



ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 March 2010

Mercredi 24 mars 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 March 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 mars 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCOUNTING PROFESSIONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010

SUR LES PROFESSIONS COMPTABLES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 23, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 158, An Act to repeal and replace the statutes governing The Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario, the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario and The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario / *Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à abroger et à remplacer les lois régissant l'Association des comptables généraux accrédités de l'Ontario, les Comptables en management accrédités de l'Ontario et l'Institut des comptables agréés de l'Ontario.*

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: This isn't the most enviable spot in the speaking lineup; you know that, don't you? At 9 a.m., folks are not exactly tuned in in large numbers. I prefer the afternoon slot, but this is the luck of the draw.

As a matter of fact, I'm being accommodated by the government House leader and other members, because the government House leader, to her great delight—this is the lead on behalf of the New Democrats that I'm doing here—knows that I have a time constraint imposed upon me, because there's a House leaders' meeting at 9:45. So this is one of those, albeit rare, occasions where I'm not going to be able to utilize my full 60 minutes.

First, I want to apologize to the parliamentary assistant, because I wasn't able to be here yesterday when the minister and he did the government lead on this. I regret that, because I think it's truly important that opposition critics should be present for the leads by the government and for the leads by their parallel critics in other caucuses, at the very least. It's a convention that I was taught many years ago, and one that I think is very valuable.

From time to time, I have been critical of PAs—never of Mr. Zimmer, but perhaps of some the more newly elected ones, who don't understand that protocol in terms of being present for the carriage or the pursuit of their bills through the Legislature. But I did read the Hansard

transcript of both Attorney General Bentley's and Mr. Zimmer's comments. And I'm not just saying that; I'm going to prove it, because I'm going to make several references to them during the course of my comments.

I do commend the parliamentary assistant, the member for Willowdale, whom I consider an outstanding member of this Legislature—extremely capable, especially in contrast to the motley assembly of mountebanks he is surrounded by.

With respect to Bill 158, I think I can say with some real certainty—I suspect we're going to vote on this this morning; I also indicated to the government House leader that our second reading debate on this was not going to be lengthy. We're going to support the bill on second reading; it's important to get this bill into committee. Committee hearings are not going to be lengthy; I suspect, and I shouldn't predict this, that there's not going to be phone call after phone call to the clerk's office by members of the public wanting to be heard on this bill, although I suspect there are a few issues with respect to this bill that may prompt public concerns, should the public ever become aware of it. But what I'm trying to put is that of 107 members here, I think I can safely predict that at least five, and probably no more than five, have read this bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: You only have to read a third of it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. O'Toole says you only have to read a third of it. That's the problem: Only reading a third of it, you miss the other two thirds and some things that should be considered that I'm going to be pointing out.

So I say this is one of those bills that, out of 107 members, I suspect five members have read, and that may be generous. That causes me some concern as well, because I don't think that's particularly unique to this piece of legislation.

I do want to thank the Ministry of the Attorney General staff for giving me a briefing on the bill and responding to my questions with respect to the bill. They were helpful in that regard, as civil service persons always are.

The bill deals with three accounting bodies: the CGAs, the CAs and the CMAs. Yesterday, Mr. Zimmer talked about how there was some sort of recognition by all branches of the profession, as he put it in Hansard, that it's time to move forward. I've got to remind him and members of this assembly that the chartered accountants in Ontario were dragged kicking and screaming into this new regime.

I was so pleased that it was the New Democrats who forced the issue and in fact forced the vote on the bill that

brought CGAs into the public accounting realm. Everybody was promising it to CGAs, but nobody was really going to deliver it. Successive governments had told CGAs, "Oh, no problem. Just stick with us, bear with us, and we'll bring you into the public accounting regime." But it never happened, and it wasn't going to happen that time, either. But I was proud to be here with Howard Hampton. There was a little bit of parliamentary pettiness going on at the time, but nonetheless, the results were good, because what happened at the end of the day was that the government was forced/embarrassed—I wouldn't say tricked, but they were drawn into a vote they never intended to participate in. You were here; I think you'll recall that momentous day.

I do want to mention, while we're talking about accountants, that as I was preparing for this morning I couldn't help but reflect on Bill Spicer down in Welland. Bill was an accountant there; he was both a CA and CGA. He was a newcomer—he came from Warton many, years ago—and quickly become a Wellander, a Crowlander. Bill died a couple of weeks ago. Extremely popular, extremely well known, he was the little man's—the little person's—accountant. He took care of businesses of all sorts, but quickly identified with the south-end community.

0910

I was at the Lincoln Plaza getting my licence stickers for my 1995 Chevy S10 pickup, which is running beautifully, and Louis Pelino was sitting there in his pickup. Of course, everybody knows Louis Pelino. He was a police officer in the old Crowland police force and ran the Pelino-Matya scrapyard. But he was also a stellar hockey player in the 1950s until he had a back injury. In fact, when he stopped, he asked, "Hey Pete, what's going on with the back?" So we shared back stories. His, of course, was 60 years old; mine was just a couple of years old—a different world and different technology.

We reminisced about Bill Spicer. Bill, amongst other things, was a member of the Welland Athletic and Benevolent Association. These are people who do good works. A lot of them have backgrounds in athletics and sports—hockey players and baseball players. Louis Pelino was a hockey player. They're famous for their annual \$60 all-you-can-eat, all-you-can drink dinner at the Croatian hall.

I don't know if you do that in big cities like Toronto, but these are common—the Auberge Richelieu does it. Louis Pelino's Welland Athletic and Benevolent Association hold these. Again, you've got to be on a waiting list to get tickets, to be in the lineup for tickets. Of course, there are draws; I'm sure they're licensed. It's all the steak, and at the Croatian hall, all the holubsti—cabbage rolls—and smoked sausage and so on that you can eat.

I just wanted to reflect on Bill Spicer, who's just an outstanding guy, a great family person, who gave a great deal to his community. When I'm talking about Bill 158, one of the things that I think the government has overlooked in a very dramatic and serious way is that there are accountants and there are accountants. Again, we're

talking about small town versus Toronto, versus Bay Street right down the road here. We're talking about accountants.

My accountant, Ray Tisi—a young guy—and his wife, Vivian, run their small accounting firm. He's a chartered accountant and he does my income tax returns and answers questions I ask him. He's just a brilliant, capable guy. As a matter of fact, his son Justin Tisi was a page here back 10, 11 years ago.

He's got a small office on East Main Street, down by Lyons Avenue at East Main. It's an old house that has been turned into an office, very common in small-town Ontario. He is just an outstanding, capable professional.

But then you've got the guys at the Arthur Andersens of the world, don't you? You've got the guys working in the KPMGs. You have the people who were accomplices—accomplices? They were the authors of the Enrons of the world.

While some people went to jail, I dare say that there are a whole lot more that should have. Conrad Black is lonely, I'm sure. Unfortunately, the United States is more inclined to send people like this to jail. The jails they get sent to—I only wish Conrad Black could have done his pretrial time over at the old Don. I would have been so pleased to read his columns after a couple weeks at the old Don. Oh, yeah.

Even a few months in the Haven, in Millhaven, would, I'm sure, have changed his literary style or at least his literary content, if he was even capable of working the keyboard. Nonetheless, he's in this spa down in Florida. The only saving grace is that we hope that the guy never gets allowed back into Canada because, of course, convicted felons shouldn't be allowed into the country, should they? He's not a citizen because he relinquished that, the arrogant—I was going to use a profane reference to the maternity of Mr. Black, but of course that wouldn't be parliamentary, because it wouldn't be a quote but something I concocted on my own.

We've got two types of accountants here. Interestingly again, the parliamentary assistant, in his comments yesterday, talked about the motivation. I'm not imputing motive here; I'm not making an allegation. I'm talking about the acknowledged motive—far different. That's in perfect compliance with the standing orders, Speaker.

Look, I know the parliamentary assistant. I know him to be an honourable, extremely intelligent, extremely capable person, for whom I have affection and a great deal of respect. I also know that he's paid reasonably well—not as much as he could make out in the private sector, but paid reasonably well—to do his job. And his job is to read the scripts in a manner that the PA is expected to spin a particular piece of government legislation.

This one isn't, at first blush, a particularly controversial piece of legislation. It appears that it's not contentious at all. Let me tell you what the parliamentary assistant said yesterday—you were here; you heard. He said, "There was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance."

Hold the quotes there for a minute, Hansard, because, you see, “balance” is always an interesting word when it’s used by the government. As a matter of fact, people in disputes with their spouses say, “Let’s have some balance here.” What that means is, “Let me prevail.” Right? “Let’s be balanced about this” really means “Let me have my way.”

Going back to the quotes—this is on page 236 of yesterday’s Hansard. It’s reference 1630; those are the reference numbers we have in Hansard: “There was a recognition that the essential thing to get right here was the correct balance between the needs of the accounting profession, speaking generally; the needs of each of the three branches of the accounting profession and”—as if some sort of afterthought, some sort of “Oh nuts, we’re supposed to mention this”—“the public interest,” as if it was some sort of add-on, like some tacky Canadian Tire accessory for your car, maybe one of those spinners for the steering wheel or an air freshener to hang on the rear-view mirror. Just an afterthought: Oh yes, by the way, “the public interest.”

Well, isn’t the regulation of these types of professions, which can have so much impact on the day-to-day lives of ordinary folks and, as we’ve learned so dramatically in the course of the last few years, on the economy of not just a region but of the whole world—Enron could only have occurred with the complicity of accountants. Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae: the atrocious collapse of those major financial operators in the States could only have happened—CIBC paid out a big chunk of money on those deals, didn’t they, and cost their shareholders a chunk of dough.

Mutual fund holders—people like your folks, my folks, your grand folks—worked hard, saved a little bit of money and were convinced by some bank mutual fund seller or, even more dramatically, somebody who picks up trailer fees on what they sell and whose motivation for selling that stuff then becomes more suspect, right? Talk about another unregulated industry: the mutual fund industry. Oh, it’s regulated—self regulation. I’m going to get to self-regulation in just a minute.

But this crisis over the last two years couldn’t have happened without the complicity, the aiding and abetting, the actual engineering by accountants. I say to you, Parliamentary Assistant—through you, Speaker, of course—that public interest should have been number one. Public interest should have been the overriding principle when it came to the drafting of this legislation.

0920

I hope I have enough time. The government House leader has imposed an arbitrary limit on the length of my speech by virtue of her House leaders’ meeting that I’m compelled to attend at 9:45, but there’s always committee and there’s always third reading debate. New Democrats will be forcing this bill to committee, make no mistake about it. We will be forcing this bill to committee, make no mistake about it. Because one of the other remarkable observations made on behalf of the government—because once again, the parliamentary assistant, who is a

fine person, who is a person of good character, who is a person who is well regarded not just here but outside of here and is a person of principle, I’m confident may not necessarily write his own speeches when it comes to the lead speech as parliamentary assistant on a bill that he has carriage of. And of course, we’re honest people in here. One of the reasons why we can’t accuse another member of lying is because no member should lie. So if there’s a rebuttal to that, I would expect it to be in compliance with parliamentary convention.

It remains that one of the other observations, justifications, rationalizations, explanations offered up by the parliamentary assistant was modernization. I’m not sure about that. Ah, but harmonization—harmonization with what? Because the reality is that if you check appendix A and compare it to appendix B and then compare that to appendix C, one applying to certified general accountants, one appendix applying to chartered accountants, and one appendix applying to certified management accountants, you will find that they’re not identical, that they contain some very different provisions. Oh, at their core they appear to create uniformity, but upon inspection there is some significant variation. And it’s a variation that, I say to you, Speaker, goes directly to this government’s abandonment and betrayal of public interest. It may come as a surprise to folks even in here.

Let’s take a look at section 26, for instance, of appendix A, which applies to all three of these respective groups.

I ask the government House leader, if we’re getting close to 9:45, will you please signal me or send a note over?

I ask folks to look at section 26, which applies to all three of the groups. All that this government is prepared to do is to regulate the use of the title “certified general accountant” or the title, in the companion appendix B, “certified management accountant,” or in appendix C, “chartered accountant” or the initials.

Anybody in this province can call themselves an accountant, can put up a shingle saying “accountant,” can promote themselves as an accountant, can charge fees for being an accountant. That’s where we’re going. Let’s leave Bay Street for just a minute, although it’s hard to leave it with those gangsters and thieves looming over our shoulders and shadowing us from their 30th-floor offices.

Tax preparation: I was shocked but not surprised to read Ellen Roseman’s column in this morning’s Star about the gouging that tax preparers, many of whom call themselves accountants, are charging for tax returns. Ellen Roseman, Toronto Star, March 24, 2010:

“Marilyn Hew pays \$40 to have her tax returns prepared by Can-Cro Accounting, Bookkeeping and Tax Services in Toronto each year.

“But since she was claiming a home renovation tax credit, she had to pay \$94 this year. The extra charge amounted to 15% of the tax credit she will receive.”

These scoundrels, these thieves, are charging her a percentage of her return. They’re referring to themselves as

an accounting operation, and they're entirely unregulated. What a lost opportunity on the part of Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals to protect people like Marilyn Hew.

If one suspects or wants to believe that that's an isolated incident, why, it was only two days ago—I checked my emails once again this morning. My staff down at the constituency office in Welland, Mike Haines—all of us probably have good staff. I'm sure we have good staff in our constituency offices. Lord knows they're the ones who do the heavy lifting. Just think about it: They've got people lined up in the morning before they open, and the lineup never ends all day. I'm sure our office isn't unique. There are still people there at 4:30 or 5 who they have to accommodate, which means they don't leave until 5:30 or 6. We are guaranteed, here at Queen's Park, a lunch hour, along with other rather lax timetables. Why, as I look around, I observe the laxness of some of the people's timetables, not because they're here but because I see the green backs of these wonderful leather chairs.

It was a few years ago that our constituency office went after and nailed to the wall a tax preparation firm that was gouging seniors. Seniors, as you know, are vulnerable to these sorts of scams because they tend to be trusting. They also tend not to report because they tend to be embarrassed about being scammed, which is why seniors are so often the targets of scams.

So here we go. Let's understand: This legislation does nothing to control the use of the appellation "accountant," or the title. I think that's a very dangerous thing. It controls the use of "chartered accountant," "certified management accountant," "certified general accountant" and the initials. It says that only those people who, in fact, can do that are entitled to use those. But anybody can call themselves an accountant, and the public, frankly, is hard-pressed to know—and we are hard-pressed to expect them to know—the difference.

One of the other interesting things is that the government—and to be fair, the parliamentary assistant addressed the issue of foreign-trained accountants. I find it remarkable, truly, truly, remarkable, I find it astounding, I find it just unbelievable—oh, but I believe it; the use of the word "unbelievable" in this instance is mere hyperbole—that the government has neglected foreign-trained accountants. I'm talking specifically about British-trained accountants, who are perfectly capable, and nobody disputes their skills—and these are members of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

0930

You see, when the parliamentary assistant, on behalf of the government, not on his own behalf, stands up here on a private member's—he had a wonderful private member's bill, the drunk driving boating bill, that passed, that became law. He leveraged the government a little bit; he appeared on Andy Barrie's show. The people in the Premier's office were bouncing off the walls; the government House leader of the day was fit to be tied. I thought it was rather mischievous myself, but not something that I was above doing in my own right. And the

parliamentary assistant had another private member's bill, the regulation of private zoos bill, which never really became law, because the existing amendments that we dealt with don't really regulate private zoos; they still flourish out there. I was supportive of the parliamentary assistant.

The parliamentary assistant says the government has to balance—listen to this—the interests of foreign-trained accountants with the interests of potential Ontario clients of accountants to rely on the qualifications and oversight of their bodies. Parliamentary assistant, I know that wasn't your idea. But shame on you for using such weasel words when it comes to foreign-trained professionals.

On the one hand, this government wants to be known as the champion of foreign-trained professionals. What was that crummy cliché in the throne speech the other day? "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario"—a tautology if I ever heard one. That was as good as they got: "Ontario needs the world and the world needs Ontario." Well, Ontario doesn't appear to need British-trained accountants.

I'm told that the CGA as a body goes back to the early 1980s—correct me if I'm wrong. The CAs are the oldest body. They go back many decades. But I bet you dollars to doughnuts—I'm not really a gambling man. Well, I buy the occasional lottery ticket. Heck, politics is a gamble, isn't it? Elected office is a gamble. But by and large, I'm not a gambling man. I'm not a big fan of casinos—nor is the member for St. Catharines, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I give him credit for that.

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants has a history that is at least as long as that of chartered accountants in Ontario. I'm not sure of that. All I know is that it has 300,000 members and students in 160 countries, it's headquartered in London, with staffed offices as an association in 31 countries, and they are being told that their members, although they're quite capable of practising as accountants because they're—well, they're accountants; nobody denies that. But they're being told that they can't put the letters behind their name of "ACCA," unlike a certified general accountant, who can put "CGA"; unlike a chartered accountant, who can put "CA"; and unlike a management accountant who can put "CMA," because the public will be confused?

Heck, as if it isn't already confusing enough. The fact is, people don't rely upon those initials. I know some professions—oh, the insurance industry. Have you ever seen the letterhead of some of those insurance guys, those insurance brokers? They've got letters; they've got to use two lines from all these little institutes that they belong to and courses that they take. They think it makes an impression.

The other thing that really bugs me is Ph.D.s who call themselves "doctor." Those are pompous people. Doctors on this continent are medical doctors; Ph.D.s are Ph.D.s. If you want to call yourself "Joan Smith, Ph.D.," go ahead, though to what extent or to what end, I don't know. But call yourself "doctor"? No. A doctor is a medical doctor or a dentist.

