undermines confidence in the McGuinty government's commitment to protect one of the last intact original forests on our planet.

The government has allowed mining companies to stake 8,000 mining claims covering an area six times the size of the Athabasca oil sands. They should be ashamed of themselves. The McGuinty Liberals have allowed construction of a 2,000-metre airstrip and is planning for a 350-kilometre railway without consultation with the First Nation communities. The government has repeatedly promised to build a new relationship with the First

Nation communities based on consultation and inclusion. I guess what they're doing doesn't quite cut it, does it?

But the process of the Ring of Fire shows that the government is not truly committed to protecting our northern environment. It's not committed to building a new relationship with our First Nations, and it's not committed to building a green economy in the north. Some 8,000 mining claims in the Ring of Fire area, but still no land planning process or First Nations consultation: unacceptable. They show no money or commitment to an inclusive land planning process. The government is creating unnecessary conflict between First Nations and mining companies and is polluting the environment for decades to come.

1350

The McGuinty government must ensure that the First Nations are fully consulted on anything in the Ring of Fire and consent to all mining activities in their homelands before mining activities can continue, and adequately fund a land planning process with First Nations as lead decision-makers before proceeding any further.

Instead of giving corporate handouts for unproven technology, the government should make environmentalism affordable for struggling Ontarians, invest in proven job-intensive and green sectors, and create jobs now by making green choices affordable today.

I could go on for quite a while, but I'm going to end it. My time is almost expired.

The throne speech should have set up a strong plan to grow our economy, create jobs and employ those who lost theirs during this recession, and ensure the environmental sustainability of our province. They didn't do that. All this did was to leave many Ontarians fearing the worst: more foreign ownership of our valuable Canadian- and Ontario-owned industries and resources, and a failure to provide a decent living for our vulnerable disabled community. This will continue until this government and the government in Ottawa get a handle on our base industries and start putting more industries back into Canadian hands. If all your base industries and your forestry and mining are foreign-owned, you don't have control over your own economy.

That's where we've missed the boat. These two governments continue to sell us down the river, and that's why all those Ontarians are out of work. Until they stop that and start putting Canadian content into our lives and into our future—then we'll be all right.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Open Ontario is the theme of the speech from the throne. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek must be one of a slender few in this province to lack faith in the ability of Ontario entrepreneurs and Ontario workers to meet the demands of our province's customers here at home and abroad. Our province and its hard-working people just don't share this member's pessimistic outlook.

The raw material of the present and the future rests on the shoulders of the eight million or so working people in

Ontario. That's why graduation rates are up across the province. Ontario is now reaping the rewards of seven years of investment in primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

Open Ontario means that young people studying ways of building value from this province's natural resources can set up and run those businesses right here in Ontario: not in Europe, not in the United States and not in South Asia.

Ontario's tax reforms and aggressive tax reductions for individuals, families and businesses will, as of mid-year, give this province a sustainable competitive advantage all across North America. There is no better place in North America to start a business, to relocate a business or to run a business than the province of Ontario. There is now no better place in North America to create a job or to have a job.

That's why independent studies have concluded that with this broad-based strategy of which this throne speech is a part, Ontario will see a net new 591,000 jobs, an estimated \$47 billion of new investment, and a rise in real incomes of about 8.8%.

Those are the cornerstones of sustainable progress. That's why Ontario's speech from the throne is a building block toward a bright and prosperous future.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I always listen closely and attentively to the member from Hamilton East. He brings the real working person's point of view to it because he knows of what he speaks, coming from Hamilton.

I can only tell you this: There was nothing of any substance about jobs—a lot of promises. Up to a million jobs were promised, but what's the record? They've lost almost 150,000 jobs.

I look at my riding as another example. There was no mention of anything that was progressive.

I think they're trying to hide behind the HST. The member who replied on behalf of the Liberals with the prepared speech they gave him—I'm surprised they don't realize that the economy of Ontario is in serious trouble.

There was nothing in this throne speech on deficit reduction. There was a token-ness to come out of reform in the pension issues that are before us. There was nothing for Durham with respect to the new-build nuclear or the 407 east expansion to be completed, nothing on the GO extension east—nothing for one of the regions of this province, with 600,000 people and growing, to improve the infrastructure.

I'm surprised that the member from the Liberal side didn't listen more closely to the Hamilton East argument that my good friend put forward. I can only say to you that he was speaking about jobs and the economy. There was nothing in the throne speech. There was this new—what they called “Sell Ontario,” or “Do business with Samsung.” “Buy Korea” was their new policy that they announced.

You've got to listen closely when the government members on that side are talking. Question it seriously.

They promised they wouldn't raise taxes; then they raised them. This HST is another tax increase, and now we find out there's a new energy charge.

They could collect all the money in the world, but ask yourself: How are things working in the province of Ontario? Not very well.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member for Hamilton and the member for Durham.

For the member for Durham, I'd just like to remind him that the budget is going to be read by the finance minister in this very House—not Magna, not anywhere else that you may have preferred, but actually in the House on Thursday at 4 o'clock, and you will see set out before you the financial plan that we have for the province.

I think that our Open Ontario plan is incredibly progressive and provides some great opportunities. We're talking about a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of our province's expertise in clean water technology. I know I've had calls in my constituency office already asking me about the Water Opportunities Act and what we're going to be doing and how we in northern Ontario can take advantage of it.

The 20,000 more student spaces in colleges and universities are very exciting for colleges and universities in my riding, Nipissing and Canadore. I was there on Thursday, celebrating a wonderful investment by Seymour Schulich in our faculty of education. Everyone was talking about the fact that we're going to be expanding our colleges and universities. They're very excited about seeing more foreign students brought in and more opportunities for Ontario students.

The member also spoke about the Ring of Fire. As a northern member, I have to say that it's an incredibly exciting opportunity. We look forward to working with our First Nations communities and our northern communities and developing what could be the richest find of chromite in the world, a great opportunity for so many in the north, for industry, for technology and for our learning institutions as we train those who will go forward and work in this great initiative. It is an exciting opportunity that we see on the horizon, unlike the previous government that sold off the north, that put the ONTC up for sale and really didn't pay any attention to anything north of Barrie for however many years that you were in power—a long, bad time for the north.

We are very excited about the opportunities that we face in the north, and we are excited to take advantage of those opportunities.

As I said, the folks at Nipissing and Canadore are very excited about what they heard in the Open Ontario plan last week.

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to respond to comments made by

the member from Hamilton East and to add to this debate.

I certainly know that the Open Ontario plan that we have developed is optimistic, and I take an optimistic view with regard to how this will set Ontario for the future and certainly during the next five years, unlike the pessimism that I saw and heard across the way.

I'd like to just make comments about the opportunities for expansion of businesses in Ontario. I look at the opportunities that there will be from implementing a new Water Opportunities Act. In eastern Ontario we have a business that during the past five, six years has expanded tremendously: the Thompson Rosemount Group, for example, in water resources. I just look at the opportunities that they've had in the past five, six years and the opportunities that this will give to that business in the future, that business and others who have expertise in that field.

I also want to say that I'm very pleased with regard to the opportunities that there will be here for higher education. As a retired educator, I'm always seeking opportunities to express that. I think it's wonderful that this will create 20,000 new opportunities, but it will also give St. Lawrence College in Cornwall, with its adjacent St. Lawrence River Institute of Environmental Sciences, that opportunity to look at the water situation in Ontario and the expertise that we have in those fields to cause that to be all part of the new Water Opportunities Act. I just think that we are set and we're at the stage that we will see tremendous development in this in the future. That's the optimistic view that I take with regard to the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his kind words, and he, too, is well aware of what's going on in his community. The member from Mississauga—Streetsville, the member from Stormont—Dundas and the House leader: I would invite them to come to the city of Hamilton and talk to the 15,000 to 20,000 people in my city who have lost their jobs in the last 15 years. Our most recent victim is another big outfit—Siemens—leaving Hamilton and heading south to North Carolina because of incentives.

You can talk about clean water up north. You can talk about your Ring of Fire. You can talk about those things, but come to Hamilton if you want to see what's really going on.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: You've been there. Well, you obviously didn't keep your eyes open, because most of my city is unemployed. All the jobs have left. For an hour, I could go through a list of major companies that have left Hamilton. Because they're foreign-owned, when there's a recession or a depression in our province, they close their foreign operations, which would be Canada, and they go back to their places of origin. They don't open. I haven't had anything new open in Hamilton other than a

bakery moving from Toronto—which is okay, but they're transforming 500 jobs from Toronto to Hamilton, so it's not really helping the people of Hamilton: maybe 100 jobs. I've lost thousands and thousands.

So when this government stands up and says how great it's doing and all that, come and talk to the average guy on the street and see what he thinks you're doing and how you're doing, because certainly he isn't doing well in Hamilton and a lot of other major manufacturing centres. Because you don't have control of your base industries, they're all moving south. They're getting incentives from other countries to move there: tax-free breaks, free land, and free buildings. The Minister of Economic Development, who has spent most of her time in China and India lately, said she talked to Siemens. She couldn't have done a very good job, because they're leaving.

So you can talk about how great your plan is. Believe me, when you keep touting your 600,000 jobs and 50,000 jobs in green energy, I want to see where those jobs are, and I want the numbers when you're done with big plan, because you're not going to come anywhere near it.

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

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I am a very excited about the very foundation on which this throne speech is built. We're dealing with some very serious issues, and I think the quality of debate in this House has been very disappointing.

The federal government, to its credit, has started down a road of trying to harmonize sales taxes in the country, and it's interesting that there's agreement by the government parties on both sides—which is probably one of the reasons they're in government on both sides of these Legislatures—around that. I was hoping that we would get a more sophisticated discussion, a more intelligent discussion, around fiscal reform and the new economy. We're living in a very different age, and it is disappointing that we're not having a more serious debate about the future of this province. In 1867—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order: I don't believe there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): We're going to check that there's a quorum. If the member from Toronto Centre could please be seated. Thank you.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is not present, so we are going to have a five-minute bell to call in the members. Thank you.

The division bells rang from 1404 to 1405.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Seeing that a quorum is now present, we will continue with debate. The member for Toronto Centre.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: We were, at that time, a very rural province. Eighty per cent of us lived in small, rural communities, and less than 20% of us lived in what would even be described as small cities today. At that time, we were part of an imperial system, and you can

see much of the regalia of that era here in this House. People in Toronto, Cornwall, Port Arthur or Fort William at that time would have thought you were rather crazy if you had suggested we would ever be anything like Canadians or become a country.

When I was born in 1957, about 60% of us lived in cities, and two thirds of us worked in an industrial manufacturing economy that was very place-based. As Hilton said at the time, the three most important business decisions are location, location and location. We governed—and most public policy, provincially and nationally, was done—through tariffs and trade barriers. We governed from the edge of our country, and we controlled jobs and protected investment by adjusting prices on imports at the border and subsidizing what we produced here through marketing boards and different mechanisms: a very heavily boundary-based economy, and one that was, as the member for Hamilton East said before, very much about machinery and physical plants. Two out of three of us were involved in—and our employment relied on—making things. It was a production economy.

In the last 10 years, the economy in this province and around the world has changed more dramatically than it did even in the Industrial Revolution. Eighty per cent of the jobs that are created in Ontario right now are not jobs that have anything to do with production at all. They are jobs of innovation: people who imagine, create, design, research, experiment and manage information. There is no generation alive that has seen a greater change in its lifetime than the people who are here today.

Of the other two sectors—and right now in the city this Legislature is in, the city of Toronto—about one third of our jobs are manufacturing, and they're declining. That is happening from Poland all the way to California. We are seeing a net decline because of automation and because of offshore displacement of manufacturing jobs—the emerging economies of Brazil, China and India—and that's part of the reality of that.

Service jobs are growing by about 20%. The higher-income jobs—though it's only one third of the workforce, over 50% of the wages earned in Ontario come from that innovation sector. It is leading in job creation.

Regions that are most successful at attracting those jobs are producing jobs at five times the rate that the worst regions in the world are as far as embracing and changing their tax systems, changing their infrastructure investments and changing their public policy framework. Those that are more successful are seeing salaries increase at three times the rate they are in those areas that are the poorest performers.

We're trying to adjust and deal with that in a very dynamic way. But the investments in lifelong education, the massive investments in every university and college in this community, and the tax reforms that take \$8.5 billion in friction out of the Ontario economy are going to accelerate job creation in a way that isn't likely to happen in too many other places in Canada. The \$32 billion in infrastructure investments—everything from

water to energy, health care, transit and walkable neighbourhoods—provides a critical foundation for creating a new generation of infrastructure for a very new economy.

We have, really, five major issues that I think we have to deal with. One, we are becoming a very old province. One in four of us will be over the age of 65 within the next 20 years. Two thirds of those people live in suburban Ontario. They live in homes where there are cul-de-sacs and no sidewalks, and they can't walk to a local store. They have very limited access to anything if they don't own an automobile. In the next 20 years, many elderly Ontarians are going to lose their drivers' licences. They will not be able to drive a car, and when they can't drive a car, the implications for health care and services, given that most of them live in unwalkable neighbourhoods and can't take transit anywhere, will be a huge challenge.

1410

This is why we've gone beyond 900,000 more families with family physicians, why we've gone beyond a 42% increase in hospital budgets and why Places to Grow is so critically important—re-engineering our suburbs, re-engineering our transit systems so that those folks live in neighbourhoods where they can walk to or access services, maintain their independence and maintain life in their homes longer, which is why we've been focusing on less emphasis on institutions and more on home care and people living independently.

Eighty per cent of people don't move after age 55. For those of us who are 55 in this House, unless we're going to a seniors' home or we pass on, we're not likely leaving our homes. We're not likely to see a change in that, and that is one area of policy that I think is well established and in which there is very strong architecture for building for the future.

As I said earlier, we're moving from a production economy globally to an innovation economy, and that's a very dramatic change. The services-and-ideas economy is rapidly globalizing. The average worker, according to studies, spends less than three years in a city and less than one year in a job when they're under 30. These people are highly critical consumers of place. They are concentrating in fewer and fewer locations. They don't come looking for a job; they create jobs and they bring capital with them. Our ability to retain and attract a knowledge-based economy is dependent on our ability to retain and attract a knowledge-based workforce.

The idea of opening up Ontario's universities not only builds more capacity for our own students and for lifelong learners; it makes Ontario a first choice for the brightest people from China to India and from Poland to Peru in choosing this place as an entry point to get what is really one of the finest opportunities at a post-secondary education in the world.

Tied in with progressive immigration policies and employment policies, we will likely emerge—one of the legacies of this government—as one of the most dynamic builders of a knowledge economy, one where our fluid, dynamic, diverse population is celebrated, which allows

us to build a knowledge economy like no other. Not only will this be good for our economy in the short term; it builds a legacy for a knowledge workforce that is simply unrivalled right now in Canada.

Madam Speaker, I know that you in particular are a concerned environmentalist, and we've chatted before about the seriousness of the loss of species. If there is one crisis that is facing humanity, in which climate change is only one factor, it is the loss of biodiversity. We will lose about one third of the species on this planet by 2050.

Anyone in here, whether they are a downtown Toronto environmental activist or a farmer in Glengarry county, understands biodiversity. Farmers understand now in California, because colonizing honey bees are no longer there in numbers sufficient to sustain the honey crop.

The problem here in Ontario, as we know, is that we've lost 50% of the 20 most common bird species, many of them pollinating species essential to our agricultural base and food production. And why is that important? Because one of the places I agree on with my friend from Hamilton East is that while our knowledge economy is going to be globalizing, energy prices globally and the scarcity of fossil fuels are going to relocalize two activities that have long been globalized. One is production: We will no longer have cheap imports from China. Right now, our average meal in Ontario comes from 5,000 kilometres away. The long-distance meal will no longer be possible. We will be relocalizing food production and we will be relocalizing the production of industrial goods. Quite frankly, without getting into a long speech, because I only have a few more minutes, I don't understand, if you understand that dynamic, how you're opposed to the HST.

I was listening to Jim Flaherty speaking in New York about tax reform. I was listening to leading opinion leaders in the United States who talked about the competitive advantage that we would have over New York state and Michigan, which haven't yet harmonized their sales tax—they haven't yet done that—and about how much more capital will move to Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia as a result of this progressive measure. I am at a loss how you have any intellectual integrity when in your own party your finance minister, the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Transport are all going around selling an integrated sales tax as one of the key advantages of an economic agenda nationally and your cousins here in the House completely contradict it. To me there is a word for that, but that would be unparliamentary.

We have to become more culturally confident communities. One of the things that we know is that our birth rate is very low, that we are wholly dependent on immigration and that our ability to celebrate human diversity is going to be important to social cohesion. The mobility of people not just into the workplace but into the leadership of this government and into the leadership of all organizations in society—business, labour, education and civil society—is really important. There is great work being done by the Maytree Foundation, and I was

very pleased to see in the throne speech a very strong commitment to the celebration of human diversity and to creating a series of policies that will enable the fuller participation and full citizenship of folks.

But I want to spend my last few minutes talking about something else. While I'm an Ontarian and I'm a very proud Torontonian, that idea of social cohesion is extremely important to nation building. I'm very proud that my partner served in the Canadian Armed Forces for much of his life. He works now as a nurse. I think when you've been in the military, you understand the value of a human life and how fragile it is. And mid-career, in his 30s, my partner, Rick, went back into health care. He works here in a large hospital in an operating room helping, working with physicians—he's a very skilled neuroclinical specialist in nursing—putting lives back together again.

We always celebrate in my house on Remembrance Day, because of my family's long history of military service, how important that is and how precious our democracy and our freedom and our common ground are. And being Canadian is the most important thing to me next to being human. Why is that? Because anywhere I go in this country, I've generally been welcomed and felt as full a citizen of any community I've ever lived in as I have here in Toronto, Winnipeg or Montreal or Alexandria or Sudbury or Ottawa. I'm a very proud Ontarian, but I never put that ahead.

I'll never forget growing up as a federalist in Quebec, fighting separatists, people in a government in Quebec at the time who wanted to draw a line in the sand and say, "You've got a certain English mentality. You don't belong here." And I remember some of the bigotry in the English community, where I worked for businesses where francophones were almost absent; in a city that was 80% French-speaking, you couldn't find a French sign or get served in the major department store in your own language in Quebec. And that was one of the reasons that gave rise to that.

If I could rename the throne speech, I would call it Open and United Ontario, because for me, that is one of the reasons I became a Liberal, as a result of what I saw happening in that province and being told that if you didn't speak a certain language or you were of a certain—I remember the slurs against people who were allophones, as they called them, not anglophones or francophones, and this harbouring a complete focus on what made us different rather than what we had in common.

I remember the jeering I would get from folks sometimes in western Canada when I would give the speeches in Winnipeg and Calgary about why Toronto and why Ontario were so important to western Canada. I remember in a federal election I ran in, the Conservative candidate said to me, "Well, if you like Toronto so much, why don't you go live there?" I always noticed that there was this Conservative right-wing agenda that said Ontario was bad: "Vote Conservative and liberate the west because Ontario has had the stranglehold on Canada

for too long." That's the kind of politics I ran against in the west, and that was to me as vicious and as nasty and as divisive as the separatism in Quebec.

I've lived in Ontario for just about as long as I lived in Manitoba. I don't feel any less an Ontarian than anyone else, nor do over half the people I represent in Toronto Centre, very proudly part of this province, who weren't even born in this country.

1420

If we start asking how long you have lived here, where you came from, why you came here and what the colour of your skin is, then we have defeated the most important thing that we've committed to in the throne speech, which is not an acceptance, not a tolerance of human diversity but a celebration of it: the full enfranchisement of women, the full engagement of young people who have brown skin to play as equal a role in leadership in this party and this government and this province as any other. I stand with that.

I was horrified when a certain member of the Conservative Party stood up and suggested that my city, because of a Toronto mentality, should be in a different province. Well, I've milked cows on a farm in Alexandria, and I understand the mentality, so-called, of people who live in parts of rural Ontario, because my father bought into a farm. My uncles were all miners in Sudbury. They died younger than I am right now of respiratory illnesses because of horrible conditions, and my aunt, who lives there to this day and is in her 90s, took mining companies all the way to the Supreme Court to get decent pensions for widows.

I worked with the mayor of Kenora to help get garbage out of the Canadian Shield that was leaching into our water system and our watershed and destroying the tourism base in fresh water that was the lifeblood of Kenora to Dryden to Winnipeg, and it didn't matter that there was a provincial boundary there. I dare say that I have spent more time in northern Ontario and a lot more time on some farms in the province than some of my colleagues here. That doesn't make me a better person, but when I hear jokes about the member for Winnipeg Centre—well, I'm proud I lived in Winnipeg, because I saw what happened to my brothers and sisters who were mayors of various communities under the Harris government, and what was happening here was not pleasant.

Quite frankly, I'm also really disappointed, when we have come forward with one of the most aggressive, balanced approaches to getting out of deficit, facing the worst economic times in Canadian history, certainly in my lifetime, since the Great Depression—not to rush out of it but to get out of deficit within a reasonable period of time and maintain that investment in services. There is probably no bigger challenge facing the Legislature than this, because we're not Alberta or Saskatchewan; we're not bouncing on resource revenues and commodity prices. That's the challenge we have.

The most difficult—I speak of this having worked in the field for years: Manufacturing-based economies are the most challenged, whether they are in the United

States, England, France or Ontario. I came here and ran proudly, and I understand the relationship between investment in infrastructure, fiscal reform, day-long education, lifelong education as a complete plan for opening up this province.

But let us never—and I hope that those of you who are committed federalists and committed Ontarians stop playing one group of us against the other. As a gay man, I spent most of my life illegal, not being able to be a parent, and losing jobs and apartments. I have no time for people who want to talk about what makes me different, because I stand here proudly, I think with all of you, being a Canadian first and an Ontarian, with no apologies and—

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I am really pleased to participate in today's debate on the throne speech. I believe the passage of this throne speech will mark a pivotal point in the history of our province.

After being hit hard by the worst global recession in generations, we have a choice. We can try to do the minimum and focus on just getting through the global economic downturn, hoping that everything will go back to normal, or we can take this as an opportunity to revolutionize our province by becoming a leading green economy, a centre for innovation and new technology, and a place where the education of our people is the best of our assets.

The world has changed, and we must change with it. We can no longer depend on exporting to the US because of our lower dollar and close proximity. Our competitors are not just south of the border. Markets like China and India are fierce competitors. Without big, bold action, without being creative, without being innovative, we will be left behind. We cannot afford to not change. That is why I'm supporting the government's new five-year Open Ontario plan.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm happy to respond to the member from Toronto Centre and to some of the comments he made. I will be making some comments myself in a few minutes on the throne speech.

He makes some points, and he's got his opinions and his concerns. I'm disappointed that he continues to play politics. Anti-conservatism is what I hear coming out of his voice almost every time he opens his mouth, and that's his right. We are in a political party here; we are opposition versus government, and he has every right to say that.

His slamming of Mike Harris: I was disappointed in that comment because under Mike Harris, Ontario created a million jobs. How many jobs have we created under Dalton McGuinty? Some 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs; 145,000 jobs in the last year alone. I wouldn't be slamming Mike Harris too badly until I had a record equivalent to his.

I will have an opportunity in a few minutes to make my comments. I'm looking forward to it. The throne

speech is the government's message. We didn't see anything very substantial in the throne speech. I am going to make some of those comments in a few minutes myself and will look forward to making the comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must confess that I was a little dismayed with the member from Toronto Centre questioning the intellectual content of the submissions by the third party and the official opposition. I thought that this House was for a healthy debate and opinions counted by everyone, but what I hear out there in the public is the constant comment about the arrogance of the McGuinty government: "Big Brother knows best." Well, here is a perfect example of "Big Brother knows best."

The best defence for any government is offence. So you divert, you stretch, you attack the opposition. Methinks thou protest too much. Me also thinks: What has your personal history and life got to do with the throne speech? I'm quite surprised that that was added in too. For a new member, that was quite an aggressive attack on the members of this House—very disappointing. I hope that we can stick to the issues and we can stick to the content and not divert to other things to get the public thinking about things that are not the most important things that are going on in our province. It's all political grandstanding: very disappointing, but you have become an expert, being the former mayor of Winnipeg. And I believe you were a former NDP member, if I'm not mistaken, so that is quite interesting, that you are slamming your former party.

I'm quite disappointed, Madam Speaker, that that member would get up and attack the other parties. It's very disgusting, and I think someone should take a good, hard look at these types of actions.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was listening carefully to the comments from my new colleague, the member from Toronto Centre–Rosedale.

One of the things I'd like to touch upon, because I know he knows this, is that the throne speech talked about Ontario taking the opportunity, based on our water technology, to provide that technology to other provinces across Canada, and indeed to export it to other parts of the world. He is familiar with a great initiative at Trent University in Peterborough. A number of years ago we established the Worsfold Water Quality Centre under the direction of Professor Chris Metcalfe, and I think the member may have toured that facility a number of years ago. The throne speech highlights that kind of opportunity. We are doing state-of-the-art research in Peterborough.

I know the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about Siemens. Siemens has an operation, a manufacturing plant, in Peterborough, and in their Peter-

borough operation they actually specialize in water and waste water technology. They also established a training centre in Peterborough, where they take municipal officials from right across Ontario—indeed, right across Canada—to do their training at Siemens; to make these municipal operators familiar in the use of Siemens-designed and manufactured equipment. These are the kinds of issues that the member from Toronto Centre was clearly articulating in his response to the speech from the throne and, indeed, his first formal speech to the House.

1430

From time to time we do engage in some partisan observations in this House, but I think that once you peel those away, the member from Toronto Centre provided great content and talked about some issues that he's very familiar with due to his background as mayor of Winnipeg. We certainly welcome him to Ontario—

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

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I apologize if I offended anyone. That was certainly not my intention. I thought that when you dish it out, you can take it. There seems to be a bit of thin skin there.

I have to say that one of the things I enjoy, sitting in the House, is the great wit and, to put a polite edge on it, aggressive questioning from my friend from Hamilton East.

I have to tell you—and I said this before—I rose on a point of order about ascribing motives. I think that this House threw out subsection 23(i) of the standing orders. You'll notice I did not attack anybody's character. I did not mention any individual name. I explained the disappointment I had when you disconnect the HST, which is really a joint initiative of the national and provincial governments of this country, and don't understand it in context when your own party is running nationally on a sales tax as a foundation of economic recovery. I just think that's a bit disingenuous, and I don't think it's rude or overly partisan to say so.

Quite frankly, I'm going to tell you that when I was born in this country I was illegal. It was impossible for me to get married, have a child or even keep a job. So, yes, I'm very sensitive to people who draw lines and differences. No, I am not someone who talks about minorities—members into the third party—as if I don't actually hold membership in that party. Having been the first person in my community to be elected mayor of a major city in the world, I knew what a breakthrough it was, in the same way it was for my grandmother, who came from the Ukraine and wore a babushka; who never rose beyond being a cleaning lady because she was the butt of every joke in her community amongst other people who were not more recently arrived and who didn't speak English with an accent. That is very important. I was not the one who suggested that my city and my constituency, because we have a mentality—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today to discuss my comments on the throne speech. I'm also looking forward to the debate that will take place after Thursday, when the government brings in the 2010-11 budget, which I hope will have far more explanation and detail to it than we have seen in the throne speech. Quite clearly, it was very vague; kind of a rough draft of a speech that we have to adopt or look at as the throne speech.

I think, as a member of the PC Party, we're very concerned about the state of the economy in Ontario. I think we should just review some of the things that have happened over the last little while.

This year we're finishing up a year where we are projecting a \$24.7-billion deficit. I believe that's about two and a half times higher than any previous deficit we've ever had in the province of Ontario—and that was under the Rae years; I think it got to be \$11 billion. The problem is, as we go toward the end of this term and we're looking toward 2011, at the rate we're going, we're going to end up with a quarter-trillion-dollar accumulated debt. That's \$248 billion that this province will owe. Our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will have to absorb that. I'm a father and a grandfather. I'm very concerned about the future of the province of Ontario with that kind of accumulated debt. The throne speech really doesn't deal with that. I think they have 24 words in the throne speech, and I will read them. Basically it says, "A plan for a stronger Ontario...."

"That's why, in its next budget, your government will lay out a plan to return the budget to balance."

Here's what they say they're going to do for our economy in the throne speech: "Your government will not put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon," whatever that means.

"Nor will it proceed with spending as if there is no deficit."

When you're planning a throne speech and calling it the "Open Ontario plan," and you're looking at the next session of this Parliament and where the government is going, I think a lot of people expected a lot better, a lot more from their government, especially a second-term government, than 24 words that day saying, "We're going to do something. We're not going to cut money, but blah, blah, blah, blah."

That's why, as a Progressive Conservative, I felt sort of insulted by that level of throne speech dialogue, because it was pretty sad.

Then we go on to other things that have happened in Ontario in the last little while: the 300,000 lost manufacturing jobs. Almost every day you can turn on the TV, listen to the local media or listen to a chamber of commerce report, and you'll hear of another plant closing. The one in Hamilton, the Siemens plant, is the latest one: 500 jobs. There are the problems we have with Grant Forest Products, the jobs up in Earlton, Ontario, and the list goes on and on.

People seem to think, "Well, that's contraction"—I think the Premier used the word "contraction" at one

time; that was his solution for it. On the other hand, one of the problems we've got is that some southern jurisdictions—our friends and neighbours to the south—are offering phenomenal incentive packages for some of these plants to move there. We've seen it with John Deere. We're now seeing it with Siemens and with a number of other plants, and that is a sad situation, because when they talk about the Second Career program and what a magnificent plan this was supposed to be, those are the very people we would be helping. Of course, we know that has been a complete failure.

The other thing that I think is interesting to note, when we're talking about the throne speech, is that I never heard anything about the fact we have the slowest growth rate in our country. I believe that all other jurisdictions are outperforming the province of Ontario in economic growth right now. Something we, in the province of Ontario, have always been is the engine that drove the Canadian economy.

I know the government has got some green energy ideas on how they'll plan it in the future. However, when you lose 300,000 manufacturing jobs, you just don't replace those overnight with somebody building wind-mills or solar panels, or whatever it may be. Now, of course, we're on Canada's welfare roll. We're a have-not province. We're now receiving equalization funding or assistance from the Canadian government.

These all add up to be points that I thought would maybe be partially addressed in the throne speech, but we didn't really come up with any strong evidence that the government was concerned about rebuilding this economy.

One of the interesting things, if you compare the throne speech—the previous speaker, from Toronto Centre, used the federal finance minister and the programs, thoughts and policies that the federal government is putting forward. The federal government had a far more detailed throne speech on how they were going to address some of the problems that the country itself was facing. I was expecting the same sort of comments and the same sort of dialogue in the throne speech that we saw in the federal speech. So, lots of things to talk about.

One of the things the government has really hung their hat on, in my opinion—it will be very interesting to see this North American centre of excellence for water, the Water Opportunities Act and all the things the government talks about on, I think, page 6 of the throne speech: "As part of its Open Ontario plan, your government will introduce legislation that will build on Ontario's expertise in clean water technology." I know we have expertise in different areas. We've been very predominant in the manufacturing of automobiles. I never knew we had a lot of expertise in water technology, other than the fact that the member from Peterborough just mentioned one example. But we're talking \$400 billion here, the size of the pocket of money that you're trying to tap into.

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I'm one person who really does believe in some of the comments that are made here, in that I think in the future

there may be wars fought over water. I think the whole planet has done a pretty bad job in a lot of areas in the way we handle our water. A lot of it has to do with climate change etc. But I can think of three things in Ontario, right off the top of my mind, where if we're going to be a centre of excellence or the North American centre of excellence for water, there are maybe areas we should try to fix now.

One of them is the declining levels of our Great Lakes. The water levels in the Great Lakes, on average, are going down each and every year. Last year, in the winter of 2008-09, we had a fairly heavy snowfall type of year, and we ended up with the lakes' water level rising five or six inches. This year, however, the water levels are going to be much lower because we've had a very, very poor amount of snowfall this year, and we don't expect that the water levels will increase much. In fact, by the time you get to July or August, we're going to see probably close to record levels of the Great Lakes.

Of course, we have an abundance of fresh water in Ontario and in the Great Lakes. I think we here take water so for granted, because of the Great Lakes and because of the thousands of lakes we have in our province, that we tend to not pay a lot of attention when the water levels drop. But when the water levels drop in our Great Lakes, it's trillions and trillions of gallons of water that have disappeared, and we have that to be concerned about as we develop the Water Opportunities Act.

I'm very interested in seeing that legislation. I'm very interested in seeing how we will listen to the general public in Ontario and seeing what that actually does mean, because I think the government's probably going to get an earful.

The second thing I wanted to mention under the Water Opportunities Act, or under the water section of the throne speech, was that we've got these programs out there now, these panels of people across our province that are called the water source protection committees. I believe there are 11 or 12 in Ontario right now. They're trying to plot all the different water sources in Ontario and how to protect them. I know a number of the people on the water source protection committee that does Simcoe county and Muskoka and into York region. It's the largest water source protection committee in the province, with the most water sources.

I can tell you right now, Madam Speaker, something you might want to know: So far, in the last year and a half, the water source protection committees combined have spent \$246 million on consultants alone. I don't know how much value they're getting for dollars in that. We've been told that that will go to at least \$400 million before the final reports come through. So you're looking at four tenths of a billion dollars just in consultants to plot the water source protection sources in the province of Ontario. I hope, under your Water Opportunities Act, every penny of that can be justified, because if you're spending that kind of money on consultants, you really need to know that you're getting value for money and it's

not going to be another one of these Courtyard deals—where, like with the eHealth scandal, you've got a billion dollars wasted and everybody's now suing the government for not finishing off the contracts, that type of thing.

Finally—I had to bring this up because it's a local issue to me—there's the whole thing around Bill 32 and the prorogation of the House and eliminating second reading debate that was passed on my private member's bill on a waste disposal site in Tiny township, site 41. I was so disappointed, and so were the people in our community who put literally thousands of hours into letter-writing campaigns trying to get people in this House to support a private member's bill that received second reading. Then, of course, these same people went back to the MPPs, trying to ask them to not prorogue this bill but to let it continue on.

This water, I'm going to say it again, has been identified as some of the purest water ever seen on the planet, and that's been done by Dr. William Shotyk from the University of Heidelberg in Germany. He identified this water underground on landfill site 41, where the proposed landfill would be, as the cleanest water in the world, second only to some of the water in the glaciers. To think that on the Thursday you would prorogue the House, shut down all private members' bills legislation, all the work that had been done from all the different members of this House, and then turn around on the Monday and brag about a Water Opportunities Act when you just squashed a private member's bill that was going to do away with the C of A on the cleanest water on the planet—now tell me how that really fits in. I would love to know the connection.

Anyhow, I'm going to reintroduce the bill. I've got it right here. I'm going to reintroduce it tomorrow and we're going to do the same thing all over again, because we're going to continue to fight to make sure the C of A is removed from that site 41.

Another thing the government brags about in the throne speech is the Second Career program. I don't know. They identify one young gentleman in here who took a course at Fleming. He lost his job as a manufacturer, and now he's going to be a chef. He took the chef course. They paid him for two years of training. It sounds wonderful, but the guy still hasn't got a job. That's the guy they use here in the example. He's looking for work.

I can tell you that my office has been inundated with people who have tried to get on the Second Career program to get some training money, some training assistance, whether it is a loss of a manufacturing job, whatever it may be, and they have been completely turned down. So the government is bragging in this thing. In fact, I think it's probably the keynote thing they talk about in the throne speech—the success of the Second Career program. Of course, we all know—and I notice they didn't mention that either—the Second Career program is all federal money. It's money that was sent from the federal government, from that mean Stephen Harper

and Jim Flaherty. It was sent to the Ontario government, and that's the Second Career money that they are bragging about so much.

In my opinion, and from what I'm hearing from my constituents, this has not been a wonderful success. We will see at the end of the story how many people actually have jobs that are paying taxes, not people that are enrolled in a program and their name is in the throne speech, but actually have a job. That's what I am really concerned about.

Then we get to things like red tape. I'm going to tell you, I've got stories here, newspaper clippings. Here is a guy right here who has been in business for 25 years. He's got a small abattoir; he kills chickens and turkeys up in rural Ontario. He does it for thousands of square miles around the Orillia area. The company is Dan Dan the Chicken Man. Sounds funny, eh? But have you seen it? This guy is finally giving up his business. There are so many inspectors coming to see his business, to see his operation. No one has ever died from one of the chickens he's killed, no one has ever lost their life, but when they show up to inspect his place, every time, they find something and they want to put the guy out of business. Finally, at the end of this year, they are going to drive him out of business, and he's gone. He says he's got to make enough money to put his last child into university and help her out, and then he's going to have to close the operation down. Already people are calling our office and saying, "Where are we going to get our chickens killed in an orderly manner, where it's done according to all the meat inspections and all the different kinds of inspections?" Well, it won't be with this guy anymore, and he does it for miles and miles around the area. I could read that article but it would take too long.

Then we go on. So many people here are talking about this harmonized sales tax. Our caucus feels this is a tax on the consumer and that it couldn't have been brought in at a worse time than now. Other provinces—and that is what we forget to mention here—reduced the provincial sales tax by 3% and 4%. We haven't done that in Ontario. We're giving people back \$1,000—some of the people are going to get \$1,000; other people might get \$50 or \$75 or whatever it may be—but they're not going to get huge sums of money back and they are going to get it in three separate cheques. A government that hasn't got the ability to think of sending out one cheque—why would you send out three separate cheques? The cost of the mailing alone—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Harris sent cheques out too.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Remember we got defeated? That's what's going to happen to you, when you send those cheques out.

Three separate cheques—why not just send out one cheque one time if you're going to give the money back? We're using the word—we shouldn't say here what it is, but we all know what that cheque is. The reality is, they should have just dropped the provincial sales tax level, if they wanted to introduce the harmonization, and made it revenue-neutral. The reality is, this is not revenue-

neutral; this is a \$3.5-billion tax grab from the McGuinty Liberals to the citizens of the province of Ontario. No matter how you look at it—

Interjections.

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Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can yell and scream and you can heckle me all you want, but the reality is, people hate this tax. Seniors hate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Barrie, come to order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Everyone I know hates this tax. Just ask municipalities how it's going to impact them. Ask the Ontario Provincial Police how it's going to affect their budget. Name it, name it, name it, and you know what? Over and over again, I'm hearing it every day. This will be the downfall of your government; you can be sure of that. Unless you find some magical way out of this one, you've got a big, big problem ahead of yourselves.

I have to say one other thing: three key areas that were not mentioned in the throne speech, three key things.

There was not one word about a key industry in Ontario: tourism. Not a word. You would have thought they would have mentioned something about trying to bring people into Ontario, especially in a year when we have so much pride in our country with the Olympics. We're planning on trying to do something with the War of 1812 in a couple of years, and we're going to do something with the Pan Am Games. Not a word. You'd think, if you had any kind of vision or plan, you'd mention something about tourism. Not a word.

Another thing: Did anybody see the word "seniors" in there? Not a word about our seniors in this so-called throne speech.

Then the final thing is, as a critic for community safety and correctional services, nothing—nothing—about community safety; nothing about policing. Nothing was mentioned about how we're going to keep law and order and what our plan is for law and order in the province of Ontario as we move forward in the next three, four and five years under these difficult economic times.

So when you add it all up, we're debating a throne speech, but you know what? I have three little granddaughters. Any one of them could have written a better throne speech than this one—any one of them, because this was pathetic. It was vague, and it didn't give us any direction for the future. You know, yourself, when a government comes up with 24 words—24 words—and that's how they're going to get rid of a \$24.7-billion deficit, there's not much direction coming from the Minister of Finance or from the Premier's office.