So somehow, the government is worried that putting "ACCA" after your name is going to confuse people, that somehow people are going to think maybe you're a chartered accountant or maybe you're a certified general accountant or maybe you're a certified management accountant. I, on behalf of New Democrats, resent this abandonment of these foreign-trained professionals—because I was told there are more than a few of them working here in the province of Ontario and across the country. This is the sort of xenophobic ethnocentrism that we've inherited from our American neighbours. University degrees, right? We make people from other countries jump through hoops to justify their degrees, yet many of them went to universities that were operating in full force before this country was even settled. It's true. And they've got this fabulous reputation. But as I say, it's that xenophobic ethnocentrism. Maybe I'm being naive and just not owning up to it, but I insist we inherited it from our American neighbours. Maybe it's a very Canadian thing in its own right; I don't know. So we've got something to say, come committees, around the exclusion of those good women and men working as ACCAs.

I want to deal with two more things, and I've to do this oh, so quickly—and I regret this, having to do it quickly—but what about notice to the public? How is the public supposed to know if you've got a bad accountant or a good one? Because it's only in the legislation affecting CGAs that the regulatory body may publish the results of disciplinary hearings. In the other two appendices, there are no statutory authorities for publishing disciplinary proceedings and disciplinary consequences. Hell's bells, these disciplinary proceedings should be as public as they are for doctors. Accountants impact on people's lives, on the economic lives of people, on the economies of provinces, of countries, of continents. It seems to me that there should not only be a requirement—not just a statutory provision that "may publish," because that's what it says with respect to CGAs, but "shall publish," and it should apply to all of the respective accounting bodies. "Shall"—mandatory. The public has a right to know if an accountant is cleared of an allegation. The public has a right to know if an accountant is found culpable of a breach and of having displayed professional misconduct.

We've got to wrap up. I'm looking forward to committee. Oh, and by reference for folks, that was subsection 36(7) that I was referring to, appendix A. I know people will be reaching for their copies of the act and studying that thoroughly within moments of me finishing this modest contribution to the debate and heading off to the House leaders' meeting.

0940

Now I want to go to section 44, so fast. "A member of the association"—again we're referring to CGAs in this instance. I'm reading from that appendix A—"is incapacitated ... if, by reason of physical or mental illness, condition or disorder, other infirmity or addiction to or excessive use of alcohol or drugs, he or she is incapable of meeting his or her obligations under this act."

Will Rahim Jaffer ever be able to identify himself as an accountant pursuant to this section? I don't know. He walked. Maybe that bag of blow was powdered sugar, but you would have thought that if he was accused of being a cokehead, the first thing he would have said upon walking out of that courtroom was, "It was only sugar." Maybe some day, Helena Guergis will tell us what in fact happened. She's the one who had, as Richard Brennan put it, the "hissy fit"—not me; Richard Brennan, the journalist, called it the "hissy fit"—at the Charlottetown airport, where she, as a federal member of Parliament, expressed horror about having been stuck—and I suspect that her wording could have been sanitized in the translation—in this "hell hole." She's a federal member of Parliament. For Pete's sake, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island: Good grief. It's one of the most beautiful places in Canada. What the heck has Helena Guergis got against Anne of Green Gables? What has she got against red soil, good folks, lobster, great hospitality, and one of the prettiest, most beautiful spots? How dare she, when PEI is constitutionally guaranteed four members of the federal Parliament, notwithstanding their population—PEI has some clout. So maybe some day Helena Guergis will explain away the coke—and I'm not talking Pepsi—with respect to Jaffer.

I just find it remarkable that you could be addicted to alcohol or drugs, fair enough, and be excluded only if you are incapacitated. You can be an addict and not be incapacitated. For the life of me, I don't know how some meth-head—I guess they can do income tax returns real fast; speed up the production rate. I'm not sure about the accuracy—or just excessive. So if you do a little bit of meth, if you do a little bit of cocaine, if you do a little bit of heroin, you're okay; you're clear. But you have to be incapacitated by excessive drug or alcohol use.

Just weird stuff—just silly stuff. Why don't disciplinary bodies—because, you see, the list of offences is not contained in the statute. This is strange, this government's obsession with private-dominated/public partnerships, because that's really what they are. There was never such a thing as a private/public partnership that didn't result in the taxpayer having their pocket picked. Go all the way back to SkyDome, if you want to. Never mind the 407 and any number of hospitals that are being built, with high, high profit for the private sector financing, all at the expense of health care.

My time is almost up. The government House leader is getting ready for a House leaders' meeting. She's going to be sitting there tapping her pencil on the desk as I arrive late, as she's wont to, because she simply doesn't overlook any opportunity to criticize me or to chastise me. If she needs a whipping boy, I've got big enough shoulders, and I've been whipped by the best. I've been with the New Democrats at Queen's Park since the days of Bob Rae, the last Liberal Premier that we had, so I've been whipped by the best.

But I want to say: Look, let's get this bill into committee. I want to hear from the British-trained and British-certified accountants. I want to hear from the parliament-

ary assistant, to explain some of the omissions and oversights in this legislation, and just maybe the bill can be approved. Are we anywhere close to the Pareto optimal now? I don't think so. Will committee achieve that for us? I'm highly skeptical, but I'm prepared to try on behalf of New Democrats.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: I've got two minutes. I just want to touch on a couple of things that the member opposite just spoke on. First of all, he used the expression that the CAs were dragged, kicking and screaming, to participate in this piece of legislation. I think that's a slur on the profession and that the member ought to apologize to the profession for that.

As I said yesterday in my remarks, since October 2003, I have worked with the CAs, the CGAs and the CMAs, and first and foremost in their negotiations and in their participation in this exercise was how best to protect the public interest. The member opposite does a disservice to the fine tradition in Ontario of the self-regulated professions, be it the accounting profession, the medical profession, the engineering profession, the nursing profession or other self-regulating professions. Without the integrity, the hard work and the recognition of the public interest that each of those self-regulating professions brings to the work that they do in the province, the civil society that we have in Ontario would be a lot poorer for it. It's because of their efforts here in Ontario that we have one of the highest standards in the world, if not the highest standard in the world, of civil society. The rule of law, principled public debate, majority and minority rights: Those are all elements of the public interest. It's the self-regulating professions that play an enormous role in that regard.

I want to say that in my remarks yesterday—I have a copy of Hansard, and I counted up: "Public interest" was mentioned more than eight times.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: We all sit and listen in wonder, sometimes, to the member from Welland. He has great experience and he brings a great deal of commitment to the task. The respect that he showed in terms of attending while the parliamentary assistant, the minister and the critic spoke, is a compliment to his understanding of the process here in the Legislature.

A couple of things: He did take a bit of a small swipe here. What I said was that the report, basically, is broken into three sections, and each section is identical except that it refers to a different accounting group. I'm going to give you an example of that to prove that this is the case. If you read under any one of the three accounting organizations, one of the objectives—and number 4 is a good one. It says here, "To promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of individuals and firms as certified management accountants in accordance with this act and the bylaws, including"—and it goes on to list. But if you look at the next sec-

tion—there are three sections, A, B and C, and I'm looking at C, which is the chartered accountants—it says, "To promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of individuals and firms as chartered accountants." So the words are basically identical in each of the sections, with very, very minor modifications.

Now, the last part—he digressed, unfortunately and uncharacteristically, to criticize federal elected members without having full knowledge of all that transpired, accusing them here of using cocaine or meth and all the inappropriate—I'm not sure what it had to do with the bill or with his displaying his own dignity or lack of it in this Legislature. So I am surprised and a little bit disappointed by the member from Welland, but at the end of the day, he means well, and not one of us here is free of criticism.

0950

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To be fair, let's all agree that when the member from Welland rises in this House, the usually abysmal ratings of this place get a great bump up. Come on. He is one of the best orators in this place. He keeps us engaged; he keeps us amused. Not only that, but he does his homework, and he did his homework on this bill. He looked at the various provisions and he made some absolutely thoughtful comments that I hope will be taken to committee.

As the small business critic, normally a shadow portfolio, I notice that there is no Minister of Small Business over there in the cabinet any more. I think that says a great deal—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Were you referring to attendance or just the position?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm referring to the absence of a small business minister in the new cabinet. I think that says a great deal. When the member from Welland talked about the distance from Bay Street to Main Street, the problems on Main Street not being the problems on Bay Street, and that this government is a government for Bay Street and not Main Street, nothing could speak to that more accurately than the fact that they do not even have a Minister of Small Business any more. That's distressing to me. I think that's distressing to the people in the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas who came to Queen's Park, 80% of whose members object to the HST, who came here and were ignored by the government. They represent tens of thousands of small businesses. Small businesses are hurting. They are not getting the tax breaks because they don't make the profits. They've been suffering during the recession, and many of them are trained accountants. The member from Welland talked about one; a shout out to my own nephew, John DiNovo, who's one. They're busy doing taxes right now. They are doing our taxes. We need to help them.

Again, certainly the member from Welland brought up some excellent points. I look forward to committee, and I

look forward to hearing the voice of small business at least there, if not here.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It certainly is a pleasure to make a few comments on the remarks made by our colleague from Welland—always entertaining, always instructive. A few words today were used that probably had us reaching for our dictionaries: “tautology,” “xenophobia,” and of course there’s fulsome—to use another of his favourite words—praise of our colleague from Willowdale. It’s very much deserved, as the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and very instrumental in this particular bill.

Of course, it’s so good to hear that the member from Welland and his party are going to be supporting Bill 158. It certainly does provide great clarity, I think, for just about everybody. I know that for myself, understanding the differences, responsibilities and skill sets of CAs, CGAs and CMAs has been something that I’ve continued to learn about. We were visited yesterday by, in fact, the CGAs here at the Legislature and heard their particular issues and of course the fact, as my colleague from Parkdale–High Park has referenced, that they really do serve small business. This is their primary interest.

The York region chapter of the CGAs is particularly active. I had the pleasure of joining them for their annual golf tournament last summer. They had the wonderful sense to use a golf course in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and again it was a very good opportunity to understand the issues facing their profession. So it’s good to see this act in front of us. It’s certainly a good step forward and I’m hoping that everyone will be supportive of this bill.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is always a pleasure and a challenge to follow my esteemed colleague from Welland, who, as some who have responded to his comments pointed out, is never less than interesting and is indeed one of the orators that all of us, when we were first elected back in 2003, looked to. We learned some of the don’ts from the member from Welland, and we learned a few of the dos. We learned some of the intricacies and indeed the pitfalls of parliamentary procedure from the member from Welland. For that I have to say that the Ontario Legislature is always an interesting place when the member from Welland is in it.

I also want to acknowledge the contributions of my colleague from Willowdale, who is certainly one of the bright legal minds that exist in the government caucus. His contributions here are always thorough and well researched. He has been, for all of us, a calming steady influence, a great guy to know and a solid contributor to the province of Ontario over the last seven years and, if I may say so, someone who I call a good friend.

There’s something the previous speaker brought up that I think was a bit of a red herring. I think we need to refer to the act itself to correct it. He talked about others

who were not chartered accountants, CAs; certified general accountants, CGAs; or certified management accountants, CMAs. I’m going to quote from schedule C clause 2 of the revised Chartered Accountants Act. This pretty much answers the member’s objections; I’ll just read it directly: “This act does not affect or interfere with the right of any person who is not a member of the institute to practise as an accountant.” Similar phrasing exists in the other two acts, those that govern the CMAs and the CGAs.

What the member’s objections were, I wasn’t entirely sure but, as he says, this bill can go to committee, and he can ask at committee. I’m sure that at committee representatives of all three bodies can look at the member from Welland and say, “This doesn’t interfere in any way with the freedom of any other person to call themselves an accountant, but they can’t call themselves a chartered accountant or a certified general accountant or a certified management accountant.” Those designations remain protected.

What this bill does is, in consultation with the members of all three bodies, it takes the articles that govern the three professions and, by and large, makes them the same set of rules and regulations and policies and procedures. It means that transparency is increased. It means that simplicity is enhanced. It means that for a man or a woman who chooses to become either a CA, a CMA or a CGA, the standards by which they’ll be governed during the time that they practise their profession are the same, regardless of what brand of accounting training they choose. It should be pointed out that the accounting training is very rigorous. Throughout it, its principle purpose is the protection of the public and the integrity of the client. One could pick just about any section of the three because, by and large, they read pretty much the same.

I know, Speaker, that you’ve had a very distinguished career as a CGA and have been recognized by the profession for your contributions both here in the Legislature and during the time that you practised. I certainly, on behalf of all of us who have the ongoing pleasure and privilege of your company, want to acknowledge you, Speaker, for your contributions that stem from your experience in dealing with other people’s and other firms’ money and your knowledge of the trends and the rhythms and flows in the management of money, and the difference that it makes, when you come into government, that we’ve got someone in caucus who actually does understand money.

We’re actually privileged, certainly, on both sides of the House to have people who understand some of the rhythms and the flows of money as well. For example, I know that my esteemed colleague from Durham has a long history in business and is also able to bring to the fore some of his business experience, which also makes the House a better place. Also, in the spirit of this being March, he’s also Irish. What more can you ask?

To look at the objectives of the difference institutes, one sees in looking at the act that they remain either the

same or obviously very compatible. In looking at such things as “to promote and increase the knowledge, skill and proficiency of members of the institute, firms and students,” it allows all three accounting bodies to promulgate the same set of good practices among their members.

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I’m familiar with some of the things that the CAs do—less so with the CGAs and the CMAs—and I know that some of the best practices in professional development are those that I’ve seen practised by the three accounting bodies. The expectations of your institute, regardless of which of the three you have the privilege of working within as an accountant, are that on an ongoing basis you’ll continue to keep your skills current, because the laws and the statutes under which you practice the tax code that you interpret are living bodies of law and they change. It means that as an accountant, it’s incumbent on you to make sure that you’re offering to your clients or to your employer the very best quality of financial advice.

To that end, all three institutes are very proactive and very assertive with their members in their expectations that they’re going to, each and every year, undertake so many days—and I don’t remember the exact numbers for each institute, but the expectation is there that you’re going to continue your education, and that each and every year, you’re going to stay current with your profession and stay up-to-date with the body of law that dictates the practice of accounting. That sort of thing says to someone who is an employer or a client that this is a profession that, when it confers that designation upon a man or a woman and makes them a member, is ensuring on your behalf that, to the limit of their ability, they’re going to make sure that you get the best quality advice that they can possibly give you and that the advice that you get is going to stay up-to-date. That, indeed, is how it should be.

I remember back, now nearly four years, when we began the work under our government of the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act. At the time, the then-minister, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who undertook a very extensive series of consultations, found that, by and large, the accounting professions were examples of how to do it right. If you came to Canada from another country, our objective in that exercise was to ensure that you obtained the ability to take your portfolio of qualifications and experience that you had earned in another country or at another time, and in a manner that was cost-effective, fair and transparent, convert that to its Canadian equivalent.

We had some examples of professions that had to be pushed and prodded into doing this, but one thing that became apparent very early on is that the best practices lay under the umbrella of the three accounting bodies. They did a good job, and I think they should be recognized for that. They continue to do a good job.

The legislation sets out some of the governance that the three institutes must operate under. It sets out who is going to comprise the council that governs the institute. It

talks about the terms that the officers serve and the process of reappointing. It sets out a series of committees and it allows the institutes to establish a fair, transparent and open framework, under which men and women who call themselves CAs, CGAs or CMAs know that their institute is staying up to date; that their members can get involved in the affairs of the institute; that they can serve on a committee and shape the future of their profession; and that the process of staying up to date and relevant, and the process of providing the best possible service to employers, clients and their own members, is a process that they themselves, as members, can have access to, that it isn’t closed to them, that the selection process is set out in very clear black and white, and that it stays in touch with the times.

The advantages to our province of having, in this case, many tens of thousands of men and women who have qualified for a designation in accounting and who can practise it in fairness and responsibility, reflect on the ability of Ontario companies to run a good operation, to stay in compliance with federal and provincial statutes, to report to their owners and shareholders and to manage things responsibly on behalf of their employees.

Part of the reason companies come here to Ontario is that in addition to the many other things Ontario can offer them, such as an excellent, well-developed infrastructure of electricity, roads, water; excellent access to the United States market—which is still the largest market in the world, but you can get access to that right here in the province of Ontario—companies that come to the province of Ontario are also able to get their fundamental natural resource right here, and that natural resource is smart people. One thing we have in Ontario is the post-secondary infrastructure to train and equip knowledge workers to be able to go out and serve their clients, employers, customers, neighbourhoods and communities. Among those are our financial people, and if any of the other professions really want to see an example of good governance and best practices, the three accounting bodies are usually a very, very good starting point.

To briefly go through some of the clauses in this bill: Among the things that the bill does is it talks about what a firm of accountants is. We take it for granted that someone might work for such-and-such a firm, but this bill standardizes and harmonizes just what constitutes an accounting firm within the text of the bill. That provides clarity for anyone who chooses to start a firm, and it provides clarity for firms that want to combine or merge.

It’s actually very common practice for firms predominantly of one designation to employ people who have another designation. For example, with some of the CA firms, one often finds CMAs and CGAs who work there as employees and managers.

In this vein, I’d like to recount a few personal things. It’s been my pleasure through my working life to have it constantly entwined in one form or another with, particularly, the chartered accountants. I’d like to recognize and thank one of my early clients from when I practised public relations in British Columbia: the Institute of Char-

tered Accountants of British Columbia. I got to know the accounting profession very well out there, and I met some great gentlemen along the way.

I would especially recognize, if he ever reads the *Hansard*—and I'm sure he's not watching this—a former Auditor General of Canada, and the first president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia that I ever served: Ken Dye.

He was followed by a gentleman who became and remained a personal friend for quite a number of years: Ron Park, who was a fine, capable man, who really took the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia into the modern era during the term of his presidency and implemented many enduring and far-ranging reforms.

We all had a lot of fun together, and I'd like to think that we did some good things together in British Columbia.

I would also like to mention S+C Partners out in Meadowvale, with whom I have a continuing friendship. Every Friday morning at 7:30, we have ice time out at Meadowvale 4 Rinks, and it's my personal pleasure and privilege to go out and get a little bit of exercise playing goal with the boys. To Kalin McDonald, Steve Myers and all the rest of them: Greetings from the Ontario Legislature, and it's been a pleasure to work for you.

The government that I have the privilege and responsibility of serving has a long history of transparency in some of the legislation that, over the years, we've enacted: such things as the Apology Act, which allows people to apologize for a mistake or a wrongdoing without fear that the apology might be used in civil litigation against them, and the Election Act, in which Ontario introduced fixed-date elections to Ontario and eliminated, to a large extent, political considerations as a factor in determining when people go to the polls. Indeed, in the same bill Ontario further strengthened our system by preserving the 11 northern ridings in the province. In terms of transparency, there was also the Good Government Act in 2009, which proposed changes that will ensure that Ontarians' rights are protected and that the people of this province receive a high quality of service.

The new Public Inquiries Act, when proclaimed, proposes to bring balance to the system and provide our government and commissioners with better tools to determine the length and cost of an inquiry while continuing to support the independence of the inquiry process. Indeed, Ontario's changes to the Juries Act create a clear and transparent process for screening professional jurors who are ineligible to serve on a jury because of a prior transgression.

On transparency, our government has regulated paralegals. Much like the proposed Accounting Professions Act, this particular action creates a fully regulated paralegal system that protects consumers and gives Ontarians a very clear choice of qualified service providers.

In general, transparency also exists in the consumer protection Payday Loans Act, which has brought greater transparency to the payday loans business, whatever you think of it. I will candidly say that I don't think a great

deal of it. Nonetheless, it ensures that payday lenders and loan brokers are licensed and meet the criteria for licensing. It requires specific disclosures in payday loan agreements and advertising. It provides a cooling-off period. It also prohibits concurrent and rollover loans, and it really did correct a lot of egregious abuses in that.

In terms of transparency, Ontario also has the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, which is consumer protection. Referred to as TICO, it administers the consumer protection rules provided by the Travel Industry Act. It requires all travel agents and travel wholesalers to register.

The Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council has also been the subject of consumer protection.

This is one of just a very long series of acts that are aimed at protecting the public and ensuring transparency in the business practices of those institutions that the province proposes to regulate.

To quote the Attorney General, who, in closing, had this to say, "The Accounting Professions Act, if passed, would bring the statutes governing the three main regulatory bodies for accounting in line with 21st-century standards. New measures in the act would safeguard consumer protection and strengthen the accounting industry's transparency."

In my final moment, I would just like to thank, for their co-operation in drafting this particular bill, all three accounting bodies. They've shown consistent patience and goodwill throughout the entire procedure. I'm sure we're looking forward to seeing it in committee to determine whether or not we've got it right.

On that note, Speaker, I thank you very much for the time to address the House this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: Students from Centennial College are visiting Queen's Park today under the auspices of the legislative press gallery, and they are journalism students at Boreal College in East York. The names of the students are Kerry Prunskus, Lydia Moore, Meegan Scanlon, Reinisa MacLeod, Roger Tran, Julie Tu, Deeanna Charrion, Kris Baker, Clarisa Pessoa, Leticia Rodriguez, Bianca Murray and Ozman Omar. They are all up there in the gallery behind you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery, Inna Dubrovsky, who is the mother of Diana, a page from York Centre. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Mary Beth Caliciuri, Anthony's mom, who is here again with us today and is enjoying a few days with us while Anthony gets acclimatized to the place.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to introduce two groups of people today.

Joining us at Queen's Park from OECTA we have the Most Reverend Thomas Collins; Paula Peroni, president, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association; and Jim Ryan, the president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association.

From my riding is Mr. Vic Pendergast, a very strong community supporter and a board member with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

I encourage everyone to visit their respective receptions today. They are mutually agreeable that you could go to both. OECTA's reception is in room 228 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario is in the Queen's Park dining room from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. We welcome those wonderful people who work so hard for our province.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature a number of people: Marita Devries from London; Diane Strachan, registered nurse from London Health Sciences Centre and ONA bargaining unit president; Jill Ross, registered nurse from London Health Sciences Centre; Sheree Bond, Ontario Nurses' Association; Lawrence Walter, Ontario Nurses' Association; Carolyn Edgar, registered nurse from North York General Hospital; Megan Strachan, York University student; and Beverley Belfon, registered nurse at North York General Hospital.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature today two of my constituents from York South-Weston: Edith George and Nick Di Nicio. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I would like to introduce the Alzheimer chapters that are joining us. From Toronto, Françoise Hébert, Andrew Ignatieff, Rosemary Corbett, Mary Ann Chang and Dan Andreae; from Windsor-Essex county, Sally Bennett Poliditis and Bob Renaud; from Perth county, Debbie Deichert and Agnes Deloyer; from Durham region, Chris Braney; from Huron county, Cathy Ritsema and Philip McMillan; from Brant, Hamilton and Halton, and Haldimand and Norfolk, you've already heard about Vic, but Mary Burnett, Ruth Simmons and Trevor Clark.

I encourage everyone, as my colleague has said, to join them at 4:30 in the legislative dining room for a reception.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Michelle DesRoches and Stephan Kramp from the town of Midland. They're both joining us here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am absolutely delighted to welcome family members of page Leah Kelly. Her mom, Loraine Kelly, is here, and her grandmother Kekio Kuryama and her grandfather Iwao Kuryama are here. Welcome to you all.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to welcome John Stunt, who is the retiring executive director of the Catholic trustees' association, and thank him for all the great work that he's done on behalf of school boards and students across the province.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House the many Greeks who are here to celebrate Greek Independence Day—which is official-

ly tomorrow, but there's a budget tomorrow. We will be raising the Greek flag at Queen's Park at 12 o'clock.

Also, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a great Hamiltonian, the publisher of the Hamilton Hellenic News, Mr. Panos Andronidis.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It's with great pleasure that I introduce one of my constituents. Phillip McMillan is here watching the proceedings. Welcome, Phillip. He's a strong community member in the riding of Huron-Bruce.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to recognize one of my constituents who's here today with the Ontario Catholic school boards' association. He's the chair of the Wellington Catholic District School Board, Marino Gazzola.

Mr. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce one of Jordan's most talented energy engineers, Ms. Lubna Salah, who's here in Ontario for a month studying the Ontario energy sector.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce some very good friends of mine who are with the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region. They're here today in support of their association. First is Teena Kindt, who is the CEO of the association. The second person is Elco Drost, who's the president of the board of directors. I'm pleased to welcome them here. As well, I'm urging all the members to attend their open House that they'll have later on this afternoon.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a member of the Catholic board from Sarnia-Lambton, Linda Ward, who is with us in the gallery today.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I am very proud to introduce and welcome Paula Peroni from Sudbury. She's with the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association. Welcome, and thank you for all your work in Catholic education.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Vaughan and page Catia Marceau, we'd like to welcome her mother, Giulia Marceau, to the members' gallery today.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Colin Boyle, I'd like to welcome his mother, Joe-Anne Boyle, his sister Caitlin Boyle and his grandmother Anne Boyle to the members' gallery.

On behalf of the member from Scarborough-Southwest and page Torin Hills, I'd like to welcome her mother, Mary Charles Hills, and father, Trevor Hills, to the Legislature today.

We have with us today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, David Harvey and Kathy Dewling from the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; and from the Alzheimer Society of London and Middlesex, Betsy Little and Francine Lacroix. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our new group of pages and allow them to assemble for a formal introduction.

Alexander Bowie, Oakville; Colin Boyle, Brampton West; Anthony Caliciuri, Nipissing; Anne-Marie Cham-

berland, Ottawa–Orléans; Diana Dubrovsky, York Centre; Erin Gaudette, Windsor–Tecumseh; Giselle Groskleg, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; Torin Hills, Scarborough Southwest; Leah Kelly, London North Centre; Snigdha Koirala, Toronto Centre; Catia Marceau, Vaughan; Harsh Modhera, Etobicoke North; Mathilda Murray, London West; Ben Neilipovitz, Thunder Bay–Superior North; Jameson Nguyen, Davenport; Eric Oh, Newmarket–Aurora; George Philp, York–Simcoe; Sabrina Sukhdeo, Thornhill; and Neale Taylor, Niagara West–Glanbrook. Welcome to all of our pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And for anyone who was not introduced and feels left out, welcome to Queen's Park today.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: On January 5, you were quoted as saying, "Ask not what your provincial government can impose on you; ask what, as a member of the public sector, you can bring to the table." Premier, you are handing over up to \$45,000 in severance to your HST tax collectors when they won't miss a single day of work. What exactly are your HST tax collectors bringing to the table?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true that there is a legal obligation pursuant to an agreement entered into by the Conservative government. I want to repeat that, because my colleagues across the way may have not heard it. There is a legal obligation pursuant to an agreement entered into between the former Conservative government and this employee group that provides for, in these circumstances, a severance payment to be made.

We believe that we have an obligation to honour that agreement. We believe, as taught by our parents, that a deal is a deal is a deal. We will honour that agreement, we will approach this as a matter of principle and we think that is the right thing to do in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, six years into a mandate is a bit late for the man who promised, "I won't raise your taxes" to worry about keeping his word.

Premier, in British Columbia, as you know, they are not paying out these types of sweetheart severances to the HST collectors. The Ontario HST collectors will get up to \$45,000 in severance. They're going to get a raise. They won't be missing a single day of work.

Premier, you have a choice to pay off this sweetheart bonus, or you can stand up for Ontario taxpayers. Will you do the right thing and cancel these sweetheart bonuses to your tax collectors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague makes reference to the British Columbia arrangement. That govern-

ment did not insert that clause into their agreement. That former government did.

Again, we believe that principle is not unimportant, and for that reason we will honour this agreement and we will find other ways, through our budget, to address the compensation issues generally.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know Dalton McGuinty and his colleagues say it's John Robarts's fault, that this was a deal John Robarts inked when he was Premier. I think you know that John Robarts became Premier well before I was born. It's time to get with the times, Premier, and if you're right that means it's time to make a change. If you won't do it, then step aside; we will.

This is clearly out of line with the expectations of taxpayers. When you're laying off nurses in the province of Ontario, when you're closing down ERs in communities like Fort Erie and Port Colborne, to pay out \$25 million in severance to tax collectors is way out of line. Premier, are you that much out of touch with reality that you think this is a good deal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I gather that what my colleague is saying is that notwithstanding the fact that he sat at a cabinet table where they approved this very agreement with this kind of a clause, with this kind of a provision and this kind of a severance package, were he in government today he would set aside this agreement. I think that's what he's telling us. I think what he's telling us is that, for him, a deal is not a deal is not a deal, and that you cannot rely on any agreement entered into by that government.

We bring a different approach. We think that the honourable thing to do, the responsible thing to do in the circumstances, is to honour this agreement. As I said a moment ago, we will find a way through our budget to address compensation issues generally.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. The principle here is simple: If you don't lose your job, you don't get severance. Every other employer follows this pattern. British Columbia is following this pattern. All we're asking is for Dalton McGuinty to do the same thing. There are so many better uses for that \$25 million in severance than the sweetheart deals to your HST tax collectors who don't miss a day on the job and are also getting a pay raise.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you stand up for Ontario taxpayers and cancel these sweetheart severances?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so that my colleague is clear, and Ontarians as well are informed on this matter, we changed the agreement for new hires effective 2006. We rejected the approach brought by the former Conservative government at the time, in which my honourable colleague sat in cabinet and approved the very agreement which requires that we provide this severance package.

In any event, we've changed what we can. We're now doing what we believe is the honourable thing in the circumstances. To repeat once again, we will address the issue of compensation more generally through our budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know that the Premier is trying to use the union contract as a cover to hand out up to \$25 million to his HST tax collectors, who won't miss a single day on the job. I know that they're in Dalton McGuinty's favourite friends. They're going to bring in, after all, \$3 billion for him to hand out to his Liberal friends in sweetheart deals as a result of this massive tax increase on the backs of Ontario families. But Premier, I think you know that there is no language in the agreement calling for the province to compensate employees who won't miss a single day on the job. Every other jurisdiction follows this rule; BC is providing this way. Why is Dalton McGuinty making a special exemption for his HST tax collectors that BC is not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought I've been very clear on this, but I'm pleased to repeat it for the sake of my colleague. The BC government was not bound by an agreement, previously entered into by another government, of the sort that we have been. When my colleague sat at the cabinet table, he was party to a government which entered into an agreement which requires that these kinds of severances be paid. We will honour that agreement; we think that's the honourable thing to do and the right thing to do in the circumstances.

We have said that when we could, in 2006, we changed it so that for new hires beyond that point in time we would not be bound by this kind of provision. We've done what we can. We think it's the right thing to do in the circumstances, and again, we will be addressing the issue of compensation generally through the budget.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the agreement and the Public Service of Ontario Act do not have any term that says it must pay severance to individuals who are not missing a single day on the job. You made no effort whatsoever to dispute this. You didn't lift a finger. You didn't stand up or think of taxpayers for one single moment. You're only too happy to hand over some \$25 million in sweetheart severance bonuses to your HST tax collectors.

Premier, there is a simple principle: If you don't lose your job, you don't get severance. Will you do the right thing and dispute this handout to these HST tax collectors, or put it in your budget bill? Because handing out that \$25 million is just plain wrong.

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the bluster; I really do. But I think it's just a little bit rich that a member of the former Conservative government who approved this very provision in this very agreement is now standing up and being vociferous in his objection to the provision that he put into the agreement in the first place.

This is not the first time we've been stuck with an agreement prepared by that former government.

We will do everything we can to always uphold the interests of the taxpayers. But we feel, as a matter of principle and as a matter of honour, that it's important we honour this agreement.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians are anxiously awaiting tomorrow's budget to find out whether they'll keep losing health services that they need in this province.

Will the Premier take this opportunity to assure Ontarians right now that no community will lose health care services as a result of tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. I think what Ontarians can and will continue to look to, of course, is our record. We have provided for a dramatic increase in funding levels for our hospitals and for our health care services generally. We have thousands more nurses. We are building new hospitals and expanding existing hospitals. We are creating ever more access to quality health care services, doctors, MRIs, CTs, shorter wait times, nurse-practitioner-led clinics, many new programs and service models that we put in place. That's the path we are on, and that's the path we will continue to follow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This government's record is one of health care services disappearing across the province. Patients in Ottawa are losing 190 nursing positions, Fort Erie and Port Colborne emergency rooms are closed, 140 health care jobs are gone in Hamilton, and Toronto East General lost its physiotherapy, pain and cardiac rehabilitation clinics. Across Ontario, the list goes on and on and on.

Will the Premier assure Ontarians that no community will lose any more health care services in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've answered that. I'll never be able to answer it to the satisfaction of my honourable colleague; I understand that. But hospital funding, for example, has gone up 42% since we formed the government. It will go up again this year.

The other conversation that I would really appreciate my colleague becoming engaged in is, how do we ensure that we continue to provide good-quality health services for all of our families in a way that does not compromise our capacity to fund our schools, our social programs and our investments in infrastructure like roads and bridges? I think that's an important conversation that we want to begin to engage Ontarians in. Of course they want their health care to be there for them, but they also want good schools and good social programs to be there as well.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't understand how this Premier can brag about a 42% increase in costs when ser-

VICES are being reduced in community after community after community.

Worried Ontario families want assurances that emergency rooms, nurses and pain clinics are going to be there when they actually need them. Some have seen the slow erosion of front-line services, while others have seen last-minute bailouts of hospitals when it's politically beneficial for this government.

Will the Premier be picking more winners and losers in tomorrow's budget? Or will he commit to providing each and every Ontarian with the same access to quality health care services wherever they happen to live?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really appreciate my colleague's raising this issue, but they're the same kinds of questions that, frankly, I asked when I was in opposition. There's a new debate now, and I think it's important that we all join this debate. It has to do with more than just ensuring—and this is very important—that our families have access to quality health care today. It also has to do with what we need to do to ensure that our children and their children will have access to good-quality health care in the future and to do so in a way that does not compromise our ability to fund other important public services. That's the new debate, and that's the debate I would ask my honourable colleague to join as soon as possible.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, but I'd like to tell him that the debate that keeps raging is whether or not this government is actually going to provide the services that people need in health care in this province. That's the debate he should be paying attention to.

London is the latest community to see front-line services vanish. Marita Devries, who's in the gallery today with us, was diagnosed with invasive breast cancer last June. She's just one of many women and men who are about to lose the nurses that provide them support as they go through their treatment process.

If the Premier's investing in health care, why are women like Marita worried about what's going to happen to the nurses who are caring for them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member for the question. This, referring to the London Health Sciences Centre hospital, of course is very close to my heart and it's an issue that I've watched closely.

What I can tell the member opposite is that we're doing really hard work in health care across this province. Our hospitals, our LHINs, are working very hard to ensure that we get the very best value for the money we spend on health care. Sometimes that might mean doing things differently. We are absolutely committed to supporting people through the health care challenges they face, but when the evidence suggests there's a better way to spend money, we have to pay attention to that evidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, there's one piece of evidence that's clear, and that is that cutting nurses who support people as they fight cancer is absolutely cruel. Thousands have come forward to say no to these very cuts.

Here's what they are saying on online forums and petitions: Debra says, "They hold our hands, wipe our tears, guide us through unknown journeys. Never once do they send us an itemized bill for their skill and genuine concern..." Ron says, "I guess hospitals don't have any time for the sick these days."