In summary, I can't support a throne speech like this. As we look towards the budget, I think it will be just about as weak and pathetic. In fact, we'll look at it and we'll debate it, but as members of the opposition, we're allowed to stand and talk the way we have today. We're allowed to take part in this debate. It's not just a Dalton McGuinty government and a Dalton McGuinty party in

Ontario. There are three separate parties in this House. They all deserve an opportunity to debate it, and they all deserve to voice their comments. As far as I'm concerned, this is a pretty pathetic example of a throne speech to be presented here in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Simcoe North has delivered a scathing indictment of this throne speech. In effect, what the member said is something I believe and had occasion to say immediately upon hearing this throne speech. The throne speech is, especially in hard times—because we've got hard times that the Liberals have made in this province right now. We have hundreds of thousands of people losing jobs. We've got families at risk, homeowners at risk. We've got students dropping out of school because they can't afford second-, third- and fourth-year tuitions. We've got people in despair. One would have hoped, with all the high-price help that this government pays for, that they could have drafted a throne speech that at least provided some inspiration, that perhaps gave a little bit of hope, however feckless that hope was, to some of those people out there who are hurting bad right now. Instead, like the member says in his comments, this throne speech didn't provide hope. It compounded the despair. It didn't provide relief from the fear of what's happening. Rather, it aggravated that very real fear.

I'm going to be able to speak to this throne speech next on behalf of New Democrats. My colleague from Kenora-Rainy River has indulged me by letting me go before him.

I talked to Grace Tomiuck down in Wainfleet on the phone just before I came back into the chamber, to get permission to talk about her and Steve Tomiuck. Grace was kind of interested to see what I was going to say, to make sure it was accurate. She'll let me know if I'm not.

I talked to Joe DiMarco and asked him if it was okay to talk about him and what has been happening with Joe DiMarco down there in Welland riding over the last short while. He said it was okay to talk about him and his business, Universal Windows.

So I'm looking forward to making my contribution on behalf of New Democrats. I thank Howard Hampton for indulging me, and I tell you, New Democrats have things to say.

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

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I want to assure my friend from Simcoe North that I wasn't offended at all by his partisanship, first off, nor were my feelings hurt. As a matter of fact, I thought he made some rather good points. I think his battle, in non-partisan fashion, on site 41 is an important one and I encourage him in that direction.

He did raise the issue of water, and I think it's a pretty critical issue. Someone in the next five or 10 years is going to play a leadership role in dealing with likely the largest and most immediate environmental crisis in the

first couple of decades of the century, and that will be that by 2015, one in three of us on this planet will not have enough water to drink. To give you an idea of how little water that is, that's about what the average Ontarian flushes in one flush of the toilet. We are a leader. Royal Bank of Canada right now is one of the leading funders in the world of water development and water research. My friend from Peterborough mentioned the important work being done there, Siemens, the work being done at U of T. The work that I was involved with at the Canadian Urban Institute, which is looking at water management, water mapping and watershed management and technology, is some of the leading work in the world.

This will be a huge area of employment. I think that there were some sincere questions about how big is \$400 billion. It sounds like a very small number when you think of the challenge within the next five-year cycle. By the time the Pan Am Games are held here in Ontario, we will be facing a critical issue. This will be something that touches the heart of every Ontarian, because many of these countries and regions that will not have sufficient water supplies to sustain the lives of young people and old people alike are places where many of us trace our roots and many of us have family.

I also just—the member—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to start by congratulating my colleague the member from Simcoe North for pointing out the obvious inadequacies of this document that's called a throne speech. I think that if this is indicative of this government's inspiration, then we don't really have much to look forward to with the budget that's coming up on Thursday, and we should all be very worried.

As my colleague mentioned, there was no mention of seniors in this throne speech at all. When you look at it in a context particularly of health care, I read that with great interest, looking for some inspiration, but when you look at the situation right now, where we have so many of our seniors who are waiting for long-term-care placements, who are staying on in acute care hospitals, which is backing up the entire system—they call them bed blockers; what a ridiculous thing to call people. There's no dignity whatsoever in that. We're really treating our seniors quite shamefully in this respect. I think when you take a look at it, if you're really serious about making some changes in health care, you should be visiting some of our acute care centres.

I was in Kingston about a month ago for a health care forum and one of the emergency room physicians there told me that right now they're actually triaging patients in the waiting area. He said, "What's next? Are we going have a MASH unit in the parking lot?" That's what it's coming to in the province of Ontario. Those are the issues that we need to be dealing with when you're looking at 46 cents of every tax dollar on health care right now. We need to really be getting serious about this, really looking for real solutions for all members of

our population, not just for seniors. That's an area that wasn't even mentioned in this document.

Another area that wasn't even mentioned, other than to just give passing lip service, was the situation for people with special needs in the province of Ontario. We're not going to have the Ontarians with Disabilities Act fully implemented until 2025. We still have a lot of work to do on that. Even with that target that far out, we've got a long way to go and no indication in this throne speech of how we're going to get there. I think we've got to get serious—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to make a comment on the member from Simcoe North. Once again, he's come up with some very good points. We all have concerns, the third party as well as the official opposition, about the throne speech and the lack of content. We were hoping for more answers. It's very frustrating to go back to your riding and not have answers for the very people who are losing their jobs as to the direction the government is taking.

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They talk about water renewal—that's good—and they talk about the Ring of Fire in the north, but there's not a lot going on about manufacturing jobs. Most of the people in my community are involved with manufacturing, and we've been hit so hard that it's to a point now where we are just dumbfounded with the amount of job losses.

We see nothing happening in Hamilton. Sure, we're getting a few medical jobs coming our way, but there are only so many positions for researchers, doctors, specialists, chemists and jobs like that. How about the people out there who have lost their jobs in a steel mill or in a small manufacturing or secondary industry? These are the people who come to me on a daily basis with their frustrations. They're losing their houses and losing their life's savings, and there doesn't seem to be a heck of a lot going on.

I reiterate: If you continue to let foreign countries own our base industries and rape this country of its natural resources, and then, when there's a recession or depression, they close their foreign operations and go back to their country of origin—that's what's going on in Canada right now. We warned them five or 10 years ago, and they didn't listen. They have sold us out. This province and country have been sold out to multinationals by governments, and that's why we are in the trouble we are. Until they start getting 50% Canadian content in our businesses in this country, we're in trouble.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Toronto Centre, Whitby–Oshawa and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for their comments. At this time, I also want to introduce a friend of mine in the audience today, Councillor Maurice McMillan from the

city of Orillia. Maurice is down on the Bill 235 hearings—some real concerns about the marketing people around hydro and oil heating etc.

I don't really have a lot to say in my closing remarks in summary, other than that I thought the throne speech was vague. People have said to me, "Look for all the detail in the budget." Of course, the budget will be on Thursday, and I look forward to the budget and to looking at it very carefully.

Again, I'm extremely concerned about the financial position of the province, and I think that a lot of lending agencies are as well. A lot of long-time very supportive people of Ontario are very concerned about where we stand right now with our economic situation and where the McGuinty government is taking us. As we look toward the next 18 months, that will all be part of the platform we develop to try to convince the citizens of Ontario that we're a better alternative, as the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak.

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today, and I look forward to the remaining time in debate.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I indicated, I'm pleased, on behalf of the New Democrats here, to have this opportunity to speak to and about this government's oh so lacklustre and disappointing throne speech.

Unfortunately, while some may hope that the budget is going to provide more, I say that hope is poorly placed. I'd say you're better off going out and buying one of those 6/49 tickets. Your odds are probably better with an Ontario lottery game than they are with this government—the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty—here in the province of Ontario.

There are a couple of things I experienced in the last couple of weeks that I think are very relevant, especially since they're post-throne speech. One, I was delighted that Malcolm Allen—he's the federal member for Welland now and part of the NDP team in Ottawa—and I were so fortunate to be asked to join folks at the grand opening of a Rona store.

I don't know if you know what a Rona store is, Speaker, because sometimes folks from downtown Toronto don't get to experience these kinds of things, but a Rona store is a big hardware store. Rona is exceptional, because it is a Canadian company. Its roots are in Quebec, and it has now spread across the country. It's a publicly traded company.

That, of course, makes one feel a little better about the whole thing, and I felt really good about this opening, because it was the opening of a new Rona store that was owned and operated by Jonas Tomiuck. Jonas is a young man and an exceptional hockey player, I must say—Welland riding tends to produce exceptional hockey players; Thorold is part of Welland riding—an exceptional hockey player, but the third generation of lumber and hardware people. I was so proud to join Jonas and his family and staff at that Rona store.

Grace and Steve Tomiuck, the grandparents, couldn't be there. Steve just had heart surgery a few weeks ago and is still at home recovering. I just talked to Grace this afternoon. She had to go to the walk-in clinic last week, and she's not feeling well. They fear she might have pneumonia, but I told her she's going to be fine because she's tough just like Steve is.

I've known these people all of my life: Steve and Grace Tomiuck. They opened Welland Lumber 65 years ago—65 years ago. A few years ago I was at their old location on Southworth Street South, where they were celebrating their 60th anniversary in business. The prospect of a new, big Rona store was not even on the horizon, but they were a Rona affiliate.

Steve comes from down Wright Street—Crowland, the south end of Welland. Those are good people on Wright Street, down in the south end of Welland—Crowland, just around the corner from the labour temple on Ontario Road. That was the home base for workers and their families for so many years down there. It was one of the home bases for the great Crowland relief workers strike. You know that history: when Mitch Hepburn—oh, yes, another one of those—sent in his hand-picked, armed troops to force relief workers to dig sewers when those relief recipients, during that last Great Depression, wanted just a few pennies more a day because they couldn't afford to feed their families. Even though they were working for their welfare, they couldn't afford to feed their families, and they simply wanted a few pennies a day.

I've got to tell you, down in that part of Welland, going on strike was an idea that was cultivated even in the youngest of kids. A free person in a free society has every right to withdraw their labour, because if you don't have the right to withdraw your labour, you're not a free person and you're not living in a free society. But I digress just a little bit.

I just want to try to illustrate the kind of background that Steve Tomiuck has lived. He was born down there on Wright Street in 1925. His parents were immigrants from Europe. In fact, Grace grew up on Cozy Street. I know those homes. I know those houses like the back of my hand.

They got married by Reverend Fern Sayles. You may not have heard of Fern Sayles. We know him well down in Welland. He was the minister at All Peoples' United Church, the old Methodist mission church. Fern Sayles ran a couple of times for the Progressive Labour Party. Regrettably, Fern Sayles was not a CCFer. We wished he were. But he became one, in due course, as time unfolded. Steve and Grace were married by Fern Sayles over in the All Peoples' church.

Steve started Welland Lumber by going door to door, fixing people's screen doors and screen windows. And you'll know, and I know that the member for Whitby—Oshawa knows this too; some people may not know what wood storm windows are, what wood storm doors are, what wood screens are. She owns a very old house. I know that, because she has talked to me about it. I own a

very old house too. I'm sure her house is much nicer than my old house, but nonetheless they're both old houses. Mine is the vintage of 1914.

Steve went door to door, fixing people's screens on their storm windows or on their storm doors. Pretty soon he had a lumberyard. He had great carpentry skills. One of the things I had occasion to see—I had occasion to see it at the Rona store opening and had occasion to see it five years ago at the 60th anniversary. Steve Tomiuck: 65 years of building homes, churches, schools, hospitals, providing the materials; in some cases, providing his own labour, his own talent, his own trade skills. His was a generation of builders. He was the kind of folk who built things, didn't tear them down, and who saw prosperity grow.

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He and his wife, Steve and Grace, struggled through the Depression, but they saw their kids grow up with better educations than they had, and they saw their grandchildren grow up with outstanding post-secondary school, college and university, and careers. Now Steve sees his grandson Jonas at the age of, I think, about 30 as the owner/operator of this Rona store.

Now, what context do I put that in? First, these are fine people for whom I have the highest regard. You've got to understand it. Again, folks in Toronto may not understand this, but when you come from small- and smaller-town Ontario, we do things a little differently. When you're dealing with business people like Steve Tomiuck or any of his sons or grandchildren, as often as not, a handshake seals the deal, instead of complex contracts that are only going to make the lawyers rich, at the end of the day. Steve Tomiuck and his family have a reputation—a well-earned reputation—of being as honest and trustworthy as anybody ever could be. See, I know these people, and I've also been a customer of theirs.

But it's the grand opening, we've got all these VPs and people out of the head office in Quebec and local politicians and so on, and as I'm walking through the store, I say hi to the staff. You know who the staff are because they are wearing the Rona uniforms, just a jacket or a sweater. "Hey, how are you doing?" "How are you doing?" You see, I knew most of those workers.

I've known them for a long time, too, because most of those workers who are working at that Rona—Rona was able to create around 60 jobs at the opening of that store—are the people who have lost their jobs over the course of the last two, two and a half or three years, while Dalton McGuinty and his gang twiddled their thumbs, while there was mere fiddling going on while burning was going on in smaller-town and small-town Ontario from the north to the southeast to the west. Sixty new jobs: Of course we celebrate that. You know how many people were lined up for those 60 jobs? Because those were 60 winners. They won that job lottery, not that they didn't deserve it—because I know those folks. There are a whole lot of skilled trades working in that Rona store, a whole lot of people from the construction industry. You couldn't be better served. You're getting

good value for your dollar, I can tell you that. But the lineup of applicants for those 60 jobs was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people.

There was nothing in Mr. McGuinty's throne speech that alleviates the fear and the anguish of those hundreds of good men and women who couldn't get hired at that Rona because, after all, there were only 60 jobs, and that's a substantial number of jobs—in Dalton McGuinty's economy, in any event, at any rate.

Why, it was just a few weeks ago that the last worker, the last man standing—if I dare say it—walked out of the John Deere plant in Welland. John Deere has a 100-year history down in Welland, building agricultural equipment. There isn't a farmer in this province who doesn't know what the green and yellow of John Deere means. Eight hundred jobs gone, not because there was no more demand for the product but gone to Mexico. Did this government have any leverage in terms of keeping those jobs here?

I've got to tell you, I'm going to talk—I have and I'll talk a little bit more—about Grace and Steve Tomiuck. I'm going to talk about Joe DiMarco, because that's important, too. I've known Joe for a long time. Joe married my dear friend Jennifer Wright. I was at their wedding. That was a long time ago. That was over 20 years ago. Jennifer is a delightful young woman, and as a matter of fact, her father was Rev. Robert Wright, who was the successor of Rev. Fern Sayles at All Peoples' United Church. See how in small-town Ontario, things are different? Everything all comes together.

Robert Wright was a CCFer and an NDP candidate. In fact, the first campaign I ever worked on—I think I was 12 years old—was Robert Wright's campaign as NDP candidate down there in Welland. You'd be surprised at how effective a 12- or 13-year-old kid—I had some charm in those days. I've lost it since, but a rather charming 12- or 13-year-old kid knocking on doors could do things for a candidate that grumpy old men like this can't.

Jennifer is the daughter of—and Nancy McRae, her dear mother whom I love dearly and is still a dear friend. These people were very kind to me. They were my mentors in terms of political values and social views amongst a collection of great mentors.

Joe DiMarco runs a company called Universal Windows. As a matter of fact, he has a website: universalwindows.ca. He has been installing some windows in my 100-year-old house—some retrofits. He has done several installations, and I had a chance to see some of his crew down there because, last week, of course, we weren't here at Queen's Park. I was here Monday and Tuesday, went back for Wednesday for the Rona opening and came back here, then went back because Joe DiMarco and Universal Windows and his crew were coming on Friday.

I watched them install windows. Man, are they good. These people know their business. His crew is a relatively young group. Joe's not an oldster, but he's not 21 anymore. I wouldn't think of buying and having

windows installed by anybody other than Joe DiMarco because of, again, how trustworthy he is, how integrous he is and how skilful he is at doing the installations and initial measurements.

His windows, you see, are made right in Niagara Falls. They're made by A.C. Vinyl Windows Ltd. They've been around for 25 years or so. They're Energy Star- and EnerGuide-rated windows. They're good stuff. I'm so pleased. I was just so happy. I was as happy as a pig in a barnyard to be at the Rona store because the other thing is, Rona is Quebec-based. It's very big on environmental issues. So is Jonas Tomiuck and his family, and also very big on promoting Canadian and, more so, Ontario product.

I'm getting to the throne speech. We're getting there. It's the scenic route, but we're going to get to where we're going to.

The first display I see when I walk into the Rona store is the barbecue display, and is the stuff made offshore or even in the United States? Are those high-priced Webers American-made? No; it's stuff right out of Kitchener, Ontario—Onward Manufacturing. I've got to tell you, in 25 years I haven't owned anything other than an OMC, an Onward Manufacturing—they make Broil King and Broil-Mate: top-notch products made not just in Canada, but made right here in Ontario, and manufactured and assembled in the Kitchener area.

I was more than pleased to see that. The reason I've owned so many OMC—Onward Manufacturing—Broil King—Sterling is another brand—is because it took me a few times before I got smart enough to realize you put the chain with the padlock to a post in the ground. I know that those Canadian-made and Ontario-made barbecues are still serving somebody well, and I wish the new owners of those barbecues the very best. I hope that they've derived as much pleasure as my neighbours and I do from our barbecue, our OMC—Onward Manufacturing—made-right-here-in-Ontario barbecue by Ontario workers.

I've got to tell you, I talked to Joe. Joe's smart. Joe has been installing windows for a good chunk of time. He knows his business; he knows it well. He's proud of his work, as he should be. He's an exceptional, skilled craftsperson. His workers are top-notch.

But you see, things are going to slow down in short order because eventually, there's going to be the sticker-shock phenomenon of 8% in terms of installation—the labour component.

The same with Rona lumber. Lord knows, I wish the Tomiucks and Rona lumber well. I'm quite capable of spending a Saturday morning, no lunch break, through to 1 o'clock in a hardware store like that, just pretending as if I know what I'm doing, but I know Porter-Cable when I see it, I can tell you that. But you see, in that business as well, the renovations and the fixing-uppings that have been going on over the last year and a half by people who aren't buying new houses anymore because they can't afford to—there has been some big slowdown in new house construction, hasn't there? That fixing-upping is going to slow down, too.

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So you see, I worry about the hundreds of people who couldn't get jobs at Rona. I worry about good entrepreneurs like Joe DiMarco at Universal Windows, who provide good jobs and do good, competent, quality service for families down in Niagara region. I worry for their well-being, because this HST is not going to serve them well. In some respects, that's the dirty little secret, because you ain't seen nothing yet. Why, the first boot has barely hit the floor, never mind the second boot. Things are tough out there for folks. All the chatty and, good God, the cliché-ridden—if you took the clichés out of that throne speech, why, it would fit on a quarter of a page of paper.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Not that much.

Mr. Peter Kormos: An eighth of a page of paper; I stand corrected by Ms. Elliott. If you took out the silly little clichés—"The world needs Ontario. Ontario needs the world." What the hell does that mean? I can tell you it means absolutely nothing to the folks down in Welland riding: in Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland, Thorold, St. Catharines, all the way through to Fort Erie and Fenwick. It means absolutely nothing to them. All they know is that they don't have jobs. "Retrain, retrain"—for what?

I'm going to talk about that, because we've got some stories coming out of Welland riding about the so-called retraining program; the Second Career program. My butt, second career. What are you going to do with 800 John Deere workers? Are you going to put tutus on them and send them down the road here to Toronto to dance the ballet? You can train them till the cows come home, but if there aren't jobs out there, all the training in the world comes to naught.

There was a time when the casino in Niagara Falls was the landing ground for people who lost their industrial jobs. Those men and women were trained to be blackjack dealers; they were trained to be mechanics and technicians for the one-armed bandits and the slot machines. It was a soft landing spot for some of those folks. The problem is, the casino is laying people off now. There are no jobs at the casino.

So, first of all, the training program, the Second Career program, simply ain't working. I can tell you that and I'm going to talk about that. Jeez, I wish I had another hour. If these folks had only given me unanimous consent for another hour I'd be so grateful. But I'm going to talk about Second Career in due course. We're going to have a whole lot of chance this week to talk about Second Career.

Today, I want to pay tribute to some people who I am very proud of: people like Joe DiMarco and Steve and Grace Tomiuck and Jonas. I also want to explain why they are so important to me: Because being with them, their families and their workers helps me understand a whole lot better than I would have otherwise how tough it is for people out there. The six-digit salaries in this chamber, I think, have left many people a little too comfortable. It's not comfortable for a whole lot of Ontarians.

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House and speak about the speech from the throne. In contrast to the honourable member from the third party, who just asked what "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario" means, I must stress the point that in fact, the world needs Ontario and Ontario needs the world because the world is a small village now. What we do, the world needs, and we also need the world.