How can the Premier and this minister be so callous as to cut the nursing care to people in their time of greatest need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that we bring some clarity to this conversation. The nurses that may be cut at London Health Sciences Centre are those who work in the mammography screening program. The best evidence through the World Health Organization, through Cancer Care Ontario, tells us that mammography screening is the only screening method that has proven to be effective. There is no discussion about cutting nurses who care for people with cancer. The discussion is: Can those nurses who are working in breast screening be better used elsewhere?

A debate is a healthy thing; it's important we talk about the facts.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can't believe the response from this minister. What do you think nurses do in a mammography clinic if they don't support the women that are going there for a breast screening?

London residents know that things are not right. The hospital is spending \$800,000 on a CEO while patient care is being cut. Thousands have signed a petition, and even the member from London West says that the situation isn't right. But the question remains, what will this government do? Will the Premier listen to Marita, to Debra and to Ron and to other patients like them, or will he ignore them and continue to cut patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our commitment to caring for patients is stronger than it has ever before been. Our record speaks for itself: We have hired 10,000 more nurses over the course of our time in office. We believe in the care that nurses provide; in fact, we are expanding the scope of practices for nurses. Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They are there when people need care. That's why we're committed to supporting new nurses as they graduate through a new nursing graduate guarantee, where they'll get experience right after they graduate so they can become full-time nurses in our health care system.

Nurses are vitally important. We will continue to support them in London and across the province.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Your fumbling yesterday

on the number of jobs to come out of the Samsung deal means you and your government really don't have a clue as to how many jobs might be created. The McGuinty government chose a model of taxpayer-funded feed-in tariffs and rich incentives to foreign companies. So perhaps the minister can get this next number right: How many Ontario jobs will be lost because of your Samsung giveaway?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't know how straightforward our answers can be, and I don't know why the member refuses to want to admit it. Actually, I know why he refuses to want to admit it: because it's good news for Ontarians, which is something that's anathema to this member and his party.

The fact is, the Samsung deal will bring 16,000 jobs to this province—16,000 green jobs. It involves a \$7-billion investment in this economy. But it's more than that. What this does is create that major tenet in our green economy that's going to help produce even more jobs, that's bringing companies from all around the world to Ontario. What this has done is make Ontario a destination for green energy investment—something we're proud of, something all Ontarians are proud of, something the member obviously does not—

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister doesn't want to tell Ontarians the whole story, because the minister knows all about the March 2009 university study on the impact of Spain's green energy policy, which George Smitherman hailed as the global leader and on which the Green Energy Act was modelled. That study concludes that for every one green job created, 2.2 jobs were lost in Spain's economy. Minister, it really doesn't matter if you pick a number like 1,400 or 16,000 or 50,000. It's always going to mean net job losses for Ontario.

Minister, stop blowing green smoke at Ontarians and tell them honestly: How many jobs are going to disappear?

Hon. Brad Duguid: In fact, there's even better news, because the Green Energy Act is going to create 50,000 jobs in this province. Day in and day out, I am meeting people—in fact, there's somebody in the audience today with the Middle East—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister. Members will please come to order.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, I just sat down and you just opened up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: A day does not go by when somebody is not here at Queen's Park, either somebody who's an advocate here in this province, trying to develop green energy, or somebody coming from abroad. Today we have a guest in the Legislature from Middle East solutions and technologies for energy and environment, coming to Ontario to see all the good things we're doing to attract attention from around the world.

Ontario is open for business. We're open for green energy business. We're developing this sector; we're creating 50,000 new green jobs through these initiatives. These are new—

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

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: More than four million working Ontarians have no workplace pension whatsoever. We in the NDP have proposed a well-received retirement plan that would allow every working Ontarian to retire with dignity and security.

Premier, will tomorrow's budget contain any good news for the four million working Ontarians lacking a workplace pension? Eighteen months after the Arthurs report gave you a blueprint for expanding pension coverage in this province, will this government continue to ignore the retirement plight of four million Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague—I thank, first of all, my honourable colleague for the question. I know he has a sincere interest in this issue.

I believe that my colleague Minister Duncan made reference to the fact that another bill would be introduced in this Legislature which will again treat this very important issue. My honourable colleague also knows that this is a matter that I have raised with the Prime Minister and with my counterparts from across the country. We see this as a national challenge. It affects Canadians from coast to coast to coast, as we say, and it begs for a national solution.

I'm also pleased to learn that this very afternoon, Minister Flaherty is launching a national discussion, which we welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Premier, but quite frankly, if you're going to stand around and wait for Stephen Harper and Jim Flaherty to act, nothing is going to happen.

Pensions, Premier, are a provincial responsibility in the vast majority of Ontario workplaces, as you know, particularly the workplaces that employ the four million Ontarians who currently lack coverage.

I'm going to ask you again, Premier: Will tomorrow's budget contain meaningful action to expand pension coverage to the four million working Ontarians who presently have no pension?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague will have to wait, of course, until tomorrow, when we present the

budget in this Legislature, to address the issues that we think warrant addressing at this particular point in time.

What I do want to say to my colleague—and I know he will understand this and admit to this, and Ontarians, of course, will need to recognize this—is that any new approach to dealing with pensions has a cost associated with it. Generally, we're talking about cost to both employers and employees.

I know that my honourable colleague and his party have put together a proposal. I would be very interested in knowing how much that proposal would cost individual employees and individual employers so that we come to grips with the real consequences.

I think it speaks to the need for all these ideas to come together, and I'm very pleased that a national effort has now been launched.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. With more students on our campuses, we're seeing additional strain on facilities, classrooms and labs. Universities and colleges are trying to keep up with the increased demand on their campuses.

Just last year in my riding of Peterborough, Trent University received over \$20 million in infrastructure funding towards their DNA and Health Sciences Centre through the joint federal-provincial knowledge infrastructure program.

Minister, what else have we done to ensure our post-secondary institutions are prepared to support our students?

Hon. John Milloy: I would like to thank the member for the question. I also want to tell members that I had a wonderful visit to Peterborough yesterday to address the chamber of commerce and had a chance to meet with representatives of Trent University, which is one of the finest universities here in the province.

The member is right: We need to make sure that we invest in the bricks and mortar side of education to make sure that we modernize our facilities, boost our long-term research and, most importantly, increase capacity.

Recent capital investments at our colleges and universities have totalled nearly \$3 billion. Last year, as members know, in partnership with the federal government through KIP, we announced \$1.5 billion in capital projects at colleges and universities across Ontario. These infrastructure investments altogether have created about 15,000 new jobs and, I'm pleased to inform members, will create about—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: Public infrastructure is vital to every person in Ontario, including the schools where our children learn and colleges and universities that equip our young people with the skills and knowledge that they need in a competitive world economy.

Our investments are providing real economic stimulus and employment by creating local jobs for engineers, architects, tradespeople and technicians. It is also helping to generate the advanced technological infrastructure needed to keep Canada's research and education facilities on the forefront of scientific advancement.

We know that our higher education is becoming more and more important in today's economy. Minister, how are infrastructure investments at our universities achieving these very important goals?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, through these investments we're going to be creating about 36,000 new spaces. But I'd like to draw members' attention not just to my opinion, but to the opinion of an outside source, the Council of Ontario Universities. They recently released a report entitled *Government Infrastructure Dollars at Work*, which highlights the important impact our infrastructure investments are having on our campuses and communities.

The report highlights what our universities are doing with the infrastructure funding they've received and how it's improving research and higher learning in our province. The report cites that many universities are building collaborative learning environments and technologically advanced classrooms designed for contemporary approaches to teaching.

No matter the discipline, undergraduate and graduate students will benefit from advanced learning settings that will prepare them for the knowledge economy.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition launched our "10 for 2010" website of 10 good ideas that, when implemented, will create private sector jobs and get Ontario's economy back on course.

One of these ideas is to create jobs in northern Ontario, a region where families have seen six years of lip service from you, Premier, but have seen no action.

Will you adopt the PC plan to restore northern Ontario's freedom to pursue resource-based job creation north of the 51st parallel and give the north a real say on the revenues and where they'll be directed?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much for the question. Indeed, may I tell the member from the other side of the House that the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry is very proud of the investments that our government has made to the northern Ontario heritage fund, rising from \$60 million to \$80 million. We are doing some work in terms of the forestry sector, providing extraordinary incentives to the industry, working on wood supply competition and certainly working on a forest tenure system.

The fact is, if I may say so, we are looking forward to the budget tomorrow. I hope I'm not stepping out of line

by saying that. Certainly we are looking forward to having some announcements that are significant for northern Ontario. But the long and the short of it is that our government has been incredibly supportive of northern Ontario. We have created 12,000 jobs, or retained 12,000 jobs, in northern Ontario through the northern Ontario heritage fund alone and, quite frankly, there's a lot—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Investment needs certainty, but your ham-fisted policies have chased away those wanting to invest in the north, because the Far North Act creates uncertainty. But don't just take my word for it. Harold Wilson, the president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, says, "When you say that 50% of land will be taken out of use and preserved, but you don't say which 50%, you rather create difficulties on the 100%." He also adds that hydro in Ontario costs twice what it does in Manitoba and Quebec, and the McGuinty Liberals' new taxes will drive it up even more.

Will you follow our advice and scrap your ill-conceived Far North Act?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We make no apologies for protecting the boreal forest, and we are going to build the northern economy through our Open Ontario plan with the Ring of Fire development that was in our throne speech: an extraordinary development, one of the greatest opportunities we've seen in northern Ontario in over a century. May I say, the member was with us at Meet the Miners Day yesterday. We are working with the mining community and the mining sector in terms of modernizing the Mining Act, and we've worked closely with them to help bring investment back to northern Ontario. We've provided a balanced piece of legislation that continues to provide a positive investment climate while we also reflect 21st century values. But I'll tell you again: no apologies from us. The fact is, we are very excited about the Open Ontario plan for the Ring of Fire which will create thousands of jobs in northern Ontario in the next decade.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. After intense pressure from health professionals, community groups, parents and, I dare say, the press across this province, we read today in the paper that this Premier may temporarily protect essential child care spaces from closure.

My question is, why won't this same Premier protect the special diet allowances of 160,000 social assistance recipients who depend on support to deal with critical health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis and cystic fibrosis?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Like I said to the member a few days ago, he should wait for the budget on Thursday to know what is in the budget and what is out of the

budget. But this government is very proud about what we have done for poverty in this province. Contrary to the government that preceded us, we have increased social assistance by 11%, and we're very proud of it. Again, on Thursday, we will see if there is another increase. We have also helped those workers who work at minimum wages by raising the minimum wage, and they will see \$10.25 per hour on March 31. The full-day learning that the Minister of Education has announced is also—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The reason I asked the Premier the question is because, for the past two weeks, the Minister of Community and Social Services has refused to rule out the ending of the special diet allowance, as she did again today.

On Monday, March 21, medical and nursing associations, led by prominent Ontarians like Dr. Michael Rachlis and Dr. Gordon Guyatt, wrote to the Premier and to the minister urging them to maintain the special diet allowance. They said, in part, that the social assistance rates in Ontario are grossly inadequate and that the money is desperately needed for these social assistance recipients. Health professionals, the Toronto Board of Health, the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and others who signed it recognize the importance of the special diet allowance in preventing serious illness. Why won't the government rule out making cuts to the special diet allowance today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As the member knows with his experience in this House, we'll have to wait for Thursday to know what will be in the budget.

But this government has done a lot for poor people. For example, we implemented the Ontario child benefit. And what did this member do when we implemented it? He voted against it.

We also increased the minimum wage. What did this member do? The member voted against it.

We also provided an income tax package which will benefit the poor in this province. What did this member do? He voted against it.

So we—

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

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Northerners understand all too well the importance of the mineral and forest resources we have in our province, but today I wanted to talk to you about the north's people, especially its young people. Our government has been clear that we will work hard to ensure that job opportunities exist in northern Ontario for young people starting to build their careers, and a great example of that would be the renewed focus of the northern Ontario heritage fund on private sector job creation.

Minister, last week you and I announced the funding for the summer jobs service program, a program that will help students in their quest for summer employment. Could you please share with the House what this program is and how it will benefit northern students this summer?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks so much for the question. Certainly, last Friday's summer jobs service program announcement was incredibly important for northern Ontario students and employers. I was delighted to announce, along with my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, that this year our government is investing more than we ever have to support summer jobs creation across northern Ontario. This year's program funding will be administered by the staff of the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, and it is a record \$5.65 million, which translates into funding for as many as 6,200 summer jobs, several hundred more than last year.

Our government has made it very, very clear that the Open Ontario plan will continue to provide as many opportunities as possible for students looking for work in the north, to help lay the foundation for them to gain employment after graduation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week's announcement was very important for both the employers and the students. At the announcement—I remember this very poignantly—we had the opportunity to hear from a northern aboriginal youth who was part of the summer jobs program, and he spoke very passionately about the experience he gained through the program.

This is first-hand evidence that the service program is working and that our government's investment is in fact giving students the opportunity to gain the skills and experience they need for a future in the north and a future they want. The experience that the students in the program will gain is very important, as these jobs often point students in the direction of the work they will be passionate about for the rest of their lives.

Minister, could you please tell the House more about the service program and the types of job opportunities that exist?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Indeed, it's really moving speaking to the young students who benefit from this program.

The summer jobs service program makes it possible for employers to hire students by providing them with a \$2-an-hour wage subsidy as an incentive to hire students between 15 and 30 years of age who are planning to return to school in the fall. These students obviously get an opportunity to gain valuable experience in forestry, tourism, retail and various other sectors.

There are a number of examples of summer job opportunities there, and certainly some of them are in the Ontario public service. The Ontario Ranger program is an incredibly successful program. It's an eight-week program working in natural resources management, living in a remote camp—again, great training for that. There's something called Summer Company, which is a great

opportunity for enterprising young people who want to start and run their own summer business.

So there are many opportunities, and it's great news for northern Ontario young people.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it is estimated that 37% of Ontario contractor renovation jobs are currently done by the underground economy. Let me give you some numbers: That means that \$5.2 billion of the renovation industry goes to the underground annually. Your government's HST will make it impossible for legitimate renovators to compete with a cash deal. Your HST will only build that underground economy. How are you going to protect consumers and the renovation sector from the certainty of disappearing to the underground economy?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. I say to the member, this government supports the 400,000 men and women who work in the construction sector. This government also wants to protect and safeguard those men and women who go to work every day to build our cities, our houses, our bridges, our roads. We've brought in safeguards. We've doubled the number of inspectors to get out on the job sites to ensure the health and safety of those workers.

Unlike that party—when they were in government, they fired water inspectors. They fired meat inspectors. They diluted health and safety—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I know why this is called question period: because there are never any answers.

This question is about HST and has nothing to do with the labour minister. Billions of dollars are already being lost to the various levels of government. The HST will only increase that loss.

The Altus Group, commissioned by the Ontario Home Builders' Association—which is not happy with your HST—estimates that the current losses are \$1.6 billion in personal income tax, an additional \$298 million in GST revenue, and about \$767 million from other revenues.

Premier, unless this is the money that your government is willing to part with, I ask again, why would you proceed with a tax—

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: This government has invested a historic \$32.5 billion in infrastructure to support the construction sector—again, to build our economy here in Ontario while ensuring the protections, the health and safety of those construction workers. We continue to be on side with the workers to build our cities, to invest in construction. That's what I'm hearing from the industry.

At the same time, we want to ensure that those good employers have a level playing field and that we tackle the underground economy. That's what we're doing by

having our inspectors out there in the field, ensuring that everybody is playing by the rules, with a level playing field, and that those workers—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Huron Central Railway operates a line from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury. It moves freight like steel and pulp, and it is critical in supporting good jobs in the north. The operator is losing money and is threatening to pull out by the end of the month without government support to upgrade the deteriorating tracks. Ottawa has already committed stimulus funding. Why is Ontario holding up this project?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Like many proposed projects out there, they're obviously under consideration at this point in time, and we look forward to doing as much as we can. This is part of a \$32.5-billion infrastructure investment we've made over the last two years. We're talking about 300,000 jobs that have been created through that infrastructure investment. Those are the numbers we predicted would be the case. The Conference Board of Canada not only verified those numbers, but indicated that our numbers were conservative and that, indeed, even more jobs were being created as a result of these very important and integral investments.

We're taking under consideration the issue the member has raised. It's certainly one of the matters that's under consideration within the ministry. We'll continue to take it very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Time is running out. Northern families are not going to be happy with this government's waffling and stalling on this very important issue for their community. They're worried about the railway shutting down.

Sault Ste. Marie city council sent a letter to Ottawa and Queen's Park urging immediate action. The city's chief administrative officer said, "Whatever needs to be done by the federal and provincial government, needs to get done." Ottawa says that Ontario needs to sign an infrastructure agreement before money flows.

Will the Premier stop passing the buck, sign this agreement and put northern Ontario families and communities first for a change?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased, again, to respond to the question to say that we're still having a very close look at this. Let me tell you something, the member from Sault Ste. Marie, David Oraziotti, has been absolutely relentless in promoting this project. I think I hear from the member from Sault Ste. Marie about every second day on this and other projects from that region.

I can tell you that we're looking forward to continuing with the unprecedented level of investment in the north and right across this province. The \$32.5 billion that

we've invested over the next two years are contributing very much to ensuring that Ontario families have access to good-quality jobs; 300,000 jobs have been created over the two-year period of this particular program.

We're going to continue to invest in infrastructure, and we'll certainly take the advice of the member very seriously.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is also for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, with the 2010 budget being tabled tomorrow, I would like to ask a question about last year's budget. In 2009, over \$32.5 billion was committed to invest in infrastructure over a two-year period—obviously a significant investment. Constituents in my riding want the government's assurance that these funds are being spent in a responsible manner and that they're going to worthwhile projects that will make the communities we live in better today and long into the future. They also want to know how these investments are supporting local projects, like new recreation facilities for their kids. They want to know that our job commitment translates into jobs locally.