When you read the speech from the throne, you find several major initiatives in that document. The document itself, as it stands alone, is a road map. It's a general plan for the next five years in Ontario. It's the plan which will take Ontario to another plateau within five years. There are several elements, and as I said, you can easily find those elements in the document. I'm just going to speak to a few of them.

One of them is the creation of a new learning centre called the online institute. This new centre is going to provide easy access for students who want to learn to increase their knowledge, education and training in various areas and disciplines. They can easily reach it, through the Internet and modern technology, in their own leisure time with much less investment, to increase their knowledge, training and education. That is a new initiative in Ontario. Other provinces do have this kind of institution. The province of Alberta was the first. I think about 15 years ago, they came out with an online university called Athabasca University. Within this university, they provide master's degree programs. So this is what we are going to do in Ontario for the first time. This has been mentioned in the speech from the throne.

The other point on the education side is the creation of 20,000 new spots—

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member for Welland. I didn't realize that he had a 1914 house. I lived in an old house like that once myself, and it's always a challenge to get home early enough to fix the things that broke that day. It's an ongoing challenge to live in an older house, because things can break at an awful pace when you live in an old house. The member for Oshawa is nodding her head. She lives in an older house as well. So you become very handy when you live in those kinds of houses.

The member speaks very eloquently about the plight that Ontario finds itself in. For six years, the grasshoppers on the government benches fiddled while the province and the manufacturing sector in this great province declined and fell away from the bones that make up this province. That was a shame.

We on this side of the House may have different solutions to the problem, but we agree on the problem. We warned the government at some length that bad times were coming, but it's a Liberal tradition to tax and spend. Peterson did it from 1985 to 1990 when he doubled the provincial budget. He started out with a \$24-billion

budget and he finished 1990 with a \$48-billion budget. This government took over with a \$67-billion deficit. Now, there was an NDP government in there and there was a Conservative government in there, and the budget only increased in those 12 years—\$48 million to \$68 million—by \$20 billion. But in the short six years that the Liberals have been in place, the budget is on track to almost double, and the debt that Ontario finds itself is also on track to double.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I was not on duty this afternoon to be here, but when I started to watch the television as I was working away at some files, I saw my colleague the member from Welland get to his feet, and I thought, "I cannot miss this." He has been away from this place too long. To listen to his tales, to listen to what he has to say about his neighbours and his friends of a bygone era, what he has to say about Port Colborne, Welland and Wainfleet, is something that ought not to be missed. I wish there were more in the House to witness this. So I ran up the stairs in order to partake because it was just such a long time that I haven't been able to watch him in full flight. The television does not do him the justice that he deserves. Even when I have to have his back to me, you can still watch the movements, the pondering and the eloquence with which he speaks.

He talks about the down-home wisdom and he talks about real people. I think that is what is often forgotten in this place. When you can put a name and a face to problems, when you can put a name and a face to what government policy actually accomplishes or fails to accomplish, it says much more than the statistics and other things that are bandied about in this House all the time or the greatness that certain people see in every political action. I don't know how often I hear that this government has done things that no other government in the world has done, that this government has fared better than any other government in the history of humankind, and on and on it goes. But when the member from Welland speaks, he talks about those real people, their real problems. He talks about the jobs that they want to keep. He talks about the opportunities that are now being denied of them.

I think we all need to listen. We all need to go back to our communities. We all need to rediscover those real people so that we can better represent them, and at least in the same way that he so ably does.

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: I too appreciate the comments from the member from Welland. He's very articulate and passionate. I also would like to congratulate his constituent Steve Tomiuck, who opened up the Rona lumber store in Welland, just as Mark Healy has opened up a Canadian Tire store in Mississauga. What it's telling me is that these individuals are investing a great deal of their money and investment because they have confidence in this province and in the future of this province.

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This throne speech spoke about how this province will be one of the lowest-cost jurisdictions in North America and around the world in terms of taxation. The tax reform will enable some stimulus to encourage these companies to invest in Ontario. Just as the local Home Hardware store in Clarkson has been surviving and has done its job, we too need both the small stores and the large stores. This throne speech speaks to the vision of Ontario, one that enables us to inspire economic stimulus and, above all, create jobs. These individuals aren't going to set up these big shops unless they're confident that there are going to be enough consumers to spend the money, money that will enable us to have strong education and strong health care, as well as improvements to our environment.

Part of this throne speech speaks about green jobs going forward and the protection of our environment. We can go on about the early years as well, because without education for the primary years, then we will have more jeopardy in the later years when these people become adults and are looking for those skilled jobs. The throne speech speaks about that as well.

I say to the honourable member, congratulations to your constituent, and congratulations to all who decide to invest in Ontario for the future, because this is about the future of Ontario. We need to encourage that stimulus and those investments, and this throne speech speaks to that. The budget coming forward will also do so.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you to the people who responded to my brief comments. Look, why do I mention Joe DiMarco and Universal Windows and his supplier, A.C. Vinyl Windows, in Niagara Falls? Why do I mention John Deere? Because if we had a Buy Ontario policy in this province, we would have gone a long way already to saving a whole lot of jobs, and perhaps even restoring some of the jobs that have been lost. We have no leverage. This government had no leverage whatsoever with John Deere in the absence of a Buy Ontario policy. They couldn't say to John Deere, "We're not going to buy John Deeres anymore if they're not made in Ontario," because they never bought John Deeres because they were made in Ontario in the first place.

The lack of a Buy Ontario policy has put jobs at risk and hasn't just put them at risk, has eliminated those jobs, and many of those jobs, once they're gone, are never coming back. I tell you what: You talk to Steve Tomiuck who lived through one depression and is living through a second. He's down there in the south end with Welland Tubes and Page-Hersey and Union Carbide. Two of the three are now gone. He'll be the first to tell you that if you aren't in a community where workers are working, making money, they aren't buying anything. They aren't buying products and they aren't keeping small business alive—end of story. No matter how good that entrepreneur is, he can't give product away. Steve Tomiuck can tell you that if you don't have workers

making good wages in your community, small business can kiss its grits goodbye—end of story. Joe DiMarco will tell you that if you don't have workers making decent wages who can afford his quality services and a quality product made right there in Niagara Falls, he's not going to be installing windows. And that HST that Dalton McGuinty has whacked those people with isn't going to help. As sure as God made little apples, it ain't going to help. I invite people to go talk to those folks, real folks who understand how disastrous this government's policies are for the workers and families of Ontario.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to our Open Ontario plan today, and I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Southwest.

I join with my colleagues in acknowledging the vibrant return of the member for Welland, and it's lovely that he hearkens back to the days when he had charm. We all hearken back to those days with you.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to our Open Ontario plan and to speak to the great initiatives and the hopeful signs that we have for opportunities and growth here in Ontario for the next five years. As you're well aware, over the last couple of years, as we've dealt with this worldwide economic downturn, we've made substantial investments in infrastructure to create jobs and to introduce new training programs for our workers. The infrastructure programs that we've introduced across the province and that we've seen roll out across the province have seen construction happening in each and every one of our ridings. In my riding of Nipissing, we've seen some great work being done to the sportsplex in Powassan, as the tenders have gone out for that. We are building a multisports complex in North Bay. We've seen the construction of roads and bridges in Mattawa, Bonfield, Chisholm and Nipissing, and we're also seeing the revamping of our Yes! employment office on Main Street in downtown North Bay. Yes! is the key service provider for training and educational opportunities for our young people and for those who have been displaced and are seeking training and future employment. It's good to see that Yes! will find itself in a new, refurbished home for all the programs and all the help it provides.

As we move forward, our new five-year Open Ontario plan is about opening up the province to new economic opportunities that will result in jobs and growth. We are creating new opportunities for jobs and growth by looking to the future, looking at new technology. As you know, we introduced the Green Energy Act, and that has created such a buzz internationally, across the country and here in the province, as we see so many green energy initiatives happening across the province. Locally in my town, we were so delighted two weeks ago to see that our local Independent Grocer, a subsidiary of the Loblaw chain, will be adopting solar panels. It's very exciting. It's quite a prominent store in our community, and it will

be exciting to see that happen and create a buzz about green energy in our community.

The member for Welland was so good about talking about individuals in his riding. Steve Draves, an individual in my riding, has been talking about solar panels and solar energy for quite some time. He has his own business, and he also teaches in the trades sector at Canadore College. He is telling me that he is incredibly busy with interest about applying solar panels to various people's roofs in homes and businesses. I'm excited to see that through the Green Energy Act we are supporting his green initiatives, but also allowing him and so many others to expand in green technology.

As we look at clean water, Madam Speaker, as you know, it's a huge, burgeoning industry across the country, but also around the world. As the member for Toronto Centre discussed, we have so many jurisdictions that are seeking clean water and will be seeking more clean water in the future. We are well positioned to be a centre of excellence for the development of clean water technology, and I'm excited at the prospects. I know that last week, when we introduced the Open Ontario plan through our throne speech, I received calls in my constituency office immediately about our clean water initiative. People are excited about these initiatives.

We're also turning to education, as we know that our greatest resource in this province is our human resource. We are trying, as we have for the last seven years, to continue to build a stronger economy by expanding educational opportunities in our schools, colleges, universities and trades. We are creating the world's most highly skilled and educated workforce. As you know, we start in the early years. We've introduced full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Last week, while I was in my constituency, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of stakeholders, all of whom are very excited about this initiative and the impact it's going to have on our young people. We have also decreased our class sizes, our test scores are up and I think we announced just today that more of our high school students are graduating.

All these initiatives are really important as our young people go forward and become the workforce of the future. I look at our pages, and Anthony Caliciuri—I think he might have gone off to school—is one of my constituents who is here today. His mom, Mary Beth, was here with us; she just stepped out. What we're doing is creating a future and creating opportunities for these young people in areas that we know are going to grow in the future—in new technology. We're also expanding the opportunities they will have, in the not-too-distant future, in our colleges and universities over the next few years. We are going to expand enrolment in our colleges and universities by 20,000 places.

On Thursday of last week, I was at Nipissing University, which is in the great city of North Bay, and we welcomed Seymour Schulich to Nipissing University. As many in this House will know, he is a philanthropist, a nationally known entrepreneur and someone who has

done a great deal for post-secondary education across the country. He has endowed faculties in various universities across the country. He has endowed the faculty of law at Dalhousie, which is now the Schulich School of Law, the Schulich School of Business at York, the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western, the Schulich School of Music at McGill and, as of last Thursday, the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University.

Mr. Schulich has endowed the university with \$15 million—a huge investment for Nipissing University—providing 100 scholarships of \$6,000 per student to students starting next year, as well as investing in the faculty and in different programs in the faculty, some with a particular interest in our aboriginal peoples. It was a very exciting day at Nipissing, and I've got to tell you, the place was just electric with excitement as we looked forward to both these new investments as well as the prospect of expanding enrolment at Nipissing and Canadore through the initiatives of the Open Ontario plan.

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We're also building at Nipissing and Canadore. We're building a new library. It's a joint library. It's the only one in the province where a college and a university share—actually, we're the only co-located institutions in the province, and in this case they actually share the library. We're very excited about the learning library. The community has come out in great support in fund-raising efforts, and the province is supporting the library to the tune of about \$19 million. As I was there last week for the Schulich announcement, we could see the walls going up. It's just incredibly exciting, providing yet another great opportunity to the students across the north who come to Nipissing and Canadore. As well, we welcome students from all over the province and all across the country.

We also welcome international students. As our Open Ontario plan looks towards welcoming more foreign-born students to our faculties across the province, I am excited at the prospect of expanding those foreign spots in Nipissing and Canadore. Presently at Canadore College, our aeRonautics centre provides training to a number of students from China. I know that at Nipissing University we have a number of students through the world university student program, WUSP. They are very excited at both the prospect of expanding enrolment of our foreign-born students and providing those opportunities—and a great learning opportunity for our students to share the classroom with people from different cultures, different backgrounds and a different point of view.

We're also working towards, as we develop these new programs and as we move towards the future and adopt new technology and support new industries and new technology, the elimination of our deficit. We don't want to leave our children with that burden. The members opposite spoke ever so eloquently about deficits. In fact, they should know, as they left with us a \$5.6-billion deficit when we took office in 2003. As you know, over

the years we managed to reduce that deficit. Now, as every jurisdiction in North America and almost every jurisdiction around the world has managed to create a deficit through these difficult economic times, we too are looking at how to deal with that. We will be doing that in a reasonable, gradual, responsible way, ensuring that all of our core services that Ontarians have grown to rely on are consistently kept up, but also making sure that we don't leave that legacy to our children.

I think the Open Ontario plan is an incredibly exciting plan for the province and for opportunities across the province, but nowhere, I think, do we capture that better than in the north. As you know, I spoke earlier about the north and about the Ring of Fire and the potential that the chromite deposits of the Ring of Fire bring to the north and to industry in the north, to our students in the north who are studying, and to various First Nations communities who stand to benefit from this find. I am very excited at the prospects.

I have to tell you, two weeks ago I was at the prospectors' conference, which was held at the Metro Convention Centre. I believe there were 22,000 registered participants at the prospectors' conference. It's the largest in the world. We were so ably represented there in my riding by the folks from Boart Longyear, Sandvik, Cementation, Foraco, and one other that slips my mind, but they were all huge employers in our region who are developing new products and producing those products and selling them around the world. As an example, the one that slipped my mind—Atlas Copco launched a new product, a new diamond bit at the conference, to a worldwide audience, and were there to sell it. They produce it in Ontario, in North Bay. Boart Longyear, the representatives, were telling me that they are hiring up and taking on new staff and are very excited with the prospects.

We do see development. We do see the economy starting to turn and, with that, bring optimism for the province and for the people of this province. I think the Open Ontario plan supports that initial hope that we are seeing around the world. I know that it's providing hope and encouragement to the people of Ontario.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Scarborough—Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes on the throne speech and the Open Ontario plan. I'm going to use a small analogy in these few minutes that I have to speak, and that is to take Sherlock Holmes from the 1800s and bring him to the present day in this chamber, show him our Open Ontario plan and ask him, "Mr. Holmes, what do you see in this plan? What do you think?" He'd look at the plan, and probably one of the first things he'd notice is that we're going to create 600,000 more jobs in Ontario. One would wonder how that is going to happen. We are basically, through our Open Ontario plan, bringing our taxation system into line with the 21st century and bringing opportunities for businesses to flourish in Ontario. People look at the HST as being only

negative, yet someone who looks more carefully at it will see that there are going to be 600,000 new jobs. That's not coming from us, the government; that's coming from independent economists who have said that.

The other thing that would be interesting is that someone like Sherlock Holmes would see Samsung coming to Ontario, and he'd scratch his head and say, "Why would Samsung come to Ontario? Why would Samsung decide to invest \$7 billion and create 2,500 megawatts of clean power and 16,000 Ontario jobs?" The reason, again, is because we have the Open Ontario plan. It's already partly in place through the fact that we have put the Green Energy Act to work at this time. This is a tremendous achievement. Samsung could have gone anywhere. They could have opened in California, they could have opened in Tennessee or they could have opened in British Columbia. But they chose Ontario, and that's the key: We've created a fertile environment where companies want to come and open—not only Samsung but other businesses as well.

We have to compete against the rest of the world. Businesses can pick up and move, as we've seen. A lot of the auto sector has moved to countries like Mexico and elsewhere. We need to compete with other countries and provide something better. In this plan, we begin to distill and find certain things that make business attractive for people who want to work in Ontario. There are all sorts of components that this plan has put forward that allow businesses to open up here.

I think the fact that the plan wants us to include a financial centre, to make Toronto one of North America's financial centres, is also important. It will create a number of jobs, as people will want to open up their banking operations here in Toronto and Ontario rather than in other parts of the country or the world. It's an important idea, and I think the foundations are already there.

The idea that we're going to have a new Water Opportunities Act means that we're going to have all sorts of new clean water technology. Earlier speakers have spoken to the fact that water is such a precious commodity. Well, we've decided through this plan—again, going back to Sherlock Holmes, if he was to look at this and look at this Water Opportunities Act, he would say, "Interesting. It appears that this is going to create jobs in the future. This is going to create new technologies in the future." It's also going to create all sorts of new opportunities for young people who want to get into this field and work in this area.

The plan goes on to do much more, of course. In education, we are launching, and have launched, the Second Career program. It's a first for Canada, because it supports up to two years of long-term training. All I have to do is speak to the president of Centennial College. Her name is Ann Buller, and I have talked to her on several occasions about Second Career. They are thrilled in Scarborough, as they are throughout Ontario, to have opportunities to bring people back to school, retrain them and put them back into the workforce. It isn't something

that is esoteric or that could happen; it is happening right now. There are people who are being trained as I speak. There are classrooms open in Scarborough, Scarborough Southwest, Centennial College and elsewhere where people are retraining, learning new skills, re-entering the workforce with those new skills and working in fields they didn't work in before.

As you begin to get through the layers here, you begin to see an underlying theme. That theme is that there is a plan here. The plan is to create a fertile environment to allow businesses, individuals and residents to prosper here in Ontario. We have no choice.

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We could sit back, I guess, and do nothing. That choice is a bad choice, because in the past, when depressions or recessions have taken place, the governments that haven't moved have always failed. I look to the United States, for example. We talk about what happened during the Great Depression there. Before Roosevelt came into government, Herbert Hoover was the first President to sort of experience a large depression. He sat back and did nothing. He was swept out of office. Roosevelt came into power, and he immediately began to bring infrastructure ideas into the government plan.

We've done the same thing here. We did it a while back, and we're continuing to do it. Over \$32 billion is being invested in roads, bridges, public transit, and energy retrofits for our schools. This means, again, thousands of jobs for people who will be working in the infrastructure section doing this type of work. It's an extraordinary measure, and it is coordinated with the federal government and with partners who were interested in being involved in the infrastructure.

I know that in my riding there are several projects under way, and throughout Ontario there are hundreds of projects under way. People are working, the cranes are up, and the contractors are out there building and creating, refurbishing and fixing all sorts of infrastructure items.

Again, the global recession struck and Ontario found itself in a difficult situation. This government, the Liberal government here, decided to act, and I strongly support the actions that this government has taken. It's something that is unique, in that we are saying, "We're not afraid. We're going to go forward. We have a plan. We're going to make some changes. It might hurt a little bit, but in the end, Ontario is going to be a leader in a lot of different areas," whether it be clean water or whether it be in all sorts of other technologies, innovations, new skilled workers, and the list goes on and on and on.

Perhaps some people are critical of us for taking action, but at least one thing cannot be said: No one can say that we did not take action. The action that we are taking is well thought out. As I said, it's woven, and it weaves back to some of the earlier things that we did with the Green Energy Act, which was passed even before this plan was put forward. This plan incorporates the Green Energy Act and brings it forward, as well as

the items to do with education, which was mentioned earlier by the government House leader, and the early learning program, the full-day kindergarten program, which also helps people to go out there and work while their children are kept in school.

In summary, I think if someone like Sherlock Holmes looked at this plan, he would say, "Well done." He would say it's a proper way to go forward. He would say it's very thorough. There is not much more that I can think of that we can do to help make Ontario the best province and the best place in the world.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member spoke about the non-event of the throne speech, and it was disappointing to hear that throne speech being talked about as being a document that created something, because it really didn't. It was a very hollow document, one of the most hollow throne speeches, I think, that I've experienced in the House in my nearly 15 years in this place.

Talking about the action, he mentioned that there was some criticism that the government took action. Well, the action the government took wasn't very exciting, and I don't think the criticism was aimed at the government for taking action. It was the type of action the government took that we were critical of. The type of action they took didn't address the problems that are facing Ontario today: the loss of jobs, the loss of work. The programs that they've introduced have been underfunded and understaffed. There have been huge numbers of people who are unemployed and retraining programs that wouldn't entertain 10% of the unemployed workers. It's just far too little and it came far too late in the day for it to be effective in the way in which Ontario has faced this terrible recession that we're in and that we were very poorly prepared for. The government twiddled their thumbs for six years of their mandate, and even after the recession hit they took no decisive action for months afterwards. It was as if they were surprised that the recession came.

I understand the member is speaking from the government benches, and it must be difficult to speak to a throne speech that produces so little for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the government's explanation—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Apology.

Mr. Paul Miller: It was more of an apology than an explanation, I must say. But I'd like them to talk to the people in my community on the street. I'd like them to talk to the thousands and thousands of people who have lost their jobs in the last few years. Just to name some of the companies that have left, major employers in the province: International Harvester; Otis Elevator; Westinghouse; John Inglis; American Can; Dominion Glass; Canada Works; Frost Fence; 80% of Stelco; Procter and Gamble; Camco; the 20-inch mill; Parkdale Works—the list goes on and on and on. These are

Hamilton-based companies that have pulled out. We've lost 20,000 jobs, and I have seen no indication of any job growth in the manufacturing sector in my city.

Now the pièce de résistance: A company with a 110-year history in the city of Hamilton—Siemens—is pulling out with 600 jobs and going to North Carolina. Why? Because they have incentives in North Carolina: free land, free buildings, free taxes for five years.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Union-busting.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's a state that doesn't allow unions too. It's a work-to-right state.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Right-to-work; sorry.

Then you've got John Deere, another company in Welland pulling out. I've seen all kinds of companies folding day after day in this province; week after week there are new announcements. So if this program they've got is so great, if it's so wonderful and it's going to make our province boom, why are these major companies that have been here for 100 years pulling out now when everything is going to be rosy, everything is going to be great?

I'll tell you what will help the province: Maybe you should do something about your hydro rates. Maybe you should Buy Ontario. Maybe you should have 50% content in Canadian manufacturing. That might do something to keep the jobs here—not all, I don't know, this featherweight stuff.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, I should say. I apologize.

It was a delight to hear from my colleagues the member from Nipissing and the member from Scarborough Southwest. They took the time this afternoon to clearly identify activities that are going on in their ridings as a result of our Green Energy Act, and opportunities that will certainly come about through the throne speech.

I guess essentially, being a former municipal politician, you often look at the throne speech as the official plan of a community. You provide the broad-brush strokes of how a community may develop over a period of time, and then you have the comprehensive zoning bylaw, which is really the nuts and bolts to implement the philosophical base that is clearly articulated in the official plan. That's what we see this Thursday at 4 o'clock. The Honourable Dwight Duncan will deliver his budget, and we're looking forward to seeing those details in the budget that will implement some of the elements that were identified in the official plan.

I take the opportunity when I'm in my great riding of Peterborough to go over to the East City Coffee Shop. It's on one of the largest spans, concrete bridges, in the British Commonwealth. In fact, we're going to rehabilitate this bridge this spring through monies that have been brought forward by the government of Ontario, the government of Canada, and indeed the city of Peterborough. When you talk to the folks at East City Coffee Shop—as I like to remind everybody, you can get a

Western and a cup of coffee for about \$4.75. It's absolutely delightful. It's cooked by the local folks there; they're great friends of mine. You get a chance to talk to the folks who work at Quaker Oats right across the street, who have been involved in Peterborough for over a hundred years. We made an announcement just recently to help their production capacity, to improve job opportunities at that manufacturer in Peterborough as well as General Electric and Siemens, and the list goes on and on.

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I'm glad we heard from my colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments? There being no more questions and comments, the member from Scarborough Southwest has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On behalf of the government House leader and myself, who spoke for the last 20 minutes or so, I want to thank the member from Halton, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member from Peterborough for their comments.

Again, I want to reiterate the fact that this document that we have, the Open Ontario plan, which is the speech from the throne, has a plan. It has a vision, and it outlines that plan very carefully. All you have to do is read it. It's not a very long document. It's barely 16 pages long. It lays out a very, very clear agenda for an open Ontario, for an Ontario that wants to invite people to come here; for an Ontario that wants to bring foreign students here, and create new universities and perhaps add on to universities so that foreign students come here to learn and get their degrees; an Ontario that wants new companies like Samsung, which is going to create thousands of new jobs located right here in Ontario, and that has a Green Energy Act that will create new, green technologies.

We want to be in the forefront of these areas. We know that the world has changed. We know that certain businesses are going to have a difficult time continuing to exist, so what we need to do is to provide a landing pad: a place where people can open up new businesses and where entrepreneurs can come to this province. This plan makes it very clear what this government intends to do.

The \$32 billion for infrastructure alone is an incredible investment that we've made here in Ontario to try to bring brand new bridges, roads and subways right into this province. We're not sitting still. We're not sitting pat. We are moving.

I am excited when I look at this document. I think of what the future will bring for the young people and all the others who live here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This throne speech showed a government that has lost their way because they have spent too long in their ivory towers in Toronto; a government that is disconnected and out of touch with the people of Ontario. As Christina Blizzard said, "It's Dalton in Wonderland." He thinks that people will be

satisfied with vague platitudes and reannouncements—and incidentally, we've heard the government mention the fact that this is going to create a million new jobs. Every one of those jobs in the throne speech has been announced prior. They were supposed to be the jobs that were announced in the last throne speech, when they in fact lost over 100,000 jobs. So I guess that goes to the amount of confidence that we can put into this throne speech.

The Premier thinks people will be satisfied with vague platitudes, but the families who have one or even two parents out of work and are struggling to make ends meet need more. The farmers who are losing money every day and expecting the bank to foreclose soon need more. The seniors—and incidentally, it wasn't mentioned in the throne speech—on fixed incomes who are scared that the HST will force them out of their homes need more. The government had an opportunity to create a real plan to get Ontarians back on track and missed the opportunity.

The McGuinty Liberals are faced with a record-breaking \$24.7-billion deficit, but if you listened only to the throne speech you'd think everything was ticking along nicely in this province. This government is on a steady course to double the provincial debt by 2013. Since the McGuinty Liberals came to office, Ontario's debt has grown by \$65 billion. It took 23 Premiers and 136 years to get us to \$148 billion in debt, and Dalton McGuinty would single-handedly double that debt in just eight years. On a per-household basis, this means every single family in Ontario is saddled with more than \$13,500 of the McGuinty Liberals' debt, yet the throne speech hardly addresses it. The people of Ontario expect more from a government than to mortgage the future of our children.

However, I will admit the McGuintys have come up with one money-making plan; unfortunately, it may be at the expense of our children. According to a recent Toronto Star article, Ontario now hosts 38,000 foreign students. The throne speech laid out a goal of increasing that by 50% over the next five years. Dalton McGuinty might call it "Open Ontario," but I'd call it "desperate Ontario."

The government of Ontario's proposal is that international students, who pay almost triple, become cash cows of our cash-strapped university system. It runs the risk that Ontario and Canadian students will be pushed out of the post-secondary education system by cash-heavy foreign students, who pay almost triple the tuition fees.

I hope that there are enough student spaces for some of my Liberal colleagues to go back to school, because they need to work on their math skills. They are creating 20,000 new student spaces, but if they are successful in attracting the number of foreign students they want, that will fill 19,000 of those spaces and leave a grand total of 1,000 extra student spaces for our Ontario children—only 1,000 extra spaces to deal with the overcrowding and the people who are currently being turned away from schools in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

These student spaces are not a new, forward-looking plan; they are a reaction to the problem that the McGuinty government has already created. People in Ontario are losing their jobs. Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario has lost 279,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs; 140,000 jobs were lost in 2009 alone. Incidentally, that was the year they were supposed to create a million jobs since that last throne speech.

High taxes and a challenging economy are forcing our businesses to close or move to more competitive locations. As a result, many Ontarians are going back to school to try and train for a new job. College applications are up 14.5% overall since January 2009, 22.8% for non-secondary school applicants. Some colleges, such as Northern College in northwestern Ontario, where mining and forestry sectors have collapsed, are experiencing an increase of 47%.

In the throne speech, the McGuinty government claimed that "every qualified Ontarian who wants to go to college or university will find a place." Well, their math simply doesn't add up. This is already shaping up to be another broken promise to the students, just like the promise in the 2007 throne speech where they said that they would give a \$300 grant each year to help with the cost of textbooks. No, they didn't.

In the throne speech, the McGuinty government pointed to the Second Career program and talked about its successes. While he included one positive story, he doesn't mention the many stories that we hear every day, people calling who are frustrated by the red tape—people like the mother of two who was trying to go back to school. It took so long to get the approval from Second Career that all the daytime classes were full, leaving her with evening courses and no daycare options. Or people like hospitality student Derek Baker, who waited from September to December for funding approval. In January, having already paid George Brown College \$145 to hold his spot, Baker could wait no longer and started classes, even though he couldn't afford the tuition. Last time he spoke to his career counsellor, she told him that he would have to drop out because Second Career funding isn't available to those already students.

Derek was a bike mechanic who was laid off at Duke's Cycle after the store burned down during the 2008 Queen Street fire. He said, "All I want to do is learn and contribute.... You guys are telling me that in order to go to school I can't go to school—are you crazy?" That was his quote.

People like Derek were looking for real solutions in this speech. People in my riding who are worried about the impact of the HST were hoping that in this speech, the government would explain how we are supposed to afford an extra 8% on everything from gasoline to hydro to home heating fuel. This tax increase will be applied to hundreds of things that Ontarians use every day.

I know that many seniors rely on services like snow removal, lawn care and home repair to allow them to stay in their own homes. Now the cost of all those services will be increased by 8% as well.

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Our farmers are worried about the HST too. They're worried about the impact of losing the point-of-sale exemption. They can't afford to pay the sales tax and wait months to get that money back. They need the money to operate. Instead of announcements to help farmers, the government chose to largely ignore them in this throne speech, with just 51 words and no new assistance. In fact, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture's commentary on the throne speech said, "Anyone looking for an at-length mention of agriculture or farming in the recent Ontario throne speech was most likely left disappointed or cold."

I can imagine how delighted Ontario farmers and growers will be to hear that there is still no room for them in the Premier's agenda. The McGuinty government has been ignoring the needs of Ontario farmers for several years, and the longer they ignore them, the more desperate their needs become.

A few weeks ago, I questioned the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on this government's lack of support for our farmers. I started by saying that Premier McGuinty was set to announce a new set of priorities in his next throne speech and that Ontario farmers are still waiting for him to deliver on the promises he made in the last one.

In the 2007 throne speech, the Premier promised to help grain and oilseed farmers. Today, they are no better off. The McGuinty government has ended the grain and oilseeds risk management pilot program even though it was a success.

On the night of the throne speech, I had the privilege of going to the grain farmers' convention in London. The minister spoke, and the farmers were left confused. If the government supports them, as she claims, why would they end a program that works? For the last three years, the province and the farmers have funded the program jointly, and it worked.

Now the Minister of Agriculture claims that it can't continue without the federal government adding to the provincial portion. The farmers can't understand why. Nothing has changed other than that the minister has simply decided not to participate.

The other question they kept asking was why they would cut the grain and oilseeds program when the McGuinty government was the one promoting it. Former Agriculture Minister Leona Dombrowsky directed Ontario commodity groups to come together to create a consensus proposal for a risk management plan, and they did everything they were asked to do. They created a plan modelled on the grain and oilseeds program. They are speaking with one voice. They are telling the Ontario government what they need, and the government is making excuses.

They claim they won't participate without the federal government. They have forgotten that these are Ontario farmers, that Ontario has a responsibility to support them. They're ignoring the fact that our farmers are competing against people of other provinces who do have the support of their provincial governments. If the Minister

of Agriculture spent more time talking and, even more importantly, listening to the farmers, she would know that the federal-provincial tug-of-war is of no interest to them. They have no time to decide whose fault it is; they simply want to work hard and make sure their work is rewarded and supported by government.

I'm tired of asking, but I will do it again. When is the McGuinty government going to stop making excuses and take action to help our farmers? We are waiting not just for an answer but for action. It's almost the end of the fiscal year. We know that last year, because of flaws with support programs, Ontario farmers, even those losing money, failed to qualify for all the support they deserved and the money that had been allocated specifically for them.

This government had a choice on what to do with that money. It could design a program that would help farmers, but instead, it chose to quietly reallocate \$82 million to other priorities.

The McGuinty government has done nothing to solve the problem with the program this year, so once again they will be faced with a choice. I hope this time they will choose to help the struggling farmers. They have known about the problems with the support programs for a long time.

In the 2005 throne speech, the McGuinty government said that it "continues to act on concerns regarding the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program." That's the program that didn't trigger and the province had \$82 million left over. Since that time, the program has been renamed, but the problems haven't been solved.

There are still hog farmers who have been losing money for several years and are unable to qualify for support. The program is still unable to deal with long-term crisis or a long-term drop in prices, and it is still failing Ontario's farmers.

In Dalton McGuinty's throne speech he talks proudly about "good things that grow in Ontario." I would like to remind the honourable members on the other side of the floor that these things don't just grow by themselves. Maybe they do in wonderland, but here in the real world we produce things, and we should reward our producers. "Reward" is too strong a word here; I should say, "help them survive," and in some cases, "help keep their lights on." This is a reality for some like Wayne Bartels, whose hydro was shut off a few months back. This is just the first of many farmers who will face these situations and be forced off their farms if they don't get help.

We respect farmers and treat them as equal partners. Not so in Dalton McGuinty's world, not according to a recently rushed Bill 204, the Animal Health Act, which creates a new system of licences and fees that do nothing to aid animal health and simply cause red tape and added expenses to farmers. Our farmers don't need more expenses and red tape; they need help. They are losing their farms and they are being forced out of business. Hog farmers rallied at the then-Minister of Agriculture's constituency office. They rallied at Queen's Park and they rallied at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings

in Niagara-on-the-Lake. How many more times do they need to tell this government that they are in trouble before someone listens and takes action? They were looking for answers in this throne speech. They were looking for a plan that would help them survive the tough times and help Ontario's agriculture industry grow. They were looking for the provincial government to step up with real commitments, not excuses.

Nothing for Ontario's farmers in an hour-long throne speech is not the only bad news I had to deliver to my community. I also had to explain that home safety isn't a priority for the McGuinty government. I had to explain when Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature, killing my private member's bill called the Hawkins Gignac Act simply to have a flowery throne speech with no real plan and no major announcements. This bill would have required functioning carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes, and it would have saved lives. I introduced this bill in the wake of a tragedy in Woodstock in which OPP constable Laurie Hawkins, her husband, Richard, and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, were killed in their home by carbon monoxide poisoning.

We all know that when the Legislature prorogues, all current business, including bills and resolutions, is lost unless included in a carry-over motion by the government. The McGuinty government chose to move forward government bills but did not include the Hawkins Gignac Act. Isn't it ironic that today nobody would question the necessity of a smoke alarm in our homes, but we tend to overlook how important it is to protect ourselves from deadly gases such as carbon monoxide, an odourless, tasteless and colourless gas that is impossible to detect without this device? I don't know how many people would be excited about opening up Ontario if they were not safe in their own homes. It is unfortunate that because of this government's action we will have to start from scratch. I firmly believe that this bill will save lives, so I commit to reintroducing the Hawkins Gignac Act as soon as is practical.

It is almost three years ago that I brought forward a private member's resolution, one that dealt with the issue of taxation on diamond mines. You may remember that on the day the Victor mine was opened in northern Ontario, Dalton McGuinty's office issued a news release bragging about how low taxes were for the industry. In fact, he said, "Provincial tax rates for mining are among the lowest in Canada." Once the mine was opened, the McGuinty government almost tripled the diamond mine tax to 13%. This is the same government that claimed in the throne speech that they would build on that success and bring jobs to the north with the chromite mine. The McGuinty government has lost their credibility with the mining sector, and this government has lost their credibility with the people of Ontario.

Dalton McGuinty is still trying to mislead people, this time on health care. While I welcome the discussion on how we fund health care, I think that once again our Liberal friends are playing with the numbers—

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I thought I heard the honourable member say something unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I didn't hear that, but—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: If she heard something unparliamentary, I withdraw whatever she heard that was unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is that satisfactory?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yes, it is. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Continue.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: While I welcome the discussion on how we fund health care, I think that once again our Liberal friends are playing with the numbers. Once again, they seem to be relying on Liberal math. The reports are that this new patient-focused funding will direct more money into high-growth areas such as the 905. I know that many of those hospitals are underfunded given the population they serve, and I'm pleased that the McGuinty government is finally addressing the problem.

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My concern is that the same report indicated there will be no more money for health care. If that's true, then where is the money coming from? What will be cut? I suspect the answer is: from our smaller hospitals in rural and northern communities. In fact, in the article in the paper shortly after the throne speech, a group representing health professionals and hospital workers were quoted criticizing the proposal. I was particularly concerned about the part that said, "The Liberals are setting the stage for rural and northern hospital closures...." I would have hoped that the Premier could be honest with the people of Ontario, but instead we seem to hope that no one will notice. We believe the people of Ontario are smarter than that and they deserve better than what they are getting from this government.

I also want to point out what isn't in the throne speech. This speech was to have laid out the plan of where Ontario is going and what changes are going to affect Ontarians. It neglected to mention that just nine days later the government would put a new regulation into effect that would cost Ontario taxpayers over \$53 million on their hydro bill. This regulation would apply the cost of the McGuinty's government's Green Energy Act on all hydro bills, similar to the way that the debt retirement charges are collected. This new regulation appeared on the government website on March 17, but in the hour-long speech the government gave on March 8, there was no mention of this tax—just like they forgot to mention the HST in previous speeches.

The McGuinty government has demonstrated they don't have a plan. They have shown that they are out of ideas and simply don't know how to get Ontario back on track. They are simply enjoying their entitlements and rewarding their Liberal friends, all at the expense of the Ontario taxpayer.

On this side of the floor, we have a different approach. The PC caucus has been talking to the people of Ontario.

Our leader has met with the farmers, with small business people and with middle-class families to listen to them and find out what they need from their government, what we can do to help them succeed and where government needs to go or get out of their way.

I have found one thing from the throne speech: It seems to me this government is unable to multi-task. They can't seem to be looking to the future and look at today. They forgot all about the situation today in Ontario and decided they were going to plan for the future, with no inclination, no watching what they were going to do to the people of the province. That's why I'm totally opposed to this throne speech.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to congratulate my colleague in the Conservative Party; we share the responsibilities of agriculture and food critic. And I want to thank him for highlighting what is in fact happening in rural and small-town Ontario.

People in small-town and rural Ontario are not being fooled by this government. In fact, their health care services are being cut, are being reduced. This government talks about making things more efficient, but when 19-year-old patients have to be sent to a home for the aged three hours away—in this case from Kenora to Fort Frances—because the LHIN says that they're not going to open up any more of the available long-term-care beds in Kenora, then people know that their health services are being cut. When people have to wait not a month, not two months, not three months, not four months, but five months to get an appointment with their family physician; when people have to travel to towns and cities in Manitoba to get a family physician, people in small-town and rural and northern Ontario know that under this government, despite all of the boasting, the back-slapping and the propaganda that they put out, their health services are being cut.

I also want to congratulate my Conservative colleague for pointing out what is in fact happening with farmers. This government would have you believe that farmers are doing well. Well, I've met with representatives of the hog industry; they're hurting badly. Many don't know if they're going to survive. They don't see a path forward. I think some of them were hoping to see some light in the throne speech—an issue totally ignored. Beef farmers still suffering from the events of five, six, and seven years ago, hoping to see some direction in the throne speech—they were totally ignored. And across northern Ontario, where tens of thousands of good jobs have been destroyed under this government, you've got three paragraphs about the Ring of Fire, something that might—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: The throne speech, Open Ontario: Contrary to what I've heard from the other side of the House, where they're preaching fear, where they're preaching depression, where they're preaching anger, what this throne speech represents is hope, ambition and

above all, confidence. It's confidence in the people of Ontario to rise to the occasion over the next five years with the foundation, help and assistance that this government is going to provide in its Open Ontario program. The throne speech, Open Ontario, represents the very best that the people of Ontario can muster up in admittedly difficult circumstances. If we have the confidence, the ambition and the hope that we can turn things around over the next five years, this government will help the people turn this province around. It will help the people deal with the \$24-billion deficit.

I dare say that at the end of the five-year period, when we look back on this time period right now, the spring of 2010, we will see that one of the benchmarks, one of the starting points, was the throne speech, Open Ontario. The people of Ontario have so much to offer, all of the new immigrants—the skills and the ambitions that 13 million citizens of Ontario have. When we all get together and pull together we will turn this economy around, and five years from now you members—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member for Oxford for his many remarks. He's got a lot of years of experience in agriculture, being a former Minister of Agriculture. He especially zeroed in and talked about, in his remarks, the special difficulties in agriculture today.