Minister, what are you doing to ensure this historic investment—

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member raises a very important question. I too believe that citizens deserve to know how these investments are benefiting our communities. I'm pleased to tell you that, together with the federal government, we've developed accountability measures to do just that. We've published program guidelines and signed agreements governing the use of infrastructure funds; we've built interministerial teams to evaluate project applications against certain criteria, such as construction readiness and environmental assessments; and we're making certain that funds are distributed fairly in all regions of the province to ensure that all regions of this province can benefit.

In fact, in the member's own community of Guelph, we're investing in a number of different projects to improve the quality of life of her residents. We're investing in roads, like Westmount and Edinburgh. We're making renovations to the River Run performing arts centre. We're supporting projects such as the—

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Minister, I'm heartened to hear that this government is taking reasonable measures to ensure that funding is distributed in a responsible and fair manner. I think, however, that my constituents want to see the results. They want to see improvements to their roads and public transit, to educational and recreational facilities, to water and to affordable housing.

After years of neglect under previous governments, our infrastructure can't wait any longer. These projects need to get under way today. You said that 2,600 projects

have been approved so far, and in downtown Guelph you can see the road construction, but what about the other infrastructure projects?

Minister, how can citizens all across Ontario learn about the projects in their own communities?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the supplementary. As you know, we do have a tight time frame on these projects, and I'm happy to report that the 2,600 shovel-ready projects are expected to be completed by March 31 of next year. In fact, 1,700 of them are already under way or complete as of today.

Shovels are in the ground and people are working. Ontarians are seeing the results of our infrastructure investments. More importantly, this government wants Ontarians to see the results of our investments and to see them from the comfort of their own homes. That's why my predecessor, Minister Phillips, helped launch our new website, Revitalizing Ontario's Infrastructure, which can be found at www.ontario.ca/infrastructure. This website will provide greater transparency to the citizens of Ontario by tracking the progress of these construction projects. They can turn to these websites—

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

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, your government is acting like workplace safety is an exclusive union issue, and so does your new health and safety advisory board, the IHSA. Only 30% of Ontario's construction workers are unionized; however, 100% of the positions on the new advisory board and the board of directors are reserved for unionized workers.

What makes you think that this board, created for the safety of the workers, can be reserved for, and given out solely and exclusively to, your friends at the Working Families Coalition?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question, and the opportunity to talk about health and safety in the province and the importance of prevention. We work with our partners on health and safety, partners like the WSIB and our health and safety associations, as the member mentioned. We work with labour groups, we work with employers and we work with employees—all working together to build a stronger health and safety system in the province of Ontario.

That's why we have now an expert advisory panel that is looking at occupational health and safety in the province in a comprehensive way. That panel is being chaired by Tony Dean, somebody who is respected by employers, by labour, by government—

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, a fair way of protecting Ontarians would include representation for all construction workers. Your government has talked tough about

integrity, but I see you have found a new way to skirt the rules once again. Instead of working towards worker safety, you've just found another way to give your union friends another sweetheart deal. Your friend Steve Mahoney, chair of the WSIB, which funds the IHSA, should make safety the only priority for the association. Instead, he's feathering your Liberal nest.

We remember him for his expensive dinners on the taxpayers' dime. Why is this safety board being handed out like a political plum to your friends at Working Families?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know that member enjoys divisive politics, but we are talking about the health and safety of our greatest resource in the province of Ontario, and that is our people. We will continue to work in a way that can prevent injuries and fatalities from happening in the workplace.

Our health and safety associations work with all sectors, work with all employers, work with labour groups and hear from employees how we can bring in the best practices to help ensure the safety of those workers, so that our moms and dads, so that our brothers and sisters come home at the end of the day, safe and sound, to their families. That is my number one priority as Minister of Labour and for our ministry, and our government sees that as one of our top—

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

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The question is to the Premier: Tomorrow is going to be the budget, and you know as well as I do that hydro prices, when it comes to our major employers in northern Ontario, are a real issue. In the case of Xstrata, it is one of the primary reasons why that Xstrata mill, as far as the smelter and refinery, is shutting down.

Tomorrow in your budget, can we expect that you're going to respond to the issue of hydro so companies like Xstrata don't have to shut down and move to the province of Quebec?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know my honourable colleague knows that I've met with representatives from Xstrata. I had a good discussion with them and I put very directly to them a question: "Tell me exactly why you are investing so heavily, for example, in Sudbury, but you are removing some of your operations from Timmins"—in case my friend would have us believe that somehow they're removing themselves entirely from Ontario. I focused on electricity prices, and those were an issue, but they were not by any means the defining issue or the determining issue in the future of Xstrata in the province of Ontario. I just want to make sure that my friend understands that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Premier, Xstrata's metallurgical site is the largest utility customer for hydro in Ontario. You can't make this House believe and you can't make

the people of Ontario believe that, somehow, your high energy cost for electricity is not one of the reasons—and the primary reason—that this company is shutting down its smelter refinery.

I ask you again, can we expect in the budget tomorrow that your government is going to respond to this issue and deal with the electricity prices so that we don't see more Xstratas of the world leaving Ontario for jurisdictions in Manitoba and Quebec, where they have better hydro prices than here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It is true—and I think we need to be honest about this—that electricity prices are lower in Manitoba and Quebec. They have been blessed with a different kind of geography that enables them to harness hydroelectric power, which gives them a competitive advantage in that way. That's not to say that we haven't done much and won't continue to do more for our energy-intensive companies. We have a number of programs in place to help them reduce their energy usage: conservation programs, energy reduction opportunities and the like.

With respect to the budget itself, of course, I know that my friend is impatient in that regard, but he'll have to wait and see when we present that in this very House tomorrow.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, farmers in my riding have brought to my attention a national print, radio and web-based public notice campaign for the Growing Forward program. They are concerned that this campaign does not promote any specific program and, more importantly, there is no mention of a current business risk management review. I know that Ontario farmers have been communicating with you, as you too have been hearing from farmers in my riding about many issues, but most importantly about business risk management. Ontario farmers are dissatisfied with parts of the existing suite of programs. They say it's not working for them.

Will the minister explain to the House what this ad campaign is all about?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I want to thank the member for the question. The federal government is currently running a national Growing Forward awareness campaign from late February to the end of March. To be clear, this ad campaign is an initiative that is by the federal government only. To my knowledge, the provincial governments were not consulted on its design—certainly not Ontario.

I'm very proud to say that the McGuinty government has stepped up to the plate numerous times where the federal government has failed to stand up for Ontario farmers. We listened to the concerns of our grain and oilseed producers, and we delivered a three-year RMP pilot for that sector. The province funded its traditional 40% share for three years. Of course, we were very dis-

appointed that the federal government wasn't able to join us in this initiative in support of our—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, I know that you presented the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition proposal at the FPT meeting last month. I'm hearing that with the business risk management plan, farmers will have no bankable support and be in a better position to deal with the challenges that nature, global competition in agrifuel and import costs present.

I know you've been pushing for the national business risk management strategic review to move forward to help our farmers, which they have been asking for. I'm also aware that you've been asking our farmers to support you in your efforts to push the federal government to come to the table as partners. My constituents would like the federal government to come to the table, just like we did, and provide support to the sector, required in these challenging times.

Minister, would it be easier to support our farmers if we had a real partner in the federal government?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: It is a very good question.

Ontario farmers are dissatisfied with parts of the existing suite of programs, and I sought to make that clear to my federal, provincial and territorial colleagues at the FPT.

We are very proud of the support we have been able to give our Ontario farmers, and I know that we could do much more if our federal government would work with us to provide effective programming to meet the needs of Ontario farmers.

My priority is to ensure that the national BRM strategic review moves forward aggressively. I am focused on the need to address producers' concerns related to complexity, bankability and predictability.

I understand that Ontario producers are restless for change. I can assure them that I will be likewise restless in my—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. On Monday I would have hoped you saw or heard what took place on The Agenda With Steve Paikin, live from Timmins, where a number of the municipalities—Jamie Lim, from the Ontario Forestry Association was there, and a question came forward about the impact of the Endangered Species Act. Minister, what's taking place there? Once fully implemented, they're looking at entire communities being shut down as a result of the implementation of the Endangered Species Act.

Can you commit to work with the forestry industry and the municipalities in northern Ontario to minimize the impact of the Endangered Species Act on those communities in the north?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. This is an extraordinarily important issue and something that I've spent the last two months working with.

I have to tell you that I have had some extraordinary conversations with the forestry sector. Certainly, anybody from the northern communities—northern mayors have come to speak to me at OGRA and ROMA. I am absolutely committed to working and consulting with our First Nations, with our northern members, and certainly with the forestry sector and the mining industry, that came to talk to me yesterday.

The Endangered Species Act is a commitment of our government; it's very important to us. We want to get it right, and we are committed to working with all of our partners on this important piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Thank you for that supplementary, Minister. The timing is a little off.

A lot of the industry is of great concern, as well as the impact on the forestry sector. If you look at the Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports and what's going to take place with the Endangered Species Act, with the individuals working in that sector—if you look at the Atlantic forestry magazine, it will specifically talk about the fact that Ontario has been taken to court and effectively may shut down many more of those industries in the north that are being affected. You have the Endangered Species Act, along with the US Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports, effectively shutting down a lot of those.

Minister, we need some sort of a commitment to ensure that those sectors are strong, because they are the lifeblood of the north. How can you help, Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I would like to comment that there has been a lot of speculation, and certainly a lot of misinformation and a lot of analysis that's wrong. It's certainly frightening, and there are scare tactics going on in a lot of media, certainly last night in some of the Timmins papers. This isn't helpful.

We need to work with our forestry sector, and we're going to find a way to make sure that economic development continues in the north. The north is our future. We intend to work with them. I appreciate the question. We're going to continue to work with our partners to make sure the Endangered Species Act and development in the north continue to progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to welcome a delegation from China headed by Mr. Yaozu Cui, president of the China higher education information and career centre, CHSI; Ms. Lili Zhang, manager, CHSI; Mr. Yingjun He, international marketing director, CHSI;

and Wenjie Chen, office manager, CHSI. They are joined by Mrs. Grace Chum, president of Sinobridge and Perfect Link, and my very good friend and constituent, the former member of Parliament, Mr. Sarkis Assadourian. Please join me in welcoming them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAX KEEPING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On behalf of the residents of Nepean–Carleton and my PC caucus colleagues from eastern Ontario, Steve Clark, Randy Hillier, Norm Sterling and John Yakabuski, I'd like to say thank you to Max Keeping.

Born a Maritimer who left Nova Scotia when I was 23 years old, Max's life story spoke to me; it inspired me. He arrived in Ottawa via Newfoundland and Nova Scotia also at the ripe old age of 23. He embraced his new hometown, every Canadian's second hometown, the city of Ottawa.

Max became a CFRA, then CTV, reporter before joining CJOH as its anchor and news director.

But it's not just his journalism that sets him apart from the rest. Indeed, it's Max's commitment to the people of Ottawa, in particular our children and youth. Max was a driving force behind making our local newscasts child-friendly. The Max Keeping Wing at CHEO and his many other honours recognize that commitment.

But it was also his work as the founder of Children and Youth Friendly Ottawa that makes it so special. In fact, the first time I ever met Dalton McGuinty was at a CAYFO event at the Spirit of the Capital Awards with Max Keeping. It was long before Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier of this province and long before I was elected an MPP in this chamber. But even then, Max impressed upon us the importance of Ontario's children and youth.

Later, as I became an MPP, I was able to bring forward the children's bill of safety and protective rights, and I beamed with pride when Max Keeping endorsed that bill.

I'll always be grateful to Max Keeping. He was a role model to me and to so many others across Ottawa. It's a privilege to know and to work with him.

I congratulate Max on his retirement and in his new role as CTV ambassador. It's an honour to say thank you, Max Keeping, for your commitment to our city.

ENVIRONMENT AWARD

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to congratulate two University of Western Ontario students for winning a \$25,000 award from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

The students, Hilary Booth and Peter Schnurr, won the award for growing biofuels that would provide an al-

ternative method for generating energy while meanwhile being safe for the environment. These students were in competition with 45 other teams and were one out of four selected. The elimination process is very rigorous as the many talented teams showcase their creations.

As you know, the safety and protection of our environment is crucial, and I commend these students for applying their critical thinking skills and innovative ideas in progressing science and alternative energy. It's their hard work and dedication that ensures that our environment is protected from harmful chemicals and also raises awareness about the new and fresh ideas young people have to offer regarding going green.

I commend both of these students for putting their ideas forward and demonstrating to aspiring scientists, environmentalists and citizens everywhere that there are always cleaner energy options to pursue.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's a pleasure, on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, to welcome to Queen's Park representatives from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and several archbishops, who are here at Queen's Park today to meet with their MPPs. Their coming to Queen's Park is an important part of the legislative process, since it allows us to discuss ideas, issues and concerns.

As a former teacher, trustee and education minister, I know the privilege and pride that come with being involved in the education of the next generation of Ontarians. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to thank all the individuals who are here today, on this Catholic education lobby day, for the outstanding contributions that each one of them has made to motivate, inspire and challenge young minds. Catholic schools have been educating students in mind, body and spirit since before the birth of the province, and they have provided educational excellence.

So I say to you, on behalf of Mr. Hudak and my caucus, congratulations on a job well done. We were pleased that Premier Davis extended full funding to Catholic schools. I hope we can all join them later for a reception.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the government, I want to say no congratulations on the recent decision by Legal Aid Ontario to regionalize services in communities across Ontario. As you know, Mr. Speaker—I imagine that members of the government know about this—Legal Aid Ontario provides legal services to people under a certain income to defend themselves in court when it comes to particular charges they may have upon them.

The problem we now have is that if you're living in a community somewhere—in my case, in northern Ontario, be it Kirkland Lake, Kapuskasing or Timmins—you will

no longer be able meet up front with somebody who has to make the decision about whether, at the end of the day, you are going to get representation from Legal Aid Ontario. Instead, what you're going to have to do now is call a 1-800 number in Sudbury in order to talk to somebody over the phone about your case and why you need to have—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's all right. I notice the clock isn't going, but I'll limit myself to two minutes.

You'll have to pick up the 1-800 number, call somebody in Sudbury and make your case over the phone as to why you need to get representation from Legal Aid Ontario. Should a decision go against you, it will be much harder for you to appeal in order to get legal aid to represent you.

I think this is a travesty when it comes to justice. One thing we have in our democracy is that everybody who is charged under the law has an ability to be represented in court and to have their day in court. How are you to do that, especially those people who find themselves at the lower end of the socio-economic scale, if you're not able to get actual access to a lawyer because of circumstances?

I say to this government that this is a mistake. I think this will lead to more problems with people being under-represented in our courts, and it's a travesty of the legal representation these people need in order to defend themselves when they get to court. I call on this government to turn this around and to re-establish services and keep services in our communities so that we can get the services we justly deserve in communities outside the regional centres.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Like all communities, those in northern Ontario have been affected by the global recession, and our government is committed to building new economic opportunities in the north.

As an example, we opened Ontario's first diamond mine in the north in 2008, creating hundreds of new job opportunities. Now, our Open Ontario plan will build on that success by pursuing mining opportunities in the region known as the Ring of Fire. We will work together with First Nations communities, northerners and those in the mining industry to develop one of the largest chromite deposits in the world. We will work to open up other economic opportunities for northern businesses as well.

1510

For instance, northern Ontario, in my opinion, is the ideal place for clean water companies to develop their ideas and sell their technology to the rest of the world.

Additionally, our plan will increase spaces in colleges and universities to ensure that students and laid-off workers can get the college, university or skills training they need to find new jobs.

These are just some of the initiatives in our Open Ontario plan that are going to benefit all of Ontario,

including northern Ontario. Our government continues to work hard to help northern families through these difficult times.

I'd also like to highlight what we've done by increasing the northern Ontario heritage fund from \$60 million to \$80 million. I would suggest that this is no small feat given the serious economic circumstances that we find ourselves in. Refocusing that fund back on private sector job creation, which it was originally intended to do in the late 1980s—it had morphed into more of a public infrastructure fund. We've refocused it back on private sector job creation, with great benefits for northerners.

AUTOMOTIVE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Mr. John O'Toole: A new state-of-the-art centre of excellence and research in manufacturing is nearing completion at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham. Dan Miles has advised me that Minister Flaherty and other dignitaries will be joining us on Friday for a tour of this excellent facility. The General Motors of Canada Automotive Centre of Excellence, also known as ACE, is a new \$99-million research and development facility. It will attract talent and ideas from around the world.

Our ACE includes one of the largest and most sophisticated climate wind tunnels on the planet earth. Arctic cold, desert heat and hurricane-force winds can be recreated in this five-storey building that will test vehicles, including wind turbines and other new manufactured products.

ACE is a partnership with UOIT—the University of Ontario Institute of Technology—General Motors of Canada, the Partners for the Advancement of Collaborative Engineering Education, and the governments of Ontario and Canada. I'd like to thank the new president of GM Canada, Kevin Williams; the president of Durham College, Don Lovisa; as well as the president of UOIT, Ron Bordessa. Gary Elfstrom is the centre's director of business development. John Komar is the director of engineering and operation.

I'm confident this House would like to extend its best wishes to the partners and staff for their continued success in operation. Durham region and its many partners—government, business and academia—are building a future opportunity. In today's highly competitive global market, Canada can take pride in the fact that Durham region has the ACE up its sleeve. Durham has the right skills in the right place and the right people at the right time. It's Durham's time to share in the future of Ontario.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Pat Hoy: Our government's Open Ontario plan contains many important initiatives that build new opportunities for jobs and growth in rural communities. Last year, we launched an aggressive stimulus plan that is building roads, bridges and community centres in our

rural communities. Now we are going to do even more to ensure that rural Ontario is ready to seize on the opportunities that are emerging from the global recession.