Last week, during constituency week, I met with a number of farm groups, producers and livestock haulers, and they, to an individual, talked about the continuous regulations in Ontario. They're inundated with inspectors, making it tough for them to do business, and I'm sure the member for Oxford, in his remarks, touched on a lot of that as well.

He talked about the failure to renew the grain and oilseed funding to the farmers who are going to need that the most; also, about the many issues that producers meet every day in trying to make a living in this province. It's difficult when you go out there every day.

My father was in small business many years ago, and one adage he taught me was, "When the farmers have a good year, I always have a good year." He was a drainage contractor. At the time, he said that when the farmers do well, they always spend money. They don't put it in the bank. They either clear trees off a drain or they put in a municipal drain, they make improvements to their buildings, which all add to the economy.

As far as this Open Ontario, I think it's an open-and-shut case that this throne speech is a failure. That's the only open thing I see in this Open Ontario. It's a failure. It has been proven many times by many speakers in this House, from all parties, that that's the case, and I think as we hear more of the debate on the throne speech, that will be proven more.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from Oxford for his remarks, and I look forward to the rest of the afternoon.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened carefully to the member from Oxford. It's interesting; I don't know why, but I'm on the email list for the mayor of Woodstock, Mayor Mike. He always sends me emails talking about how Toyota has been such a big boost to that community as they work through their quality problems, which they inevitably will. He talks about the associate businesses that have been coming to Woodstock as a result of that investment in Toyota, which is a good thing for the riding of Oxford and the city of Woodstock. We all welcome that on all sides of the House.

1630

But I really have a question today. From time to time, I pick up the Waterloo Region Record. I want to quote from the March 8 edition. It said:

"Some Tories Question Stand on HST....

"However, some party members"—they're talking about the recent convention down in Ottawa—"seemed concerned that Hudak's refusal to commit to scrapping the 13% harmonized sales tax is a somewhat confusing message when he is so opposed to the HST.

"When people find out that I'm a PC, customers or friends, their first question is: Tim Hudak and the PCs say they're against this but they won't repeal it," said one delegate who didn't give his name but identified himself as a small business owner. "Can you expand a little bit more on what we can do to help in response to those questions we're getting hammered?" on every day about the HST and the inconsistent stand?

That's quoted from the great newspaper, the Waterloo Region Record. I know a number of members over there read it faithfully every day, and for some unknown reason they missed this particular article dated March 8, 2010. I encourage the official opposition to read about one of their own delegates at that Ottawa meeting.

The member from Oxford made a few points, but essentially we want to know their stand on the HST.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank my colleagues from Kenora–Rainy River, Willowdale, Sarnia–Lambton and Peterborough for their kind comments.

I want to first of all thank the member from Kenora–Rainy River for his comments about the agriculture community and the challenge it is facing and for reiterating some of the challenges with the cattle producers and the hog producers that have been going on for quite a period of time. The government has done nothing about it, the same as the member from Sarnia–Lambton mentioning the challenge that has been there for some time and nothing has been done about it. I just point that out.

I would find it more interesting if the member from Willowdale and the member from Peterborough had also said that they had heard from the agriculture community and knew about the problems and that they too were working on trying to come up with some solution to those problems. It seems that their comments are totally away from the issue at hand and they want to talk about other things.

I think the comments from the member from Peterborough were interesting, talking about getting hammered by the comments about the HST. I can understand it. I'm getting hammered with comments about the HST. I can't understand that any government, after hearing that much hammering, would still be interested in implementing the HST.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough; the member from Barrie. Order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank them for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second. It's very difficult to hear the comments from the member from Oxford, so could you please come to order?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I think this is an important issue and I want to say that I am really shocked with the number of comments that are coming out from the people almost universally opposing the HST. I cannot understand that any member of the government would want to bring that topic up, because it's not a matter of what happens to it in the future; the people I talk to today want to know why anybody—and they actually do this—in their right mind would impose the HST on the people of Ontario today. I find it strange that he would bring that up during this debate. But I do want to thank him for the comments, and I do want to say that with Toyota being in Oxford, the growth has been very good for our community, and we're very happy to have them there.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I have to think that whoever drafted this throne speech, when they decided to title it Open Ontario, was obviously not thinking about what's happening in northern Ontario, obviously not thinking about what has transpired in northern Ontario under the McGuinty government over the last five years.

The government says "Open Ontario," so I look at what is happening in northern Ontario towns: Marathon, Ontario, pulp mill closed—not open; Terrace Bay, Ontario, pulp mill shut down—not open; Longlac, particleboard mill closed, chipboard mill closed, sawmill closed; Nipigon, plywood mill closed; Red Rock, containerboard mill closed; Nakina, sawmill closed; Atikokan, sawmill closed, particleboard mill closed; Ignace, sawmill closed; Sioux Lookout, sawmill closed; Ear Falls, sawmill closed; Kenora, sawmill closed, two paper machines closed, OSB mill only operating half-time; Thunder Bay alone—Bowater paper mill, two machines closed, one pulp mill closed, Abitibi Mission paper mill closed, Cascades paper mill closed, Stone container plant closed, three sawmills closed. Dryden, the most modern paper mill complex in all of North America, with over \$5 billion of new investment in the last 16 years, closed; both paper machines closed.

I look at Sudbury. The government now somehow wants to boast about mining. What I see in Sudbury is over 3,000 miners on the picket line. I look at the copper refinery that used to be located in Sudbury—moved to Quebec. Why? Because the company simply decided it was cheaper for them to mine the copper in Sudbury, ship it to Quebec, and have it smelted and refined there. Why? The differential in hydro rates.

I look at what is about to unfold at Xstrata in Timmins, where Xstrata is going to close down the most modern metallurgical processing plant in Ontario and move the 700 direct jobs and 1,300 direct jobs to Quebec. Why? Because of the differential in industrial hydro rates. They will save literally \$50 million a year simply by moving the jobs—the processing, the smelting, the refining—to Quebec.

The government has the audacity to speak about Open Ontario, but what people see in my part of the province is nothing that is open. Things have closed, are closing, or have announced to be closed. People are not thinking about what might happen in 10 years. They're not even concerned right now about five years. They are concerned about putting food on the table today. They are concerned about being able to pay the hydro bill at the end of the month. They are concerned about being able to buy winter clothes for their kids. They are concerned about being able to buy a new pair of running shoes for their kids to go to school. I know many of them were hoping in this throne speech to see a government that had a plan to address some of these things.

You know what, Speaker? There are all of four paragraphs on northern Ontario—all of four paragraphs. Do you know what it was? A vague reference to the Ring of Fire. But do you know what was astounding about the vague reference to the Ring of Fire? As the government was here boasting about something that might possibly happen five or 10 years from now in the Ring of Fire—and it will take that long—what's actually happening and was happening at the Ring of Fire is that the First Nations who live there were blockading and protesting against what the government was boasting about. The First Nations were blockading and protesting. So even with what the government was offering up as its vision for northern Ontario, the very First Nation people who live right in the Ring of Fire were saying, "If we're not consulted, if our rights and interests are not considered, then this is not going to go ahead."

I can't say this too strongly. The government talks about what might happen 10 years from now or what might happen five years from now. This government has no clue what could happen five years from now or 10 years from now, and trying to offer that up as some sort of illusion to people just demonstrates to me how misguided this government is. The issues are now.

1640

I go to the community of Dryden, the most modern paper mill complex in all of Canada, over \$5 billion of new investment in the last 16 years: totally automated wood-handling procedures; brand new, high-speed, large

paper machines; totally automated paper cutting, paper packaging, paper shipping, paper finishing; brand new recovery boiler—\$750 million—state-of-the-art technology. That complex, six years ago, employed 1,100 people. Today it employs 300 people. The paper machines are shut down. Do you know what's really troubling? The company, Domtar, continues to harvest the forest. They continue to harvest the jack pine and the spruce. They run it through the pulp mill, turn out semi-processed pulp, ship the semi-processed pulp to their paper mills in the United States, and they now make the paper there.

This government talks about Open Ontario. What it's done in Dryden, primarily as a result of its electricity policy driving up industrial hydro rates, is simply take the best jobs, the jobs that require the highest skill, the paper machine jobs, and ship those to the United States. So we produce the wood fibre, we continue to harvest the trees, we semi-process them into pulp, and now it's shipped to the southern United States, where the skilled jobs, the high-technology jobs, the best jobs, have relocated. All you have to do is go on Domtar's website. Domtar is very plain about this. They'll show you all of the paper mills that they're operating in the southern and central United States, and all they do basically here now is take the pulp, the wood fibre, semi-process it and ship it there. All of the jobs that we were creating in Ontario, that we need to create in Ontario, have now been relocated to the United States.

But it's not just Domtar. In my home town, Fort Frances, AbitibiBowater is running the pulp mill at flank speed. If they run it any faster, the thing may fall apart. They're running the pulp mill at flank speed. They take the wood fibre from the forest, they bring it in, they semi-process it. As soon as it comes off that pulping machine, away it goes to the southern and central US, where it's used to make to make paper. The best jobs, the higher-skilled jobs, the value-added jobs—this government, through its misguided electricity policy, has essentially relocated those jobs from northern Ontario to the southern US. The same thing's happening at the Abitibi-Bowater complex in Thunder Bay. That complex used to be a kraft pulp mill, a hardwood pulp mill and three high-speed paper machines. Today two of the paper machines are completely shut down. One operates sometimes. The hardwood pulp mill shut down, but the softwood kraft pulp mill is operating at full speed. And what are they doing with the wood fibre? Shipping it to the southern United States, where the value-added jobs have been relocating. The same thing is happening literally in Kapuskasing. This government has literally taken the value-added jobs, the high-skill jobs and shipped them off to the United States.

But do you know what the greatest travesty is? My part of Ontario generates electricity at some of the lowest costs on the planet. The Kenora paper mill completely shut down. The Kenora paper mill was surrounded by hydro dams that generate electricity at less than one cent a kilowatt hour—less than one cent a kilowatt hour.

We've had paper mills shut down where you don't even have to use the transmission lines because the hydro dam is right there beside the mill. You'd think, in a world where energy is becoming expensive and in short supply, that mills and processing plants that were located right by hydro dams that generate electricity at some of the lowest cost on the planet would be booming; and in a world of any sort of good sense, they would be. Except that this government has adopted a policy which says that it doesn't matter if your plant, if your processing facility, your mill, is right beside a power dam that generates electricity at some of the lowest cost on the planet. We're still going to force you to pay costs that have nothing to do with your business and nothing do with your location. That's why these jobs are relocating.

Similarly, what's now called Vale Inco but was then Inco was very plain when they shut down the copper refinery in Sudbury and shipped the 200 jobs to Quebec. These were good jobs; these are the high-end jobs. They were just very blunt. They said, "Look, here's the industrial hydro rate in Ontario after five years of the McGuinty government. Here's the industrial hydro rate in Quebec. We'll save several millions of dollars a year if we simply mine the minerals in Ontario and ship them to Quebec for smelting and refining."

That's exactly what Xstrata is going to do in Timmins, but when it all comes out in the wash in Timmins, it will be over 2,000 good jobs because of the contractors, the suppliers and all of the other people who are associated with that metallurgical site. Where is the McGuinty government's response to these things? There is none. The throne speech is totally bereft of any plan to take this on.

In talking about the Ring of Fire, let's be clear: The Victor diamond mine, which is located near Attawapiskat, was over 15 years in development. It opened just a couple of years ago. The Ring of Fire has incredible mineral potential, but if you're going to put power lines into the Ring of Fire—this company says they want to build a rail line into the Ring of Fire—if you're going to put the other infrastructure in place, and if this government is going to properly address the First Nations issues—and I think the evidence that this government was not properly addressing the First Nations issues was evident when you have two of the First Nations that are right adjacent to the Ring of Fire blockading any further development. I think that tells you that the First Nations were not happy with what was happening. If this government is going to properly address the First Nations issues, it will be at least 15 years before you see any meaningful activity that generates jobs and economic activity coming from the Ring of Fire.

What is this government's plan in the interim? There doesn't seem to be one. Yes, I know they have a northern growth plan. It's no plan at all. It reads like somebody's shopping list that they made up on Sunday afternoon just before the store closed: "I'd better get three litres of milk and one of orange juice and some bread, and maybe some peanut butter and marmalade." It's no plan at all; no plan

whatsoever. Meanwhile, people are hurting; people are hurting badly.

But what was equally disturbing about this throne speech is that those very folks, these very people who, in many cases, have seen their incomes reduced by more than half over the last few years, people who had good jobs, good incomes, and are now struggling, are going to be hit with the largest single tax increases that they have ever experienced as a result of the HST, and yet, no discussion from this government. It's as if this government thinks that the HST didn't happen. But it is going to happen. People who have no access to public transit are going to pay a lot more money for gas and diesel. The estimate is that this government will take an additional \$830 million out of people's pockets through the HST on gasoline and diesel. For people in northern Ontario communities and rural communities, this is going to hurt badly. At a time when people have less income, the McGuinty government is going to take more from them in taxes.

It doesn't end there. Just simple things—I was at a hockey tournament on the weekend and I was talking with some parents. They said, "Our kids and the team that they're on have about 40 games and 40 practices a year, so 80 ice times a season, and the ice costs about \$100 per session." I said, "Do you know that the HST will apply to that?" They said, "No. What do you mean?" I said, "Well, if it's \$100 a session and you've got 80 ice times, that's \$8,000 for ice. Now you're going to pay 13% HST on top of that."

Mr. Michael A. Brown: That's not right.

Mr. Jeff Leal: That's not right.

Mr. Howard Hampton: That is exactly right. I invite Liberal members, if you've got something to say, to stand up and say it. Quit hiding from the HST. Thirteen per cent on \$8,000 is going to be over \$9,000. That's what the ice time will cost that hockey team. There's no way—no way—you can avoid that. That's the reality.

1650

But you know, the people I really feel for are First Nations, because First Nations, until now, have had a point-of-sale exemption from the provincial sales tax. That will be wiped out with the HST. Now, I don't know if this government cares about this, but I know that in my constituency the lowest-income people are First Nations. The people who struggle on the lowest incomes are First Nations, and now they're about to be hit with a massive tax increase. I was visiting with some of the First Nation communities over the last couple of weeks, and in many of the communities people do not have a vehicle. They may go into Dryden or Sioux Lookout once every two weeks. They take a taxi. The taxi fare in is \$50; taxi fare back is \$50. I pointed out to them it's not going to be \$100 anymore. It will be \$113 because the HST will apply to taxi fare. These are people who, if they have to go to Thunder Bay, take the bus. The bus ticket back and forth to Thunder Bay is \$100. It will now be \$113 with the HST. If folks go in to Sioux Lookout to buy a winter jacket for their kid and the winter jacket costs \$100, it's now \$113.

The government says, “Well, you know, what? You can apply to get these taxes back,” but this government should know what the rules are. The basic rule is this: You have to show that you live on the First Nation and you have to show that wherever the goods were purchased, they were shipped to the First Nation. But if you did your shopping in Sioux Lookout at the Northern store or you did your shopping in Red Lake or if you did your shopping in Nakina, Longlac, Marathon, Timmins or Hearst, you did your shopping in the store, you have no evidence that the goods were shipped to the First Nation.

We also know the reality: People in their busy lives will find it very difficult to take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and then take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and take these HST costs and save the bills and receipts and then sit down like an accountant and work it out and send it in and make the claim. That’s the reality. Some of the lowest-income people in Ontario, First Nations, are going to be hit the hardest. Do you know what First Nations find really bewildering about this? This is a government that continually boasts about its new relationship with First Nations, and First Nations leaders say, “There was no consultation with us. There was no dialogue. There was no discussion. How does this show a new relationship?” How does it show respect for First Nations when this happens?

These are issues which I hoped would have been somehow addressed in the throne speech, but sad to say, nowhere were they addressed in this throne speech. This government talks about Open Ontario. I didn’t see any openness here. I didn’t see any strategy to reopen pulp mills or paper mills or sawmills. I didn’t see any openness to a new—

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I just want to recount to members of the Legislature how I maybe spent Monday in a northern constituency. I did a clinic in Gore Bay, a small municipality on Manitoulin Island, and talked to some folks who came to see me about some difficulties and opportunities they had, and spent the rest of the morning in Mindemoya talking to Community Living Manitoulin, then over to talk to Manitoulin Family Resources, which operates the women’s shelter and a number of other social services. Later on in the afternoon I joined my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in Sudbury for something called the Little NHL, the Little Native Hockey League, which was started from some folks from Aundeck-Omni-Kanig, which was formerly known as Sucker Creek and Whitefish River First Nation, almost 40 years ago—39 years ago. They attracted to the city of Sudbury 900 young hockey players, over 110 teams, to play hockey in one of the most joyous events I think I’ve ever been at. There’s great entertainment to be found there. There were 300 people from Sarnia who came to Sudbury for this event. It was fabulous.

I want to say to the member across the floor that he, with his one-trick-pony approach to forestry, does not recognize there are 190,000 unemployed forest workers in the US—72 pulp and paper mills in the US. He doesn’t seem to live in the same world we live in in North America, and understand the complexity of the industry. We are hurting in forestry, it is true, but your one-trick pony is just too much.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I listened very carefully to the member from Kenora–Rainy River, and I particularly took a lot of interest in his comments on the forestry industry and the huge investments that have been made in some of the modern plants up there. To think that they have been downsized so dramatically over the last five years, basically under the watch of this government, is very disturbing.

I guess it goes back to our comments earlier on the throne speech. What we were looking for in the throne speech was a new vision, a new direction. We’ve got the world economy suffering and everybody using that as an excuse for the downturn in the economy. What I was looking for, particularly, and I’m not someone from northern Ontario, was a new vision for the forestry industry. Whether there are plants closed down around the world—I’m not sure about those numbers that the member from Algoma–Manitoulin just mentioned—it’s a very important part of the economy in northern Ontario and I, for one, expected a lot more out of this government when it comes to revitalizing and showing enthusiasm and making sure that the people in northern Ontario who work in the forestry industry can continue to work in the environment they love to work in.

Obviously we haven’t seen that in the throne speech, and maybe it is more complex than I’m used to seeing or am aware of. But I can tell you that there wasn’t a vision, as far as I was concerned, and I applaud the member from Kenora–Rainy River for bringing these points forward. I do think he knows his riding very well—he knows northern Ontario very well—and I, like him, would agree that the throne speech was very shallow in trying to set a vision for northern Ontario and the mining and forestry industries as well.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d also like to commend the member from Kenora–Rainy River. He’s very astute in what is going on in his area.

I must say that four years ago, I was lobbying for the US steelworkers, and some of the workers in the Kenora paper mill were with the United Steelworkers union. Even then, we lobbied in this Legislature and warned them about job losses and what AbitibiBowater was doing at the time, and it fell on deaf ears. Obviously, it still falls on deaf ears.

As far as I know, the two paper mills in Kenora are still shut. I know that the major employer in Kenora is the hospital, and I also know that guys sit on their

porches and watch logs going down the road to Manitoba to be processed outside the province because they can't afford the hydro. The guys then told me that they were paying two thirds more for hydro than Manitoba at that time, and AbitibiBowater was looking at Manitoba or Quebec to produce the lumber into product.

So here are the guys watching their forest basket trees leaving their area on trucks driving by them—their old jobs—and that place had been producing for 80 years to 90 years, if I'm not mistaken. They had been a major producer, one of the best wood baskets in all North America, and they're unemployed and shut down, and I believe 11 other communities in northern Ontario have been affected.

This government sat on their heels and did nothing for the forestry industry. When I was lobbying four years ago, we warned them. I was in Ottawa warning them; I was in this building warning them. They did nothing. This Liberal government did nothing then and is doing nothing now to bring jobs back to Ontario. If you'd start smartening up with your hydro rates and start giving tax breaks and tax rebates to the forestry industry, you might get them back. But you're not doing anything.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The member from Kenora–Rainy River commented on how the throne speech looked from his part of the world, but there are some things I would like to comment on from my part of the world, from my part of the province.