For example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will continue to support opportunities to encourage Ontarians to buy local. We will also work with our agri-food sector to seek new markets for Ontario-grown produce.

Our Green Energy Act is already creating economic opportunities in rural communities. We are going to build on that momentum by creating new opportunities for clean water entrepreneurs to sell their clean water technologies to the rest of the world, creating good jobs in rural communities. Families will also benefit from our new spaces for students that we are creating in our colleges and universities this fall.

These are great initiatives that will help our farmers and rural communities thrive in the new global economy. I am proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I am very pleased to hear how our government's Open Ontario plan will open up new economic opportunities that will create more jobs and grow our economy. For example, we are going to capitalize on the global demand for clean water technology. We will help clean-water businesses develop their technology and sell it to the rest of the world, which will help create high-skilled, well-paying jobs for Ontarians.

In addition to that, our Green Energy Act has made us North America's leader in clean energy. Support for both Verdant Power and Canadian Bio Pellet, companies now establishing in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, are great examples of this government's commitment to green industry. In the next five years, this government will support a cluster of clean-technology companies that will build their goods here and sell them to the rest of the world.

Another important concept of our plan is our tax reform package, which has received support from economists and Ontario business associations. The harmonized sales tax, in addition to business tax cuts, will result in new jobs and make our province more attractive for new business investments.

These are just a few of the examples of how, with the Open Ontario plan, we will strengthen our economy and create more jobs.

I support our government's plan for building a stronger Ontario, and I look forward to the budget tomorrow.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Our government's Open Ontario plan recognizes that diversity is one of our province's greatest strengths. It gives our businesses a competitive advantage by allowing us to share our ideas with the world and bring new ones to the province of Ontario.

We want to facilitate this advantage even more by making Ontario a classroom for the world. We're going to increase the number of international students at our colleges and universities by 50%. These international students bring unique experience to the classroom. They also give an important boost to our economy and help us forge partnerships in a global economy.

What's more, we're going to pursue new trade opportunities for Ontario businesses. For example, by 2030, there will be a 40% gap between global supply and demand for water. This is a great opportunity to sell our clean water ideas and products to the rest of the world.

What's more, by being open to new investment opportunities in emerging economies like India, China and Pakistan, we can take advantage of the rapidly changing global economy and create more jobs for Ontarians.

These are all important initiatives for our province, and I'm proud to support our government's Open Ontario plan.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming some future leaders, who are seated in the east and west galleries. I had the opportunity to speak with them today and officially welcome the students from Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute to Queen's Park. Enjoy your afternoon.

Also, welcome to the family visiting from Chicago. Enjoy your visit to Queen's Park, and thanks for coming and touring in Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My kind of town.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a fun city.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38, the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Minister of Labour concerning labour appointments. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN ESSENTIELS

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à régler sans grève ni lock-out les conflits de travail au sein des services de transport en commun .

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Caplan: For a very short statement.

Public transit, whether one is a transit user or not, is vital to the health and economic well-being of our city and, indeed, our province.

Since 1974, the TTC has had nine strikes and work-to-rule campaigns, including an illegal walkout in 2006, a two-day strike—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The standing orders make it very clear what constitutes the comments by a person presenting a bill for first reading. They do not constitute a speech or a debate on the matter. In fact, we had agreed at one point that the explanatory note was to be the basis for that. This goes far beyond what the standing orders contemplate for that brief explanation. This is a political statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Welland for his point of order, and he is correct. I will remind the member, and take this opportunity to once again remind all members, that when they are introducing bills, they are to read the explanatory note.

1520

Mr. David Caplan: Thank you, Speaker.

There was also an eight-day job action in 1991.

If enacted, the Essential Public Transit Services Act will prohibit strikes and lockouts in connection with labour disputes between the Toronto Transit Commission and its employees, and will provide a means to resolve the disputes by arbitration. The bill will also authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations extending the regime to any other public transit service in the province of Ontario.

I say, enough is enough. Citizens all over the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I would remind the member not to challenge the Chair, please.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. Ruprecht, Mr. Sergio and Mr. Colle exchange places in

order of precedence such that Mr. Ruprecht assumes ballot item number 5, Mr. Colle assumes ballot item number 8 and Mr. Sergio assumes ballot item number 38; and that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items number 5 and 8.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity to remind all members that when they do present a petition, they are to be certified by the table. I don't want to have to be a schoolmarm checking out your petitions.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government created the local health integration networks; and

"Whereas the mandate of the LHINs includes providing funding to a hospital; and

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital's deficit of \$6 million is largely due to fixed costs beyond its control; and

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital is serving an ever-larger population; and

"Whereas operating rooms and in-patient surgeries will be closed, vital services lost, and jobs lost will impact the economy of Cambridge;

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

"That the Ontario government sufficiently fund the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN and the Cambridge Memorial Hospital to ensure that Cambridge residents have full access to all hospital services to which they are rightfully entitled."

Pursuant to the standing orders, I sign the petition, among thousands signed by Cambridge.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: In my hand there is a certified petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, good for you.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you.

"Whereas the health of the First Nations youth in Ontario is of growing concern;

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

"To continue the partnership with the Right to Play partnership with the Moose Cree First Nation;

"To expand the Right to Play program to other First Nations communities; and

"To follow up these programs to ensure that other initiatives continue to promote the health of First Nations youth in Ontario."

I agree with this petition and attach my signature and send it to the table via page Jameson.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition that was a major issue during my by-election; it's regarding the harmonized sales tax. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Leeds-Grenville do not want the McQuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

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

I certainly agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right of all Ontarians and they should be able to enjoy that.

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

"To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

"To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

"To continue to strengthen Ontario's trust in the safety of our drinking water;

"To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

“To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standard;

“To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and give it to page Harsh.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure, as always, to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas residents 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 for their children, “and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000;”—in fact, it will be applied under \$500,000, as well—“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” of Ontario: “seniors, students, families,” the frail elderly, “farmers and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families” yet again.

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this, and present it one of the pages, Jameson.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a unique opportunity to develop the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario and the Legislative Assembly should ensure us that this valuable resource is used to advantage all Ontarians while respecting the environment and rights of the First Nations people;

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

“To develop the natural resources in the Ring of Fire for economic benefit for Ontario;

“To ensure that the development of the Ring of Fire does so only within the guidelines of an EPA report;

“To respect the rights of the First Nations people and communities; and

“To work with local industry to bring employment to northern Ontario communities.”

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it, and send it to the table with page Alexander.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

“Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

“Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child’s school several times throughout the day in order to test their child’s blood sugar levels; and

“Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

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

“(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

“(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child’s parent/guardian.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my name thereto.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Joe Dickson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario’s youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

“To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

“To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

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“To continue to support Ontario’s families through these initiatives; and

“To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province.”

I agree with this petition, I attach my signature to it and I pass it to Snigdha.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals...” and a number of other ones listed here that I will not read;

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

“That the Dalton McGuinty government recognize Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

WATER QUALITY

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

“Whereas the worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than the current supply in the next 20 years; and

“Whereas Ontario has developed many new clean water technologies and practices since the Walkerton water contamination, which resulted from the poor water regulation practices of the former Conservative government; and

“Whereas Ontario has now implemented many new, improved practices for clean water regulation, developed better policies and fostered new clean water technologies; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s Open Ontario plan includes strategies to increase our province’s ability to develop and sell clean water expertise and products to the rest of world;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government’s plan to introduce a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of the province’s expertise in clean water technology, create jobs and new economic opportunities for our province and help communities around the world access clean water.”

As I support this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: If I may I’d just like to introduce my son, Stuart Miller, and his buddies Rayce Veitch and Rudy Olsson. That’s his band. They’re called Crimes in Paris and they’re here visiting. A little promo there.

Now on a more serious note, I have a petition with thousands of signatures on it with regard to Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare has undertaken an operational audit to identify efficiencies and reduce costs; and

“Whereas we recognize that the status quo is not an option; and

“Whereas rehab services are of paramount concern to the residents of the region where income levels exclude them from accessing other alternatives; and

“Whereas the deficit recovery plan will not balance the budget;

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

“That the Minister of Health provide additional operational funding of 5% amounting to \$3.4 million to ensure the continuation of services as described in the deficit reduction plan submitted to the North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN dated January 29, 2010.”

I support this petition and have signed it.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

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

“To continue with their support of the guns and gangs program;

“To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

“To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

“To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

“To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be.”

I have signed the petition.

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Whereas the McGuinty government’s plan to harmonize the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

“Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovations, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget.”

As I am in agreement, I have signed this to give to page Ben.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Glen R. Murray: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right all Ontarians should be able to enjoy;

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

“To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

“To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

“To continue to strengthen Ontario’s trust in the safety of our drinking water;

“To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

“To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standard;

“To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply.”

I agree with this and will affix my name to it and give it to our legislative page Sabrina.

TAXATION

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax (HST) represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

“This new tax, which we are calling the DST (Dalton sales tax), will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including:” accounting and other services; “electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; newspapers and magazines; Internet and cable; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym” memberships and fitness memberships;

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

“That” Dalton McGuinty “not impose this” rigorous “new tax on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses” at this time in the economy of Ontario.

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this, and present it to Leah, one of the new, young, intelligent pages here at Queen’s Park.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Rick Johnson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than the current supply in the next 20 years; and

“Whereas Ontario has developed many new clean water technologies and practices since the Walkerton water contamination, which resulted from the poor water regulation practices of the former Conservative government; and

“Whereas Ontario has now implemented many new, improved practices for clean water regulation, developed better policies and fostered new clean water technologies; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s Open Ontario plan includes strategies to increase our province’s ability to develop and sell clean water expertise and products to the rest of the world;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government’s plan to introduce a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of the province’s expertise in clean water technology, create jobs and new economic opportunities for our province and help communities around the world access clean water.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it and pass it to page Neale.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto’s role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I wholeheartedly endorse this motion, and will be sharing my time with the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, who is very anxious to advance submissions with respect to this very important motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I’m always pleased when my friend across the way from the riding of Durham recognizes my time and encourages me to stand in this place and use as much of it as is allocated to me. Having said that, I want to begin by similarly expressing my support, in a general context, of the motion we have before us today, and I want to make a preliminary comment before I move into some more specific comments.

When I travel, like many of us do, outside my home jurisdiction, whether it’s somewhere in Ontario more

remote from Toronto, where my riding or my home sits in Pickering, next to Toronto, or when I travel outside the province in Canada or, in some cases, outside the country to other jurisdictions, I meet people and they ask, "Where are you from?" I don't start with, "I'm from Pickering," unless I happen to be in the greater Toronto area or the Golden Horseshoe. Once I get beyond there, my reference point is Toronto. If I travel outside this province and they say, "Where are you from?" I say, "I'm from the Toronto area." They say, "Oh, I know Toronto; where in Toronto?" So I can begin to whittle it down a little more precisely.

If I'm outside the country, in particular in the US or maybe somewhere else—not very frequently, mind you, but on occasion—certainly Toronto will be the first point of reference when someone says, "Where are you from?" It might be, "Well, I'm from Toronto, Canada." "Oh, yeah, I think I know where that is," and we can kind of whittle it down from there.

I open with those general comments, because I think it's important that we recognize in this debate how important Toronto is in the context of what we're going to be discussing here for those who don't do business here directly, don't necessarily know the geography directly, but recognize Toronto as a significant entity when you reference it to folks well outside of where you might be. It becomes our point of reference, and thus the point of reference, I think, for many others whom we want to influence in the context of what we do here in the province of Ontario.

I want to endorse the need, first, for a strong common securities regulator in this country, with its principal office being located here in Toronto. Securities regulation and enforcement are particularly important issues at this time, and I don't think we'll find much disagreement about that as we have our discussion this afternoon. We may, but I can't imagine that we'll have much difference of opinion in regard to security regulations as important issues at this time in particular, as we try to modernize our regulatory structures and create more effective enforcement tools for securities.

Ontario's financial services sector is already a world leader and a critical part of this province's economy. The sector itself employed some 365,000 people in Ontario in 2009, an increase in sectoral employment of some 60,000 jobs since 2003. In addition, the sector supports an estimated 280,000 ancillary jobs in the area of software design, in respect to financial market areas, and similar fields. So when we look at the quantum of employment involved with securities regulation and ancillary services, we're talking about 650,000 jobs.

Toronto is home to globally successful insurance companies. We're home to globally successful investment and pension funds. Canada's banks are largely based in Ontario and enjoy a global reputation as the soundest in the world. I think any of us in this place can easily reflect upon the last 18 months, upon the last 12 months, upon the last six months, and acknowledge the importance of the banking system to the stability that we've seen, but I

think more importantly, as we look beyond our borders, to the way others see Canada, see our banking system and see our capacity to manage our financial situation here in this country. Toronto is also home to five of the largest banks in North America by market capitalization and is the third-largest financial sector in North America, behind only New York and Chicago.

The McGuinty government is supporting the growth and expansion of this major sector of Ontario's economy, and continues to support it by investing in education and public infrastructure and by establishing a more competitive tax system and a more modern and more efficient provincial regulatory climate.

I've had the opportunity over the past half-dozen years here to serve as the parliamentary assistant to both Minister Duncan currently and, prior to my time at the finance ministry, to the then Chair of Management Board, currently the Chair of Cabinet and minister responsible for seniors, Gerry Phillips. In each of those instances, I've had the opportunity to watch and work with those gentlemen in respect to securities regulation.

I want to speak just briefly in regard to the Chair of Cabinet, Gerry Phillips, and his early role when I first came here—at least his early role from my context on my arrival, not his early role. He has played, I think, the lead role here in Ontario and throughout the country, in many ways, in encouraging and supporting the establishment of a common securities regulator. He believes, as we do, that that's a very important initiative. I think he took a tremendous leadership role in that regard across the country. I had a chance to see him in action in that regard and I just wanted to acknowledge his work, although the file is currently being carried by the Minister of Finance within that context.

An effective securities regulator promotes a culture of integrity and compliance that instils greater investor confidence in the capital markets, which in turn attracts capital and supports job creation. The key here is to acknowledge the fact that if you have a strong financial system, one that entrenches a culture of integrity, that builds on compliance and compliance skills and that creates investor confidence in the capital markets and attracting those dollars, then are you going to attract more investment, and that investment is going to create jobs.

This is more than just recognizing the importance of Toronto in the financial services sector in Canada. It's more than simply calling on the need to acknowledge Toronto as the logical home for a common securities regulator. It also speaks strongly about the need to build the economy in this province and in this country and what an important role Toronto, and Ontario in this instance, can play in doing that.

To promote growth in Ontario's economy, we need to send a very clear message to all business and entrepreneurs that Ontario is a safe and attractive place in which to invest. This is particularly important in today's global economy where we compete with jurisdictions from around the world for their investment dollars, their investment euros or the yen.

To that end, I want to recognize the excellent work that has been done by the Ontario Securities Commission during this very recent period of almost unprecedented market volatility and turbulence. Praise has legitimately been given to Canada's bank regulators for sparing this country from the abuse that has been seen in so many other jurisdictions. I believe that the provincial securities regulators, and most importantly ours here, the Ontario Securities Commission, also deserve considerable credit for allowing Canada's capital markets to continue to operate in a safe and effective fashion in the face of what we will all recognize as having been and continuing to be very challenging circumstances.

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The OSC has worked hard to promote integrity and compliance in Ontario's capital markets. During the past year, in response to upheavals in the market, the OSC has even increased the degree of vigilance that it normally proceeds with.

In the adjudication area, the number of hearing days for matters heard by commission tribunals rose by 48% in the last fiscal year. Investigations increased as well, with investigations of alleged breaches of securities law increasing by 23%. Now, that level of vigilance is always important, but increasingly so when people are anxious about how and where to invest. I believe the OSC has been and continues to send the right message about Ontario and the right message about Toronto. The number of concluded proceedings rose by 62%, with sanctions from these proceedings totalling some \$20.8 million in administrative penalties, the disgorgement of proceeds of violations, settlement amounts and costs.

Of course, enforcement is only part of what the OSC does to maintain market integrity. Preventing economic crimes from occurring may not make great news headlines, but it's a far more effective manner in which to deal with these issues than punishing offenders after crimes have occurred. Prevention is much better than punishment.

The OSC compliance efforts have intensified during and since the financial crisis first hit us, and one would not expect that, in the short-term, to diminish. As the financial crisis unfolded and impacted Canada's non-bank asset-backed commercial paper—or as we have come to understand it, the ABCP market—the OSC closely monitored the disclosure filings by public companies. The commission also conducted compliance reviews of major segments of the investment fund markets, including a number of fund managers of money market funds and non-conventional investment funds, to assess whether their portfolio holdings and exposures were subject to any ABCP-related risks. In addition, they looked at hedge fund managers to determine whether their funds posed any additional related risks to investors.

To assist the OSC, our government has also stepped up to meet these challenges through legislative changes that have made it easier for the OSC to take the necessary action when an enforcement order is issued by another jurisdiction, including orders made by courts and secur-

ities regulators in other provinces. I think that speaks well to the efforts that are being made, in Ontario and elsewhere, to find common ground with the objectives of establishing a common securities regulator. It's necessary that we work with other jurisdictions, and it's necessary that we look at our legislative structures to find opportunities where we can find greater co-operation and greater opportunity for the necessary enforcement.