1700

For example, in my part of the province, if you go into a store to buy a kid's jacket, kids' clothing is exempt from the provincial sales tax, and it will continue to be exempt from the HST—at least the provincial part of the HST. That's one of the exemptions that we are continuing. As far as I know, the budget of Ontario and the law of Ontario apply to northern Ontario, so I would think that if you went into a store in northern Ontario to buy a children's jacket, you would find that in fact it is exempt from the provincial part of the HST, just the way it always was.

I don't know about Mr. Hampton's part of Ontario, but when I think of hockey in my neck of the woods, hockey takes place in municipal skating rinks for the most part. If a municipality—number one, most kids' leagues are exempted anyway, but if you go into a municipal hockey rink, municipalities get rebates on the GST. That means municipalities get rebates on the HST. The municipality has no business charging that whole HST to their clients, residents and constituents, because they're getting a rebate on it. So if that's what some league is telling people, that league is stretching—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank the honourable members for their contributions. I'd especially like to respond to my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin. I

noticed, when he talked about the youth hockey tournament, that he didn't mention to people there that next year the ice time is going to cost them more money because of the HST. I find this true of all the Liberal members: They don't want to talk about the impact of the HST on people who are already living on lower incomes. This is going to be really, really difficult. Parents who already sacrifice so that their kids can play hockey or soccer are going to find next year that this is going to become much more expensive.

The member talks about the one-trick pony of hydro rates. I invite the member to go talk to Bowater when they shut down the two paper machines in Thunder Bay. They were very direct. They said, "We can't afford the electricity costs." When Domtar shut down the two paper machines in Dryden, they simply said, "Look, our hydro bill has accelerated by 40% in five years. We can't afford to operate." When Abitibi shut down the Mission mill in Thunder Bay, they asked me to come and look at their cost figures and they asked the two members from Thunder Bay to come and look at their cost figures, and they said, "The only cost figure that's gone up for us, which makes it unaffordable for us to continue to operate, is our hydro bill. We simply cannot continue."

The member says that, yes, they've lost some forest jobs in Thunder Bay to the United States. Yes, they have. But you know what? Their losses are small compared to what has happened in Ontario under the McGuinty Liberals.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from Willowdale, who happens to be my parliamentary assistant as Attorney General.

I want to speak, though, as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I want to say that the Open Ontario throne speech presents a brighter future for aboriginal peoples throughout the province of Ontario—First Nations, Métis, Inuit—a brighter future than the one that might have been enjoyed in the past by many. It also speaks to a plan, to an approach to that brighter future. It's one thing to negatively comment on what's happened in the past, but it's essential—it is absolutely essential—to have a plan to redress the past, to reconcile with the past and to achieve that brighter future.

There are several parts of the throne speech which speak directly to that, which I look forward to in the coming months as the throne speech is brought to life through government initiatives and legislation. One area, of course, is the area of education. Education is absolutely the key to the future, and the particular part of education which is essential is post-secondary education and enhanced skills training. Premier McGuinty, in the Reaching Higher plan, made that a centrepiece for Ontario's future economic development almost five years ago—and it's a good thing he did, because everybody today is speaking about the necessity of post-secondary education and skills training. Thank goodness we started

on it more than five years ago by making the largest investment in 40 years in that area.

Part of that investment was specifically directed to first-generation students, those whose parents had not gone on to post-secondary education or skills training, and to aboriginal students. There is a specific part of the Reaching Higher plan that is directed to those students. We need to continue and enhance those efforts in the future, because in parts of this province, such as the north, the fastest-growing part of the workforce that will be needed for economic prosperity in the future is our First Nations, Métis and Inuit: the aboriginal peoples. We need to make sure that every aboriginal person has access to and benefits from post-secondary education and skills training. That will ensure a solid foundation for economic prosperity in the future.

We've seen some specific examples of success there. The Victor diamond mine was mentioned. The Victor diamond mine is a specific example of success. It is not simply a development by a corporation of a diamond deposit; it is a development that had at its heart the training of and obtaining of skills by First Nations, particularly along the James Bay coast. They are an essential and integral part of every part of the operation and an essential part of the success of that mine. We have also seen that in other operations in the north, such as the Musselwhite mine, where First Nations from surrounding communities have benefited specifically and directly.

The goal is to build on what we've learned, to build on the success and to ensure that people in First Nations who have historically not had access to economic opportunity, who have not had it for themselves or for their children—certainly not their children's children—now have access to that success. How do you do that? You make post-secondary education and enhanced skills training available, you specifically target it where appropriate and you combine with it economic opportunity.

I've mentioned one: the Victor diamond mine. I mentioned another one: the Musselwhite mine. We're speaking about the Ring of Fire, a huge chromite deposit—but other minerals as well—located in the middle of almost a dozen First Nations communities. There's a huge opportunity there to ensure that all peoples—aboriginal peoples, non-aboriginal peoples, northern Ontarians, southern Ontarians, everybody—benefit along with the corporation and its owners through that development. It is only through everybody benefiting, I say, that developments like that can proceed and prosper.

The comment has been made that developments like that take years. Of course they do.

Interjection: That's why you've got to have a plan.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You have a plan, and you work to the plan. So when a development proceeds, the first on the ground are those who are not only exploring but prospecting and mapping the land. Well, who better to be part of that process than those who have been of the land for centuries?

Then you talk about access to power. In the province of Ontario we have the most far-reaching energy

legislation in North America, some of the best in the world, in the Green Energy Act. It specifically incents wind, solar, run-of-the-river projects, specifically incents projects by aboriginal peoples. So we're seeing applications throughout the province of Ontario by aboriginal peoples, First Nations. You can see those opportunities in the north. They're opportunities not simply to have wind and solar projects on First Nations lands; they're opportunities also for First Nations peoples, for Métis and others to be part of the running of the projects, the building of the projects, the servicing of the projects, and to be constructing the components for the projects. It is an enormously exciting opportunity. This is happening and beginning to happen all around Ontario, not five years from now, not 10 years from now—now.

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I was on Six Nations just about six weeks ago with my colleague Brad Duguid, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, when we witnessed the signing between Six Nations and Samsung of an accord that sprang directly from the Ontario government-Samsung relationship. It sprang directly from the Green Energy Act, it sprang directly from the foresight of the Premier and this government in ensuring that we become the home of green energy in the future. That foresight is giving rise already to economic opportunities for peoples who have not traditionally enjoyed the prosperity of Ontario. And education will be at the heart of realizing those opportunities. It is an enormously exciting prospect, not simply, as I say, in the north, but Six Nations, of course, in the south, and throughout the province of Ontario.

The other part of the throne speech which is potentially very exciting for First Nations, for aboriginal peoples throughout Ontario, is the part that concentrates on water. We are the home to more fresh water in the province than anywhere else in the world. Water is a huge natural resource. Protecting it, ensuring that it's clean, in the face of continuous development, is absolutely crucial. We are the leaders in Ontario, with some of the best water purification companies in the world, and I would only mention two: Trojan Technologies and Purifics, both of which happen to be resident in the great and glorious London, Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Good companies.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Great companies that do business all over the world. Clean water technology is where it will be at for many in this world in the years to come; clean water in all of Ontario is essential; clean water in the north is essential.

Every isolated First Nations community—every community—is going to have its water system. Who can run that water system? Who should be participating in running that water system? Who needs training? We know the federal government is withdrawing their support for that activity, but First Nations still need to have access to clean water and have the people able and available to service it, repair it, develop it. Those are great opportunities for the future. As I say, as Trojan and Purifics have done, let's build on the knowledge that we

have, and we're going to do that through the proposed Water Opportunities Act. What a great proposed piece of legislation—enormously exciting, as I say, for First Nations, Métis and Inuit throughout the province of Ontario, and great for the companies that are involved in this technology at the moment, two of which happen to be, as I say, resident in a place not far from here known as London, Ontario.

This throne speech speaks to a brighter future for all Ontarians and a brighter future for our First Nations, a brighter future for our Métis, a brighter future for our Inuit. We will be taking advantage of a continuously strengthened relationship between the government of Ontario and aboriginal peoples. I'm very much looking forward to the future of Ontario as outlined and as will be achieved under the Open Ontario plan.

I'll turn it to my colleague.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm happy to follow my colleague the Attorney General in my remarks on the speech from the throne.

As I said earlier in one of my two-minuters, Open Ontario is all about the future. Ontario, like every other major economy in the world, is at a crucial crossroads. The nature of political economies is changing. We are at a crossroads. We are at a fork in the road, and, like most times when you come to a fork in the road, there are a couple of things you can do. You can come to the fork in the road and be uncertain or nervous about which way to go and you can retreat, you can go back, or you can choose one of the forks in the road. In Ontario's economy, we cannot go back to the old economy. The old economy is behind us. So the question is: Where do we go? Which fork in the road do we take?

Open Ontario is a choice; it's a roadmap of the fork in the road that we are going to take. In the Open Ontario plan, we've laid out a plan that builds on, that takes advantage of, that recognizes the ambitions of 13 million Ontarians, that takes advantage of and builds on the confidence of 13 million Ontarians and takes advantage of and builds on the capabilities and the capacity of 13 million Ontarians.

People from all around the world come to Canada, and they particularly come to Ontario. Why do people come to Ontario? Why are Toronto and Ontario such a magnet for ambitious, educated immigrants? It's because we have a structure here, we have a political economy here, that they know they can bring their skills to and that they can build on. The Open Ontario plan is going to help all of those newcomers to Ontario. It's going to help all of the people who are already here. It's going to protect our seniors. It is going to take us down a fork in the road. It's going to take us down a fork in the road to recovery.

Now, I've sat here and I've listened to the remarks from the official opposition and from the third party. Of course, this being politics, what we've heard from the other side is negativism, negative critiques, harping, crankiness, but no solutions, no ideas about how to go forward, which fork in the road to take. What they want to do, having come to the fork in road, that fork being the

nature of Ontario's changing economy—they have no plan. They have no plan. Their plan, their reaction, is to retreat, to go back, but that is not what we can do in Ontario.

What do other people outside of this chamber think about the Open Ontario throne speech? What's the public reaction to it? That's critical; that's very, very important. In this chamber we hear all of the criticism, the harping and the haranguing from the opposition parties. I'd rather place real value in what I'm hearing from third parties, from the outside.

For instance, I'm quoting from the Globe and Mail editorial of March 9, 2010, referring to the throne speech: "... clear signs that the government is thinking creatively about economic growth. When dollars are scarce and international competition is fierce, sometimes the best innovation is an innovation in thinking." That's what Open Ontario is all about.

March 9, 2010, the Toronto Star editorial: "At a time of severe economic upheaval and widespread personal hardship, one thing that can be said safely about Monday's throne speech is this: the provincial government gets it...."

"This throne speech sketches out a prudent plan for an increasingly knowledge-based economy for the province."

The Ottawa Citizen, March 9, 2010: The McGuinty government is "pointing in the right direction."

The CEO of the Belleville chamber of commerce, quoted in the Belleville Intelligencer: "The Open Ontario plan acknowledges ... the work already under way including tax reform and efforts to reduce red tape, both of which the chamber"—that is, the chamber of commerce—"has been looking for for years."

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Chartered accountants is one of the professions in Ontario that has the most critical and valued insights into the nature of our economy, and how to build it and how to grow it and how to get it off in the right direction. In that regard, Mr. Rod Barr, the president and CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, said, "We're pleased to see that the throne speech maps out this direction—especially in financial services where we are already significant players—and in green technologies, new resource opportunities and attracting the best foreign students. These will also be important in offsetting losses sustained in other areas during the recession." Again, it's a plan to go forward.

The executive director of Peterborough Green-Up, quoted in the Peterborough Examiner on March 9: "It's nice to see longer-term planning on the province's part." Again, the plan: Open Ontario. "We're happy to see the province interested in looking at, and investing in, green jobs." Again, it's about a plan to go forward. But it doesn't stop there.

Anne Sado, who's the chair of the committee of presidents of all of the Ontario community colleges and also the president of George Brown College here in Toronto, referring to throne speech, said, "This is an import-

ant commitment to people's futures and to producing a stronger workforce in this new knowledge economy," and "Greater numbers of people will get the higher education and training they need to achieve success."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce—now, there is an organization of, again, business persons, businessmen and businesswomen, keenly interested in how our economy unfolds. What do they say? "Today's speech from the throne, with its focus on creating the right environment in Ontario for investment, job creation and skills development, sets the right tone for Ontario as Ontario prepares for the end of the global recession." Again, they're supporting the plan; they're acknowledging the strengths and merits of Open Ontario, the plan to move forward. We are not stuck at the fork in the road. We are not going to retreat. We are going to take a fork in the road, and Open Ontario represents that fork in the road.

I do have a very interesting endorsement here which I must share, especially with the official opposition, in regard to the throne speech. Chris Hodgson, president of the Ontario Mining Association and a former member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, and a former Minister of Northern Development and Mines—what did he say in the *Toronto Sun* on March 10, 2010? He said, referring to the throne speech—and I want to be very careful with the quote: "It's good news for our members that the government has recognized the importance of mining," and, "Also they [Ontario government] realize it can be done in an environmentally sustainable fashion." That's from Chris Hodgson, a former Mike Harris-Ernie Eves cabinet minister.

Now you see that a former distinguished member of the official opposition's caucus is out there in the real world, away from the official opposition's caucus headquarters down the hall here. He has got to look at the challenges that Ontario faces in an objective, down-to-earth, will-it-work, is-it-good-for-the-economy, is-it-good-for-the-jobs mindset. And when he applies that objective mindset, now that he's outside this place, he recognizes the value of the themes set out in the throne speech. I want to particularly thank him for recognizing that.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I listened with some interest to the comments by the Attorney General and Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, as well as the member for Willowdale, who split their time in the discussion of the throne speech that we've had this afternoon. I listened as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs indicated that he was going to focus his remarks on that particular responsibility. At the start of his remarks he specifically indicated that that was going to be the focus of his speech. I didn't hear him mention the word "Caledonia," and I suppose that the minister would hope that no one would want to bring up that subject because it's surely one of this government's greatest failures since their election in 2003.

Our MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, has, over the past four years of the illegal occupation of

certain lands known as the Douglas Creek Estates, time and time again called attention to the problems associated with the occupation in his riding, the fear, the intimidation, the lawlessness at times, the economic loss that community has experienced as a result of what's happened and the despair and loss of hope in that community that anything is going to be done to help because of this government's policy, quite frankly, which at best has been ineffective and at worst is an example of political hubris.

I would suggest and implore the minister in his two-minute reply, the opportunity that he has forthcoming, to apologize to the people of Caledonia for the ineffective policy of this government and explain what, if anything, they are going to do as a government to respond to that problem in the coming weeks because certainly that is a huge issue for the province of Ontario, and I think that the Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has an obligation to address it in his response.

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

Mr. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to try to take one minute on each of two topics. One, I represent a constituency that is home to more First Nations and Métis organizations than probably just about any other in Canada. In my previous political career I received an eagle feather, which was one of the only honours I ever accepted from First Nations elders, because of that.

A lot of things that we're doing right now are not specifically aboriginal programs per se, but things like day-long learning and Second Career reflect the reality that in the city of Toronto, 25% of people who are homeless are First Nations and Métis people, and while we may want to point fingers—and this is not to blame governments past. It's been one of the great Canadian failings that we have not embraced, engaged in, ever. I don't think we've had a government ever that's done the kinds of things that are necessary to correct the course of that. You just to have look at the conditions in our communities to see that.

I think the suite of programs that were laid out in the throne speech don't single aboriginal people out, but they deal with the fact that the rapid urbanization of First Nations and Métis people is being addressed aggressively in housing programs. You just have to go to Regent Park and see a \$1-billion buildout of private and public money in affordable housing and how that reflects upon meeting the housing needs of First Nations people.

The second thing I want to talk a little bit about—I talked earlier about the exchange that I think the minister touched on. It's the challenge of this economy. My friend from Hamilton and I have been chatting. I just went through the Internet and looked at 2009. Twenty-five—and I stopped there—companies, Hooper Welding, AquaCut Foam, Bar Hydraulics, Burlington Automation, SP Data, Hotel Hamilton, Factor (e), Tim Horton Manufacturing, VitaSound, INO, panamnursery, CANMET—I could go on and on. These are all companies that have expanded or opened their doors. In Hamilton, there have

been about 40,000 new jobs created, and 25,000 lost in the industrial sector, and 69% of companies are planning expansions in next three years—

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member for his stats, and I'm not sure—I live there and a lot of my friends are out of work, former tradespeople who can't find work. Yes, maybe some of those companies have opened up their doors, but I'm sure, as he pointed out to me in our discussion, that most of those are 25 people or less. There may be the odd or more—there may be some with more. But, with all due respect, when you get major manufacturers closing in the Hamilton area, like Westinghouse, Camco—they employed hundreds and hundreds of people. They're all good-paying jobs.

Yes, there may have been some jobs created in Hamilton. I wouldn't want to argue, but I would tend to believe that a lot of them are in the service industry, too, of those 40,000. So they may have created maybe 5,000 jobs that are \$50,000 or \$60,000 or more, but I would say the majority of those jobs are not well-paying jobs. We have more Tim Hortons in Hamilton per capita than anywhere else in Ontario, I believe. So there are a lot of jobs in those types of minimum wage situations. That doesn't buy houses, that doesn't buy cars, that doesn't buy major appliances, and it certainly doesn't allow you to have a decent pension or leave money to buy RSPs. Yes, his stats are probably correct, but they fall far short of the amount of people who have lost their jobs in that area in the last 20 years.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: The Attorney General talked about something that I think is very important for us as Ontarians. He talked about clean water. All over the world, one of the problems that nations everywhere will face is going to be access to water. To just give you an example from a developed nation, the mighty Colorado River that flows through the western United States is completely, totally consumed by the time it reaches the gulf of Baja. There is simply nothing left of it by the time it's used to irrigate soil and support agriculture in California. That's similar just about everywhere.

One technology that's going to be absolutely critical in the first half of the 21st century is going to be water technology, and nowhere in the world is it done better than here in Ontario. One of the directions laid out in the Open Ontario policy is that this is already the home of the leaders of that type of technology—how to purify water, how to ensure that water stays clean—and that's going to be one of the priorities for Ontario's government. We are going to lead the world in doing something that the world has to have done.

All over the world, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in South America, people have to learn how to ensure that they don't lose the clean water that they have, that their water doesn't erode the soil that they have and that they

know how to clean up water that may be polluted or contaminated. They look to Canada as one place where we've already got the technology, the know-how, the organization and the means of delivering it. This is going to be one of the central focuses of Open Ontario: to take a market that the rest of the world is going to desperately need in the next 40 years and capitalize on the lead that we already have. That's a good reason to get behind this speech from the throne.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Attorney General and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just briefly, to the members for Wellington–Halton Hills, Toronto Centre, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Mississauga–Streetsville, I want to thank them for their comments and contributions.

I want to pick up on something that my colleague from Toronto Centre mentioned, which is the urban aboriginal population. It's enormously important by many counts. There are more aboriginal peoples living in cities than there are on the First Nations. Many of the challenges that my friend spoke of quite eloquently are being addressed now through these very far-reaching programs such as all-day learning right through the continuum of enhanced post-secondary education and skills training program, and I mentioned the First Generation programs before. But there is a lot more to do.

By saying there's a lot more to do, we recognize the enormous potential that all people have to make a positive contribution not only to their own futures but to the future of the province of Ontario. We need to ensure that every Ontarian is able to make that contribution to the fullest extent of their abilities in order to achieve our potential as a province. That's why the Reaching Higher plan, our educational approaches, our poverty reduction strategy, among other initiatives, all come together to make sure that those who are in need are supported, those who can achieve are able to achieve, and everybody is able to reach their full potential.

I'm very excited, as I said, by the Open Ontario plan for the future because it is a future that's brighter for all, a future that's brighter for aboriginal people in the province—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate? The member from Cambridge.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Oh, sorry; Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, I am the member from Oshawa. I was wondering if somebody else jumped up ahead of me.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on the throne speech. I'm going to stick to the contents of the speech and try to do what we can.

On page 1, it says, "First: It plans to invest over \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy retrofits for our schools." The first thing that comes back is, where do the funds come from? Thirty-two billion

dollars is a substantial amount of funds. I know, from the time that I had the opportunity to spend in the Ministry of Transportation, certainly a lot of sectors are very concerned with where the funding will come from long-term for the reconstruction of roads in order to keep those builders going in the province of Ontario. The populace at large is very concerned with where the additional funds are going to come from to deal with these issues.