Our government is laying the foundation for the financial services sector in Ontario so that Ontario can remain a growth engine that will continue to create thousands of high-paying jobs. We are providing the financial sector with support and flexibility to stimulate future growth while also protecting the interests of consumers and investors. Our government is partnering with the industry and other governments and has established the Financial Services Leadership Council, consisting of major financial sector CEOs and government leaders. The council will guide the work of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance as it implements a plan to improve the sector's competitiveness and make Toronto one of the top 10 financial sectors in the world.

Our government continues to pursue important measures to enhance regulation of Ontario's capital markets. In 2009, we implemented Securities Act changes and approved new OSC rules to update securities registration requirements, and registration and prospectus exemptions. These changes improve the transparency of Ontario's regulatory requirements and signal that Ontario markets are receptive to business and ready for investment.

In 2009 we also made changes to the Securities Act and the Commodity Futures Act to ensure the province and the OSC have the necessary tools to take immediate action to protect the public interest in the event of extraordinary circumstances involving a major market disruption. These changes position the government and the OSC to respond even more quickly to any future financial market crisis, the key being that as we see and have seen things unfold over the past year and a half to two years now, it's important that we act not only after the fact, but during those times, to avoid situations in the future that might put us in any particular jeopardy.

Just last month, in February, the OSC announced the creation of an investor advisory panel that will provide input on the work of the commission, including proposed OSC rules and policies, the OSC's annual statement of priorities, concept papers and specific issues. Input from a broad range of investors will assist the OSC in better understanding the needs of different investors and in developing policies that better protect investors.

Those of us in this place and throughout the province of Ontario have seen what has happened to investments that we've had in retirement-related portfolios, as an example. I think that for those who have the responsibility to ensure the level of integrity and compliance that comes with investment, it's important that we provide the necessary support—and that they do their work—through strategies like the investment advisory panel, to ensure

that we protect the investments of not only those who want to engage in the capital markets in large-dollar amounts, but effectively those individuals here in the province of Ontario who put their trust in the system with their financial future.

We're working as well with the credit union sector, the Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario on an ongoing basis to address emerging issues and support the sector's growth and its competitiveness.

This follows the successful implementation on October 1, 2009, of a multi-year legislative project to modernize regulatory requirements, update investment and lending powers, and strengthen consumer protection.

Ontario has established the Centre of Excellence in Financial Services Education, and our government is working with the financial services sector and post-secondary institutions to attract foreign students and develop the best financial-sector talent possible.

I had an opportunity just recently to meet with someone at an event we were at; I believe, if I recall, it was sponsored by OPSEU. We had quite a good discussion about opportunities for bridging between the academic status of those young people, in most cases, coming out of the university sector, wanting to move into the financial sector and having developed this base of skill, this knowledge base, but not yet necessarily having the on-the-ground experience—talent—that's so necessary to move more effectively into roles of leadership.

As part of the financial services sector, there's a proposal that is effectively being made that speaks to how you bridge that gap. How do you take young people, whether they are foreign students or whether they are natural-born students here in Ontario, from their academic training and expedite their leadership opportunities in the financial services sector?

I think there are some pretty great opportunities here to take advantage of the educational structures that we have in place and the desire of the private sector effectively to partner to make the transition not only easier, but effective.

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As we know, Ontario has earned a well-deserved reputation as a safe place in which to invest. However, in today's dynamic and quickly evolving financial markets, we can't rest on our laurels. We must always try to do better, to be even more consistent, more efficient, but probably as importantly, more accountable. Capital markets are no longer provincial in scope. They're certainly national in scope, they're international in scope, and even global in scope. It's becoming increasingly difficult to regulate them solely at the provincial level. And yet that's what we're currently doing in Canada. The OSC is one of 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators in Canada. They in turn, though, work with various provincial and territorial police forces, as well as with the RCMP. Different laws in different jurisdictions are being individually interpreted and separately enforced in 13 different jurisdictions within Canada, and yet we're

dealing with a global economy and a global market for investment.

Multiple regulators can certainly lead to duplication and restrictions on information-sharing. No one would deliberately choose to regulate markets this way. In fact, Canada is currently the only major industrialized country without a national securities regulator. Our system is, quite frankly, outdated, cumbersome at best, and in need of a significant overhaul.

Our fragmented regulatory structure puts this province and our country at a competitive disadvantage when we try to attract that international investment, and increases the costs and administrative complexity for domestic businesses and domestic investors. Frustration with this particular structure is widespread, and within the business and investment community it continues to grow. In a recent survey, 92% of Canadian CFA Institute members agreed that the current securities regulatory system should be reformed.

Colleagues on both sides of this Legislature know the Ontario government has long supported a single securities regulator for Canada. It would reinforce Canada's otherwise strong international reputation for excellence in the regulation of our financial institutions. The McGuinty government believes that a single regulator would enhance Canada's competitiveness in global capital markets, which would in turn promote prosperity in all provinces and territories.

It would seem rather obvious, if virtually every other major jurisdiction in the world has a common regulatory structure, that 13 in a country as small, in relative terms, as Canada would be far too many. There's no question about the duplication that occurs; there would be no question that different sets of rules and regulations in each one would be interpreted differently in each of those jurisdictions. Can you imagine trying to do business in multiple jurisdictions and dealing with those multiple sets of rules in a nation as small, relatively, as Canada?

Therefore, one can be heartened by the progress that has been accomplished recently on this front. A Canadian Securities Transition Office has been established by the federal government, charged with collaborating with the provinces and territories and developing and implementing a transition plan for a Canadian securities regulator. Although the structure of the new regulator is still in progress and references to the courts on relevant constitutional questions have yet to be heard, work on the transition to a national regulatory system is well under way.

Two of the appointees that the federal government has named to the transition office are Bryan Davies, a former provincial Deputy Minister of Finance, and Larry Ritchie, presently a vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. Ten interested provinces and territories nominated representatives who have been appointed to the advisory committee of participating provinces and territories to this body.

We know that a Canadian securities regulator with the right structure would offer many real benefits to our economy. It would reduce the cost and increase the

efficiency of capital market regulation in Canada. Less time spent communicating and coordinating with other securities regulators would allow for more time spent on overseeing and monitoring market participants. That's why our government is actively working with the federal government and other interested provinces and territories to put in place a Canadian securities regulator. This province has consistently advocated for a strong common securities regulator to strengthen regulations, bolster investor confidence and enhance the competitive position of our capital markets.

Given the significant role that Ontario's financial sector plays in Canada's capital markets, our government strongly believes that the principal office and centre of operations of the new regulator should be in Toronto.

Toronto is the business and financial capital of Canada. It is the centre of the nationwide capital market and Canada's link to international capital markets, which are becoming increasingly global in nature. Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined. Just let me repeat that: Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined, those cities being Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg.

Toronto offers obvious advantages as home to the new national regulator. This city is home to some of the largest participants in Canada's capital markets, and these include the TSX, the eighth-largest equity market in the world based on market capitalization. The six alternative trading systems operating in Canada are all based in Toronto. We are home to Canada's five largest banks. Two of the largest 10 global insurers plus three of the four largest Canadian property and casualty insurers find their home in Toronto, as do 58 pension fund managers—including the CPP Investment Board—and 119 securities firms. The list is not only long but impressive.

Toronto is the headquarters and home to the senior management of national associations such as the Investment Industry Association of Canada, the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, Advocis, and the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. The Toronto chapter of the CFA Society is the second-largest chapter of this influential global organization. Toronto is the headquarters of two national self-regulatory organizations for the securities industry: the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada.

And of course, Toronto is home to the Ontario Securities Commission, the largest securities regulator in Canada, with approximately 475 permanent staff who represent a unique Canadian pool of specialized security expertise in compliance, oversight and enforcement.

At times, I almost want to go back a page or so so that I can reread into the record the list of expertise that already exists here in Toronto.

Situating the principal office and centre of operations of a Canadian securities regulator in Toronto would contribute to the city's global stature.

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I began my comments talking more personally about when I travel outside this small jurisdiction we're in, as I know some of us do, and people recognize where we're from, in many cases, by virtue of our point of reference. If we're outside of the country, we reference Canada, and then we often reference—those of us here, where we work or do business—Toronto as a centre that people will recognize. Simply put, its wealth of financial institutions, its strength of financial associations, its depth of expertise and its proximity to other major North American markets make Toronto the most logical and practical choice.

I didn't comment on our proximity to other major markets, and will just briefly. We speak about New York, Chicago and Toronto as being the three largest markets in North America. If we look at Toronto and its geography and begin drawing rings around it, we can see its proximity to capital investment, to industrial growth and to those other markets that are so important. Toronto is best positioned in this country for that purpose.

The McGuinty government will continue its work with the federal and provincial governments to establish a common securities regulator that functions co-operatively throughout Canada and fairly captures the importance and strength of local offices while also having its major presence here in Toronto, reinforcing Toronto's role as the centre of financial and capital markets in this country of Canada.

Today I'm calling on members of the Legislature to endorse the need for a strong national securities regulator. I'm also calling on members to support the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the global leader in financial services and, as such, locate the principal office and centre of operations of the Canadian securities regulator in Toronto.

Ontario's strength, including its people and its strong capital markets, will ensure that our province continues to be a leader in the global economy. By working together, we will ensure that this happens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like to inform the House that the late show requested earlier today by the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has been withdrawn. I know the House shares my disappointment.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to speak to the government motion this afternoon. The motion is that "the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

Why are we debating this motion this afternoon? Well, it could be because the debate on the speech from the throne ended early and the government has no further

business to debate. Or it could be that perhaps they're just trying to create some sort of cover in case they're unsuccessful in securing the home of the national securities regulator in Toronto, where it should be. Or perhaps the government likes playing silly games—we've seen them do this before—where they bring in another Liberal wedge motion. In this case, they want us either to go on record as being against the federal Conservatives' desire to establish a national securities regulator, or they want us to support the McGuinty government's latest fluff announcement that was in the throne speech, and that's the new Open Ontario plan.

When I call the latest announcement fluff, you just need to look at the record in past throne speeches—past commitments they've made in throne speeches—to realize why I'm not putting too much weight on this latest commitment from the throne speech about the Open Ontario plan. They made a commitment of some 35,000 long-term-care beds in a past throne speech, and what have we seen? We've seen very few of them built. Most of the long-term-care beds that have been built by the McGuinty government were ones that weren't finished from the commitment made by the past PC government: Of the 20,000 long-term-care beds being built and the 16,000 rebuilt beds, some of those got finished within the time frame of the McGuinty government. But very few of the 35,000 that were promised in the throne speech have actually been built, and that's despite the fact that since 2005 the wait-list for long-term-care beds has gone from 12,000 in 2005 to some 26,000 in 2010. It's more than doubled.

They promised to shut down coal-fired electrical generating stations. In fact, that's one that's been made many, many, many times.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes. Their plan to conserve electricity, as the member from Timmins–James Bay is telling me from the side here, is to shut down most industry. They've been very successful at that. That's the consolation prize. Put the prices up so high, create conditions where business can't survive, and you end up conserving electricity because all the plants in northern Ontario, as the member from Timmins–James Bay will state, are shut down, most of the mills. Where is that ore from the Ring of Fire going to be milled, is what I'd like to know, because with our high electricity prices that the McGuinty government's bringing in, the danger is it's going to be in Quebec or Manitoba where they have more reasonable electricity prices, despite the promises of the many thousands of jobs they claim are going to be created by the Green Energy Act.

The other promise they made in the throne speech is to reduce red tape.

I am going to be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill and also the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. Thanks for that reminder, Deputy Whip.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's why you've got deputy whips, Norm.

Mr. Norm Miller: That's right.

They promised to reduce red tape in a previous throne speech, and yet the Canadian Federation of Independent Business states that the cost of red tape is some \$11 billion a year. It's a real drain on job creation, particularly for small business. The Certified Management Accountants of Ontario surveyed members: Half of them say that in the last few years under the McGuinty government red tape has gotten worse. So that promise was obviously one that wasn't kept.

What's happened to the five-point economic plan we heard so much about?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I've been waiting for the member now for about five minutes to speak to the motion.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you. The Speaker is very—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With all respect, he was speaking to the motion because the motion talks about the government's plan referred to in the throne speech, which gives this debate quite a large latitude.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I requested that he speak to the motion. I will be the one who determines whether he is speaking to the motion.

Member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I was relating it to how the Open Ontario plan was part of the throne speech and I was pointing out how the government has made numerous commitments in past throne speeches—I was outlining a number of them—which have not been kept. So I think it does relate to the recent promise to do with the Open Ontario plan.

As I say, they used to have the five-point economic plan. They now have the five-year economic plan. I expect that tomorrow we'll be hearing about the seven-year plan to eliminate the deficit, that is, as compared to last year's five-year plan to eliminate the deficit. That means that we're looking at nine years with a deficit; that is, if we believe the latest plan.

On that latest deficit reduction plan, they're planning on returning to a balanced budget in fiscal year 2017–18—or that is what has been leaked out in advance of tomorrow's budget. I would just like to point out that that is two provincial elections from now. So hopefully the people of this province will have figured out by then that this government's plans, promises, throne speech commitments and budget announcements aren't worth the paper they're written on. Hopefully the people will have come to their senses and will have elected a Tim Hudak PC government by that point, a government that will keep its commitments.

Getting back to the motion for today, though, I would actually like to move an amendment to the motion. I move that the motion be amended by deleting the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting the word “calls” therefore. If I could get a page to take this amendment to the table.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved that the motion be amended by deleting

the words “endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling” and substituting the word “calls” therefore.

Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: That would mean the new amended motion is going to read: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and calls on the federal government to recognize Toronto’s role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs.” You’ll note that the open-for-business fluff part of it has been taken out of the motion.

I would like to come back more directly to the motion now—as I’m sure the Speaker will be happy to see—and talk about why Toronto should be the centre for this national securities or single securities regulator. It should be noted that Canada is the only major country in the world without a single securities regulator. As was noted by the previous government speaker, I think there are 13 securities regulators in the country.

I’ve heard some rumours that some members of the third party—and they’ll be speaking next—will be calling on the national securities regulator to be located in their ridings. The member from Timmins–James Bay is going to suggest perhaps Timmins—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Hearst.

Mr. Norm Miller:—or Hearst as the centre for the national securities regulator. I suppose I could make a pitch for Huntsville, Ontario. After all, it’s going to be the centre for the G8, coming up in June. The world focus will be there.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Good point. It could be Parry Sound as well, because I’m sure all those involved in the financial services industry would love to be on the beautiful coast of Georgian Bay if they’ve got any spare time. However, I do recognize that Toronto is the natural location for the national securities regulator, not just for Ontario, but for the country.

Let me give you some background on Toronto and the financial services industry. The city of Toronto is recognized as Canada’s national centre for financial services. It’s home to the headquarters of Canada’s five largest banks and about 80% of the headquarters of foreign banks that operate in Canada. The Toronto Stock Exchange is the largest in Canada. Toronto has a concentration of 1,700 financial services firms.

Employment in the sector has grown steadily between 1983 and 1999, growing about 97,000 to 130,000 through those years. It has consistently employed between 9% and 11% of Toronto’s total employment for the past decade. Shifts in the sector include decreases in employment in bank and trust company branches, leading to the doubling of head offices for bank and trust companies. There are strong linkages between the sector and supporting institutions also situated in Toronto.

All of Canada’s large banks are actively pursuing the US and international markets, and Canadian banks have

an international reputation as leaders in e-commerce applications and continue to invest billions of dollars in IT, product development and employment. Toronto’s strengths include: the existing concentration of the financial services cluster; the linkages that exist within and between industry groups; a large, available skilled labour pool; and an existing critical mass of financial services and educational institutions. Strengthening the cluster must include recognizing the importance of Toronto’s financial services cluster.

Now let’s consider the impact of Liberal policies and behaviours. Liberal financial policies have done little to strengthen Ontario’s position. Their tax-and-spend ways have resulted in Canada’s worst government, accruing Canada’s worst deficit, although that number seems to be changing daily, even before the budget planned for tomorrow.

When first elected, the McGuinty Liberals rolled back planned tax cuts for seniors, families and businesses. They added scores of regulations, increasing the red tape burden for small business. They increased the public sector job growth, outstripping private sector job growth. They increased the public sector by over 200,000, eight times the rate of the private sector.

To add insult to the industry, a direct hit to the financial services sector, there is the application of the HST on mutual fund management fees, where the cost to the sector is expected to be about \$300 million, which, in this economy, may be all it takes to drive the mutual fund companies out of Ontario.

I’d like to revisit that point for a moment: The new HST, planned to come into effect July 1, will add that tax on the management fees on mutual funds. So here you have the 60% to 70% of the population that don’t have defined benefit plans trying to save for retirement, and now there’s going to be this extra fee on management fees, making it harder to put money aside for retirement, harder to build that nest egg. Also, for the industry and the country, the risk is that the companies will end up moving to Alberta, where there is no tax.

Also, another point I would like to make is that when I met with the industry, not just Ontario but Canada as a jurisdiction where there’s a value-added tax is unique in the world, in terms of taxing the management fees on mutual funds. I think it’s something that needs to be looked at, especially in light of the fact that for somebody who’s trying to save through an RRSP, the maximum they can put into their RRSP is 18% of their pay, whereas if you are in the public sector and you have a good pension, the value of that defined benefit pension plan is about 34%, almost double the maximum you’re allowed to put into your RRSP. People in that 60% to 70% of the population are struggling to come up with enough money. This fee, the HST, on management fees will make it more challenging. But the greater danger in the discussion we’re having this afternoon is that we will lose the companies, which will move to other jurisdictions. That is a real worry to us.

On debt and deficits, the numbers keep changing, but without a doubt the most serious concern is the insidious,

toxic impact of a long-term structural deficit, which is what it looks like has been created by the McGuinty government.