Then it says, "Second: Your government is supporting Ontarians in their choice to go back to school so they can get a good job—not just any job." The concern there is that the number of job losses, particularly coming from Oshawa, not Cambridge, in our communities is rather substantial. They were good-paying jobs that individuals did very well with; they had good pensions. There's a lot of concern there now. These individuals are wondering, "Do we need to go back to school? Because there isn't a job out there. Are those some of the reasons that we as individuals need to go back to be retrained? And once we are retrained, where do we get jobs?"

The throne speech mentions a culinary course, and I certainly wonder, as do a lot of individuals, how you can go from the auto parts sector to a culinary course and find that compatible or comparable. Maybe that particular individual, in this case, it worked out for, but a lot of the individuals who have 20-odd years working on the line at General Motors in Oshawa and other car plants are not saying that's something that they find a very easy task.

How do we move forward in other sectors? Ontario used to have a competitive advantage when first dealing with workers' compensation; then we had a competitive advantage throughout North America that dealt with the health care system. Now those competitive advantages have been negotiated away in other jurisdictions and Ontario no longer leads in those areas. We have to find ways to lead once again, and I'm not so sure that this throne speech will be that path to a strong Ontario that once again needs to be out there. Certainly the individuals are wondering, when they're going back to school, where the jobs are going to be at the end of that school rainbow.

The throne speech said, "We will continue to build the world's cars—but they will be the more efficient cars the world needs." The throne speech is designed—what takes place is that various cabinet sectors will input into the speech. What I'm reading here is that the government is going to decide what vehicles will be made available by the manufacturers, as opposed to the consumer. See, it's the consumer who dictates what will take place and how it will take place and what they want to purchase. That's what dictates how they're going to move forward. The Camaro in Oshawa is doing extremely well. The quality of work there is second to none in the world and the individuals are producing a great-quality car. The demand is out there; they're adding additional lines and more production to make sure. But when you read that "they will be the more efficient cars the world needs," to me that says, "Wait a second. Is one of the ministries stepping in and saying, 'Now, we're going to set your

standard for you and we will decide how that will take place'?" You only need to talk to those individuals within those various sectors and find out there is some concern when they see those sorts of aspects coming forward in a throne speech.

The training upgrades that are mentioned in the very next paragraph, that talks about education—we've heard it on a regular basis: the education Premier. There's constantly a focus on an educational component. Nobody has concerns with moving forward with a stronger education and a knowledge base that is beneficial in the long run. However, when these training upgrades take place, how is it going to unfold? Currently, part of the problem is, for example, in the apprenticeship program, when an individual takes your courses, they're normally located at distances away. So they're out of work, they're not being paid and time lags take place when they're dealing with those training upgrades that are so necessary.

"A plan for our economy," page 4: "The Open Ontario plan begins with creating a climate where business can thrive, create jobs and build innovative new products to sell to the world." You have to create an environment and you have to lead by example. We can't constantly listen to the fact that, "Don't you realize there's a world recession on?" The last recession that was around—quite frankly, a friend of mine, Paul Mackie, was with the governor of Michigan, and he stated to us, "Listen, I have to tell you. I met the governor of Michigan." He's a race car driver and he was at a race with the governor. The governor said, "I have to tell you, Ontario used to be our number one supplier for jobs." But the policies that came forward to attract businesses into the province through the previous government in 1995 were their biggest concern, because they felt they were going to lose a lot of jobs that were going to Michigan and other states simply because of the taxation and the policies that were established. You need to work and lead by example. Set policies that attract businesses.

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In business, there's essentially a push and a pull strategy: You either try to push the product out of a manufacturing location by providing incentives to produce or you pull it out. What I'm seeing here is a push strategy: You push it out the door by making decisions or by making things—that there will be more efficient cars the world needs. What that says to me is that they're going to decide which vehicles are going to be pushed out that door, as opposed to a pull strategy where you create an environment to attract individuals to pull the product out through the acquisition of goods. It's a simple, basic business premise that has been very effective, and there are two different sides on how it's taking place.

What I see here is the current government deciding, "We will support this industry and push it out by supporting them," as opposed to allowing the populace at large to make the decision. Quite frankly, the people of the province of Ontario are the best ones to decide what should move forward and how it should take place.

Also, it says income tax for Ontario was cut on January 1. Well, I look at that and I say, is that not just robbing Peter to pay Paul? You brought in the health care tax in the past, as well as the HST. When we talk about the HST—I know it was mentioned earlier on by one of the members regarding ice fees and how municipalities get a rebate. Well, they used to receive a 100% rebate. The rebate after the HST moves forward is not going to be 100%, and the municipality will have to make decisions as to where it's going to give breaks and not give breaks. I know that in my own family we're looking at possibly \$50 a month in increased costs just to play hockey in the city of Oshawa. That's what it'll amount to. If you speak to your own cabinet ministers, you'll find that some of them will actually pay a considerable amount more than that once the HST takes place.

One of the questions that I would like answered, if at all possible—and I'm not sure there will be an individual. We talked about the harmonized sales tax on page 5. The question is about the zero-rated—

Mr. Michael A. Brown: You paid \$600 a month for ice time?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: It's \$500 a month.

Interjection.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Well, no. We pay \$500 a month for ice fees for the boys. They play rep hockey, and that's what it amounts to. Probably, when you factor it in, they'll go up about \$25 a month. The fee for hockey is \$250 a month per child. When you look around, some communities are even more expensive. I know members of your own caucus actually have expressed the fact that they pay a considerable amount more than that, and they write the cheque at one particular time, during the tryouts, in order to do that.

The zero-rated taxation rates for things like basic groceries: For those who haven't seen it, the CGAs have a great booklet on the HST and its implementation within our community. It lists what's taxed and non-taxable. It's the zero-rated question, where basic groceries are zero-rated. I'm just wondering: Is that fixed, or does that mean that at a later date the zero rating can be changed? I haven't gotten a straight answer from anybody on that, and if there's somebody in the House who can clarify for me, that would be greatly appreciated.

Also on page 5, it talked about the Green Energy Act. If you go down a little bit farther: "Your government will soon welcome hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed-in tariff program...." That's great and it's nice to see, because you need an initiation of new technologies to come forward. They have to start somewhere, with wind power and solar power, but there are a number of other energy potentials out in the province that need to be looked at.

One of the questions, of course, is the time-of-day metering with the smart meters that is going to take place and the cost, particularly to seniors. As mentioned, the throne speech doesn't address seniors, the impact on them or their quality of life. What's going to take place, for example, on time-of-day metering? For those sug-

gesting that people stay up past 11 o'clock to do their laundry and dishes etc., if they haven't got a timer on some of their appliances it makes it very difficult for those individuals who aren't at work during the peak hours for electricity. They're at home. They're in their residence and that's when they use electricity, at those times. How is this going to impact seniors? There's a large concern there and I completely agree with that.

If you turn to page 6 it says, "From water conservation to nanotechnology, Ontario companies are leading the way...." The one minister spoke about the two companies in the individual's riding and how they're moving forward. However, there's a company in Richmond Hill called BluePlanet. They recently had to list on the German stock exchange. There just wasn't any support here to make it happen for them. What it effectively is, if you take this—if I may use the glass of water to take a drink—if you put it through this process, the nanotechnology by BluePlanet, it uses nano bubbles. If you put this water through there, it would completely fill the glass up again. What it does is it provides an oxidizing base for plants. It has been very effective in increasing the lifetime in fish ponds and such because it puts oxygen back into the environment. It's an Ontario company, but it's been trying and trying to get some support, and having a considerable amount of difficulty.

So there are some companies out there that are leading the way in technologies, but they need to be reached out to. To be quite frank, I was quite concerned when I heard about the minister mentioning the two companies in his riding, whereas this company had to go to Germany in order to gain the support necessary to advance its product here in the province of Ontario.

The other aspect was how on page 7 the minister spoke about the Victor mine. In 2008, northern Ontario became home to the first diamond mine. The problem with that was, I was here when De Beers had their meet-the-miner day here at Queen's Park. Each year, when they come, a different company highlights its product. It just happened to be that De Beers was highlighting its product right here in the legislative dining room downstairs. It was amazing to hear the president of De Beers specifically state that when the taxation rate changed, he couldn't believe it took place, and he equated it to something that would take place in a Third World country. He received calls from the international president saying, "What is going on in the province of Ontario?"

Many probably don't know, but when I was the PA for northern development and mines, I announced the diamond mine potential locations for the province of Ontario. It's quite a spectacular event, if you didn't know what takes place. Virtually every helicopter from Quebec to Saskatchewan had been booked because the prospectors were waiting for these sites to be listed, and then the helicopters were all waiting at the airport. They get on the helicopters to do their claim staking and stake out these areas for potential development. My understanding is that there are two other sites in the province of Ontario

that have diamond mine potential. However, these companies are not going to invest in the province at this particular time.

There were some substantial changes back in the early 1990s in British Columbia. These companies look worldwide. They looked at these places to invest, and while they were in British Columbia, they said that the provincial government was not supportive of what was taking place in the mining sector, and they invested in the province of Ontario at that time. When you get changes in the taxation rate such as took place with the Victor diamond mine after they had invested \$900 million in that mine—and, according to them, they had about \$100 million that was directed to support the First Nations communities in that area, and they were reluctant to move forward. Yes, we know about the potential for the chromium mine, I believe it is, for the chromium that's used in stainless steel, but there are a lot of other potentials in here where people are questioning, "Do we want to get involved in that aspect?" I'm not sure that the certainty is there.

Most members here probably wouldn't know that I've held a prospecting licence since the 1980s. I enjoy my time in the bush, and you may as well carry a prospecting licence, because you never know what you're going to find when you're out there.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You struck gold in Oshawa, Jerry.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Oh, yeah.

The other aspect was from the same thing on page 7. I think some of the members in the House would recall, "Your government is fully committed to working with northerners, aboriginal communities and mining partners to fully realize the Ring of Fire's potential." During the public hearings on this, we were in Sioux Lookout, a great community in northwestern Ontario. The First Nation communities there said something that I had never heard before, and I was quite surprised. They said, on the legislation that was coming forward at that time, the Far North Act, that they were willing to go to war over it. That doesn't show a lot of support by that community. When they are specifically stating, for the first time in my privilege and honour to serve in this Legislature, that they are willing to go to war over an issue, that does not say it's building an environment that will allow those communities to move forward and to develop in the province of Ontario.

On page 8, it talked about the implementation of accessibility by 2025, but some of the things that are happening in my community, which I'm hearing from on a regular basis, are that because of the changes there, they are asking for support. How do they move forward when municipalities don't have the funds to make the changes as well? Madam Speaker, I have spoken to individuals in your own caucus who have expressed the same thing. Locally, as a result of this, they feel that they are going to have to close down two rink pads for sure, possibly three, along with swimming pools. I'm also hearing from the local parks association. The small parks association is saying that they're going to have to close

their clubhouses because they don't have the support to move forward with the accessibility legislation that has come in. They have no problem with trying to do it, but it's just a small group that used to raise funds at bingos and those other halls that are so difficult now.

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A lot of those organizations were very dependent on those bingo halls, but if you look at the numbers and the amount of halls that were out there supporting them, they've substantially dropped. I know a lot of those organizations were very dependent on those funds and are now hurting and looking for support elsewhere.

The other thing—when you get to page 9, it talked about how it has reduced class sizes. Of course, you've reduced class sizes, and we said what was going to happen—exactly what has taken place in my own kids' schools. They're in split classes now. There may be only 20 in a class, but there are 40 kids with one teacher in the same classroom, where they didn't have split classrooms before.

For every action there's an equal and opposite reaction, and you have to look at all the pros and cons and how things are going to unfold. They're talking about how the number of students who are graduating has increased; however, from what I understand, if you lower the bar or the ability or the grade level—my next-door neighbour is a retired principal from the local high school and she says that when she was there, you only had a certain number of Ontario scholars. Now, lo and behold, because the bar has changed—and instead of having the standard up here, it's now down here—there are 10 times as many individuals who are graduating as Ontario scholars.

Is it the reason, the encouragement to move forward in college and university because of the quality of education when they're graduating? Yes, there may be more individuals or the numbers may show that, but if the level of ability of those graduating from the schools is lower, then they need to stay in school longer in order to achieve those levels. I don't know; these are some of the things that people ask.

Also, you talk about on page 9, starting with a full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds that will begin across the province—there are a number of organizations that have approached me in that particular area. One of them was the Y; their program was under scrutiny now and they felt that the individuals in there were about to lose their jobs. As well, a number of—quite frankly, it was the churches. The churches that run the young day-cares in the schools are now going to be substantially impacted, and they felt that their preschool programs that were run by all the churches in the community—that had, according to them, lower student-to-teacher or student-to-individual ratios—are now going to be eliminated, and they have some strong concerns.

We all have our own different perspectives. They believe that giving the individuals or the young kids the opportunity to deal with some faith aspect before they go into a public school is now going to be eliminated

because of the fact that the individuals will automatically gravitate to the all-day education.

One of the other areas, and I brought it up before, is on page 10, where it talked about the skilled trades individuals. We need to ensure there that the individuals doing the training also work with the individuals doing the testing. My understanding from automotive mechanics—I'll be quite frank; Paul Beatty has brought it up and would love to discuss it—is that the individual who is doing the training of the courses is not coordinating with the individuals doing the testing, so many times they're not trained in the area they're being tested on.

The difficulty with that is that individuals are taking the test seven or eight times in order to achieve something, when they may never have the ability to work on a transmission, for example, in the case of an automotive mechanic, or have the ability to resource the questions as they come in, because when they're working in the field they will check on the Net or they'll check the manuals etc, to make sure that they're doing it in a proper fashion.

These are some of the concerns. There are many more. I know that the people of the province of Ontario are concerned. We're in difficult times; we all need to work together to make sure that we move forward. As opposition, our position needs to come forward to say that these are the areas we have concerns with. Let's hear some answers.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to thank the member for his remarks. He presented a very reasonable critique of the throne speech, and I think it's very important that what he didn't talk about should also be mentioned, to place his remarks in their correct context. There's something that the throne speech has focused on, which is Ontario's opportunity in places like China and India.

Let's look at China and India by comparison with Ontario. China outnumbers us 100:1; India outnumbers us 85:1. This year China is projecting 10% growth; this year India is projecting 7.6% growth. Most economists expect that these two nations are going to lead the world recovery out of this particular recession.

What Ontario has proposed in this throne speech is that Ontario take a leading role in the education of foreign students. China is the biggest source of foreign students to Canada—already 42,000 out of Canada's annual 178,000. We should be far more aggressive in this. By educating a foreign student in Canada, in Ontario, what we've got is somebody who knows how business works here, who knows how our society works here, who is presumably going to go back to his or her country of origin, and what more natural thing than to go back, develop your contacts in your industries in India and China and then say, "The place that we should be doing business more than any other is Ontario. I know Ontario. I've been educated in Ontario." When one has toured Asia—and I haven't done a lot, but I've done a little bit—you encounter so many expats from just about every nation on earth, but especially Canada, and a lot of

people who work over there, who were educated here, find it very easy to come back and do the thing that we need them to do much more of, which is to do business right here in Ontario.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Exporting our spaces for education to international students was not something our Ontario students were eager to hear, some of whom are competing right now for spots in university. They would have hoped to have heard that this government was considering how to get more Ontario students into university. This strategy to turn education into an export industry is really, I think, born out of desperation. It seems to be an idea that revenue is better policy, regardless of where you get it and how you get it, than to train our own students here in Ontario. I don't know. Where's the plan? Has an analysis been done on this? We hear nothing except an idea—an idea born from where? Again, desperation.

My colleagues over there are laughing because they know not of a plan, either. You know not of a plan; you only know of an idea. Once that idea is planted, everybody follows along and hopes that something—something—will emerge from it.

This province had a five-year plan when I first came to the Legislature three years ago. There was huge talk about a five-year plan. Whenever the opposition parties asked about the detail of the five-year plan, there never was a detail of a five-year plan. Now we have more plans. The other plan is long forgotten because it failed. Nothing ever happened as a result of the first plan, and now we're branching out. We're going to import international students. We're going to have policies that mean nothing to us here in Ontario but make us look good on the world stage. I think it's quite pathetic.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to compliment the member from Oshawa for his insight on some important issues that he brought forward, and I hope he gets some answers at committee.

One of the biggest things that the McGuinty government brought forward in this session was the fact that they were going to lower class sizes. Well, with all-day kindergarten, our numbers tell us that the classes are going to go from 20 to 26 students. Speaking from a personal perspective, my wife is a retired kindergarten teacher, and she tells me that they have trouble getting EAs for the special-needs kids and stuff in the classes as is. The city of Toronto, the board in Toronto, is laying off EAs and other communities are laying off EAs, so their dream of a smaller class is not happening and probably won't happen, and it will be less productive for the kids with no EAs to help the teacher out.

The member from Oshawa also touched on the skilled trades. It's great to be training people and great to get them back to school and into the Second Career program that they like to tout around here. That's fine, but if you

don't have a job to go to, it's not much use. When you have trained to be a welder or trained to be something else and you end up working at Tim Hortons, it doesn't quite cut it.

What's their plan for manufacturing? In Hamilton, it's non-existent. They're talking about 600,000 jobs. I don't know where, but I certainly don't see them.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to be here as the day wraps up. I was in committee most of the afternoon and managed to get in here for the last five minutes of the speech of the member from Oshawa. I'm not sure how long he spoke today, but I heard just the last little bit. I must say I hope that his comments today were a little bit more reflective and accurate, in terms of what he was portraying, than an article I had the opportunity to recently read in a sporting magazine in Thunder Bay that the member opposite from Oshawa submitted. It contained more inaccuracies, I must say, than I thought it was possible to include in one article, but we'll have an opportunity to speak about that.

When I was in committee, I managed to step out a little while ago and also hear the member from Kenora-Rainy River going on his same rant. Thank goodness our member from Manitoulin had an opportunity to respond to him, as well.

I know today is about the throne speech, and I know that the members in the opposition are having a difficult time finding anything positive to say about it. That's okay. I know that people who follow the goings-on in the Legislature on the parliamentary channel understand and expect that the members of the opposition will do exactly that: They will oppose. But I have to tell you, there is a point at which the credibility of the opposition begins to be called into question. Speaking on the HST, which many of them do spend much of their time speaking on, when you look at it federally and you look at it provincially, almost everybody now, politically, is supporting this. The federal Conservatives support it. The provincial Conservatives, I would suggest, are having a hard time holding on to their credibility in terms of their opposition on the HST. What we're left with is, federally and provincially, the NDP are the people opposing it.

The throne speech laid out quite clearly where we have been when we came out of the recession—

investments in career training and infrastructure—and on a go-forward basis, where we see ourselves going. We on this side of the Legislature are excited about it. We're going to continue to support the priorities we have in the past: health care, education and job creation.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the comments from the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan—I'm not sure which article he's referring to, but I'm sure I'll hear about it—and the members from Hamilton East, Burlington, Mississauga-Streetsville etc.

I want to comment on the Mississauga-Streetsville member's comments when he spoke about bringing in 20,000 students from places like China and India. Let me put it this way. When Maureen Kempston Darkes was the president of General Motors, she was complaining that there was all this competition out there for the parts industries and that General Motors could no longer compete. I looked at her and said, "Well, aren't you to blame for that?" She said, "What do you mean by that?" I said, "Look, you've outsourced"—and I started to list all the companies that are doing the production for these goods. I said, "You've outsourced all that. These individuals have companies to deal with as well. They go to the cheapest place." At that time they were going to China and to Mexico, and they were taking the technology with them to produce these goods in those jurisdictions. I said, "Guess what? When you don't come back with a tender or a bill or they can no longer sell to you, they still have to be in business. So now they're competing with you after you've outsourced the technology that you gave them."

What's going to happen when we bring these individuals in to train them how to make BlackBerrys and everything else that's made in Ontario? Guess what? We'll be exporting that expertise that'll be produced in other countries at lower rates, and they'll be sold in Canada and in Ontario. That's going to be a problem.

We need to plan. We need to look at the future, and we need to work together on this.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being after 6 o'clock, I now declare that this House stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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