The growth of our provincial debt is, along with job losses, the single biggest economic challenge facing Ontario. In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance confessed that the deficit was \$24.7 billion. He just announced an hour ago or so that it's now going to be \$21.3 billion. I just did an interview on CBC Radio and I described this as being "fun with numbers." We started out the year—the deficit in last year's budget, if you read it, was \$14 billion. In June they switched the number; it was going to be \$18 billion. In September they said it was going to be \$24.3 billion. And now the good news: It's only \$21.3 billion the day before the budget comes out. I think any observer would say the government has lost all credibility when it comes to their numbers and their budgeting process.

That deficit is bigger than all the other provinces' combined. This represents a danger to Ontario's fiscal health, with long-term taxation and service impacts that will be borne by our children and our grandchildren. Despite that, the speech from the throne gave little attention to the deficit and debt. In fact, there were some three lines, 24 words, that were dedicated to it.

Of course, we do have the budget happening tomorrow, so we can wait and see, and hope that something is going to happen in tomorrow's budget. But if it's like the previous budgets or economic updates, I don't have much confidence that we'll see a restraint in spending. The spending record of the government is not good. They've increased spending 65%. We're on track to double the debt of the province by 2012. That means that if this government makes an attempt to balance the budget, it will be on the revenue side of the ledger. And to date the ideas that we have heard have been less than inspiring.

1630

As I've said, I am sharing my time with a couple of members whom I mentioned, from Thornhill and Wellington-Halton Hills, and I think also from York-Simcoe. There may be time for the member from York-Simcoe as well, so I'll get her riding on the record as well.

In conclusion, Dalton McGuinty has failed this province; he has failed Ontario's families, seniors and businesses. I'm not confident that he will maintain Toronto's place as the headquarters for our financial services sector. So far, Toronto has remained the financial centre of Canada despite the policies of the McGuinty government, but I'm pleased to support the amended motion to recognize that Toronto is the perfect location for the proposed national securities regulator to be located.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good afternoon to all of our fellow Ontarians watching on the Ontario legislative channel. We're going to entitle this segment, "Your tax dollars at work." I received this motion, like everybody

else, about 24 hours ago. I've got to tell you, my feeling on reading it was that I was offended. It's 24 hours later, and I'm still offended. The reason for that is, this motion, as it was originally worded prior to amendment, is a snooker motion. It has a Catch-22 in it. About 24 hours ago, we had also voted on the throne speech. Our party and the third party voted no to the throne speech. The throne speech embodied the concept of the Open Ontario plan.

This motion, the way it's worded, reads, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator"—and here's the salient part—"and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry," and it goes on. That phrase, if we vote for the motion as it stands, puts us in the position of turning around the vote that we stood on yesterday, where we said, "No, we're not buying into the McGuinty government's Open Ontario plan." So I'm put in the position, if that's the wording of the motion prior to the amendment, of being told that if I don't vote for this, I'm not for Toronto as the seat of the common securities regulator, and if I do vote for the motion, then I'm turning around my vote on the Open Ontario plan and voting for the throne speech. That's a Catch-22, and I and, I can tell you, the Tim Hudak Conservative caucus are not going to be caught that way. That's the reason why my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka has put forward the amendment.

I must say, and I would like to say to all members of this House and to the people watching, that the concept of a common securities regulator is not a problem. The concept of creating out of Toronto what is already de facto here and now, inasmuch as it is the seat of financial activity in Canada: That doesn't bother us one little bit. That's just fine. All to say that if the motion had not had that little tidbit in it about endorsing the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry, we could have put this motion to the House and asked for unanimous consent, it would have been dispensed with in about 30 seconds, and we'd be on to other business. But it seems to me—and this is why I mentioned "your tax dollars at work"—that this Liberal government doesn't want to do things like that; it wants to take valuable time in this Legislature to have people like us stand up and debate this silly motion to waste time, just to take up time. Can you tell that there's a budget coming out tomorrow? The fact of the matter is that this government is single-handedly doing everything that it possibly can to drive business out of Toronto and out of Ontario, so the concept of a motion making sure that we put the seat of the financial business in Toronto in these circumstances is laughable.

While I'd love to say that I'm happy to rise in this House to speak to this issue, it gives me some pain to do so because, once again, we're dealing with a no-brainer. Should Toronto be the seat of financial activity in Canada? It is. Should we have a common securities regulator designation applied, and should this be located in Toronto? Yes. I think that you would get 107 out of

107 members of this House agreeing to that kind of idea. I think we do.

Similar to the bogus resolution on the economy that was debated in the fall of 2008 and the resolution earlier this year on federal transfer payments, we are wasting precious taxpayer-paid time talking about something that should be a given. Do you remember that debate—I use the term loosely—earlier this year? It ended in an hour and a half. It was on federal transfer payments. We were calling on the feds to do the transfer payment delivery. It was a no-brainer, so it didn't persist and didn't continue. It wasn't worthy of any debate, and it collapsed.

Going back to the nature of this resolution, why wouldn't Toronto be the natural site for the national securities regulator? Bringing this unnecessary resolution is proof that this government's agenda is void of substance—something we on this side of the House have been saying for months; indeed, for years.

The government continues to waste good debate time, which, I might add, is paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, to talk about non-issues, instead of pressing issues like jobs and the economy. Did I say “jobs and the economy”? While I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle think they are being clever with this resolution, it really is just a repeat of what was already in the throne speech, which we voted against on principle.

Of course we want an Open Ontario, but we want details. We want to know what an Open Ontario means. We want a plan. The thing we haven't seen in six and a half years of McGuinty government power is a plan. No plan. So here we are.

We are now being asked by the Liberal Party, in what I consider an underhanded way, indeed a treacherous way, to endorse the Open Ontario plan, which we did already reject. We support the principle of the resolution: locating a common securities regulator here in Toronto. There's no problem with that. The PC caucus has never once said that it didn't support the selection of Toronto as the home of a national securities regulator. For me, Toronto, or at least the GTA, has been my home for the past almost 30 years, and it never occurred to me that we could consider anywhere but Toronto to be that. It is de facto the case. You want to formalize it? No problem. We support that too, but you're basically beating a dead horse.

What we don't support is the reference in the motion that calls for the endorsement of the Open Ontario plan, and I cannot repeat that strongly enough or more often. One really has nothing to do with the other, and if what you're doing here is presenting a snooker motion, as I have suggested, perhaps you've snookered yourselves.

The federal government, Ontario and the majority of other provinces support the need for a common securities regulator. If it were to go anywhere else, maybe such a consideration would be owing to the fact that this government is not making Ontario as friendly, by any stretch of the imagination, as it could possibly be for any branch of the investment community. It follows logically, then, that Toronto would be the location of that national securities regulator.

It is known to everybody that the financial services industry is centred in Toronto and, therefore, in Ontario now. But this Liberal government clearly needs to be reminded how this came to be. It's because successive Progressive Conservative governments, over a 40-year period, created the economic conditions that invited industries, like the financial services industry, to Toronto, to Ontario, allowing them to compete and thrive.

When you decide that you're going to pick winners and losers to create an industrial base for the province, when you essentially buy jobs or buy investment, when you go out and provide special incentives to the Samsungs and Ubisofts of the world, that's when you start to reverse what we worked so hard to do. And when I say “we,” I don't only mean Progressive Conservative governments; I mean the people of Ontario, hard-working people who deserve to have the kind of climate that affords them and their families a future, good jobs and a continuing income. By keeping business taxes competitive, keeping taxes on new investment low and providing reliable, affordable energy, Progressive Conservative governments created the climate required, that saw Ontario become the economic engine of Confederation, which that side has done everything it could to negate for the past six and a half years. Sadly, this Liberal government has not only eroded all of Ontario's past successes, but they are now, according to Terence Corcoran, “Canada's worst government”—Canada's worst government.

1640

It has reduced, at this point, the debate in this House to what you might term stuff and nonsense. I'm standing here and debating something that is not worthy of debate. The reason we're talking about this is because the motion has been put forward, and it has been put forward in such a way that it demands commentary—stuff and nonsense, indeed, that is not contentious, as far as the opposition is concerned.

We're in Toronto right now. We're in a chamber that's located in the middle of Toronto. Down the street, Bay Street, the financial district, the hub of this country for the past 100 years, continues to thrive, notwithstanding the things you're doing to see to it that it doesn't.

Why are we debating something that we have always agreed on? I'll tell you why: We're debating this so that the government doesn't have to debate or address the real issues that are besetting Ontario today, like bringing jobs back to Ontario; like delivering affordable, quality health care; like delivering reliable and affordable energy.

If this government really wants to debate something of substance that is relevant to the financial services sector, we should be debating why the McGuinty Liberals are hammering financial services with the harmonized sales tax. Let's talk about that. You want the financial community to be healthy? You have to give it conditions that allow it to thrive. Besides the fact that this is a tax on savings and a tax on seniors, many of whom are on a fixed income, it's a tax on the financial services sector.

Interjection: Who support it.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You can talk about whether they support it if you want. But you go talk to the people

who, over the course of the past year or year and a half, have had their savings decimated in a global recession, and tell them that they have to put their money into mutual funds that, as of July 1, will carry an additional 8% on the management expense ratio, and then you tell me that there's broad-based support.

Let's talk about some positives in favour of Toronto for a couple of moments and put them on the record. Toronto is the heart of Canada's financial services sector. It is home to five of Canada's largest domestic banks, 55 foreign bank subsidiaries and branches, 119 securities firms. This is right now—if you don't scare them away—headquarters to Manulife and Sun Life, two of the top 10 life insurers worldwide; the base of the TMX Group, commonly known as the Toronto Stock Exchange; headquarters for three of the four largest property and casualty insurers in Canada, and for the operations of seven of the top 10 largest global hedge fund administrators.

The city has the largest Wi-Fi zone in Canada, a total of six square kilometres, all surrounding the financial sector of the community, so that people can be mobile and do business wherever it is; sit down on a park bench with a laptop and do their trading in Toronto, the de facto heart of the financial services sector.

Look at the mutual fund industry; look at what you're doing to it with your HST. If you take \$200,000 in savings and invest it in mutual funds, the HST, which is the net difference on that—and let's face it, \$200,000 in savings is not enough for anybody to retire on—is going to cost you \$400 annually, net new money, just on the management fee that you're paying for that level of investment. So don't tell me that the HST doesn't have an impact, and don't believe that that impact doesn't further impact the reliability and the go-forward of the financial services industry in Toronto.

A recent Mackenzie Financial report estimates the cost of the HST for a \$100,000 portfolio will be almost \$2,500 over the course of 10 years, and on larger portfolios much, much more.

Last year, Canadians paid \$450 million more in taxes on their mutual funds due to the GST alone than they would have paid on non-taxed financial products—and this is according to the Investment Funds Institute of Canada. Since the GST's inception in 1991, consumers have paid \$5 billion in aggregate sales taxes on mutual fund products. If Ontario and BC harmonize their taxes as planned, sales tax rates will grow by 160% in Ontario and 140% in BC. Mutual funds and other managed pools will be taxed at four to five times the rate of GICs, equities, term deposits and other non-fund investment vehicles. The HST will be hidden from investors because of an Ontario Securities Commission requirement for fund managers to report a single management expense ratio that covers all costs, including taxes.

In brief, what we're doing with an HST is the antithesis of what this motion suggests we should be doing. We're pushing financial, corporate entities away from Ontario, away from Toronto. We may be the centre of the financial universe in Canada now, and a world

financial centre, but if this government doesn't get with the program, it may find that the question is not the one that the motion considers but rather whether the people who form that financial sector want to stay in Ontario. That's what we have to consider. That's at the basis for this motion and it's the thing that we're considering.

By all means, we'll vote for the motion, as amended, but if you leave the Open Ontario nonsense in it, the Progressive Conservative caucus is not with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Waterloo–Wellington—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Wellington–Halton Hills. Thank you.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was honoured to represent the people of Waterloo for a number of years. Unfortunately, redistribution has to some degree changed that relationship, but I try to keep in touch with my friends in Waterloo region, certainly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the chance to speak to this particular government motion that has been brought forward this afternoon. Initially it read, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

I'm aware that my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, who does an outstanding job as our finance critic, as well as our whip, has moved an amendment to the motion deleting the words "endorses the Open Ontario plan" because, of course, as we know, our caucus has just in the last day voted against the government's throne speech motion because we do not have confidence in this government.

I would like to return to the throne speech just for a moment because there was a reference in the throne speech, as you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, to this issue. In the throne speech, the Lieutenant Governor said:

"Your government also understands that the bedrock of our province's economy includes one of the strongest financial services industries in the world.

"Canada's banks—based here in Ontario—are widely recognized as the soundest in the world.

"Toronto is now North America's third-largest financial centre and home to 350,000 jobs. Ontario-wide, the sector supports 625,000 jobs.

"So your government is working with the Financial Services Leadership Council to support the industry and create a strategy to make Toronto one of the world's elite financial centres.

"And your government applauds the federal government's efforts to create a national securities regulator. It should be located in Toronto."

I was interested when I heard that in the throne speech because last year, in advance of the 2009 budget,

recognizing that the province, and indeed the western world, was experiencing a financial crisis and a huge economic challenge, I felt it was incumbent upon all of us as members of the Legislature, including members of the opposition, to endeavour to offer constructive ideas to the government and to work together across the aisle to try to help solve this problem, work together towards that end. I said that many, many times—and not only said that; I also endeavoured to do it.

1650

In a statement to the Legislature on March 11, 2009, just over a year ago, well before the 2009 budget was read into this House, I offered a number of specific suggestions that I thought should be considered by the government, and that should have been included in the 2009 budget. You can check Hansard, if you wish; it's there on March 11. I gave a number of suggestions.

Also, in the middle of my presentation that particular afternoon, I said: "They must develop a strategy to turn Toronto into the leading financial services city in the world." This was what I said in the Legislature on March 11.

It wasn't necessarily an idea that came to me out of the blue. I recall, quite vividly, seeing on the newsstand a few weeks before that the February issue of Toronto Life magazine. There was an article on the front page, the cover of the magazine, about the opportunity that was represented by the economic and financial crisis on Wall Street for Toronto to try and emerge as perhaps the leading financial services city in North America, if not the world. Because of the crisis on Wall Street, the lack of confidence because of the financial crisis, and the strength and soundness of our banks, we had a real opportunity. In fact, the article was called "The Good News About the Bad Times."

Having had a chance to review it again—again, it was in February 2009 that this article was suggesting that this was something we should consider. The writer of the article—his name is Philip Preville. During the course of the article, he indicates that he had a meeting with Dwight Duncan, the Minister of Finance. This would have been back in November 2008. You'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that the financial crisis and the stock market crash were in the fall of 2008. He met with Dwight Duncan in the boardroom of the Ministry of Finance, and apparently the minister was quoted as saying this: "I think it should be a goal for Toronto to rank among the top 10 in the world," he said. More than any finance minister in recent memory, Duncan, with his heavy, neckless frame, looks the part of a stereotypical banker—albeit a banker in bad times, with dark circles under his eyes. He'd spent the previous week in the riding he represents, Windsor—Tecumseh, an area heavily dependent upon the auto industry. It's starting to look like most of the 150,000 manufacturing jobs the province has lost in the past two years are gone for good. Ontario is now experiencing what the UK went through under Margaret Thatcher: a final, massive shift from manufacturing jobs to service jobs. In the new economy, Ontario doesn't

make stuff anymore. We let other places do that; our new job is to lend, invest, and manage people's money."

If, in fact, this article is correct—Dwight Duncan, sitting in his office in November 2008, talking to a writer who was going to write a story for Toronto Life magazine; Dwight musing out loud, saying that maybe we should try to find a strategy to make Toronto the financial capital of the world—you would have thought that we would have started, and embarked upon establishing the strategy at that time. You would have thought that perhaps it would have been announced in the fall economic statement, maybe; or if it wasn't announced in the fall economic statement, you would have thought that perhaps in the budget of 2009, there would have been a statement about the establishment of a working group or an expert panel or what have you to start to work on developing a strategy to make Toronto the leading financial services centre in North America, if not the world.

The idea was brought forward by one of the members of the Legislature, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, in a letter that I sent to the minister and statements that I made in the House. Yet here we are, several months later, March 8, when the government finally announces it's doing it.

I would submit that the opportunity to create the strategy to develop Toronto as the leading financial services capital in North America, or the world, may very well be past. The fact is, the American investment banks, the Wall Street investment banks, have recovered. In many cases, they're paying back the bailout money that they borrowed from the American government, the American treasury and taxpayer. I would suggest, and I'm afraid to say, that the minister may very well be too little, too late.

Again, I can't understand why, if he was talking about this in November 2008, we didn't get going on it then. The strategy would be completed, and, theoretically, we would be in the process of implementing it right now. Unfortunately, we waited until March 8, 2010, to see the government actually wanting to something about this.

It's very troubling and disappointing. I hope we haven't missed the boat and I certainly wish the government well in terms of trying to create this strategy so that it's successful. I would once again suggest and submit that if we had gotten going on it many, many months ago, we would have had it finished by now and would probably be in a different position than we are today.

This motion that we are debating today was given to us as an opposition party just a little over 24 hours ago. In fact, when we were at caucus we were informed that this was what was going to be debated this afternoon, while we were having our caucus meeting at about 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon. Again it shows a government either unwilling or unable to co-operate with the opposition in terms of the normal courtesy of notice, or perhaps a government flying by the seat of its pants. I'm not sure which it is, but I suspect it's probably the latter—most likely the latter—because we have been getting along fairly well in terms of the House leaders' process and so forth.

But it's interesting how the House was called back in February and we're back in session and apparently the government doesn't have much of a legislative agenda. There are very few substantial bills before the House, so they have to come up with these creative resolutions to try to bring forward so they can fill an afternoon of debate. In some cases, these resolutions—in some cases, characterized as emergency debates—are initiated, debate takes place over a couple of days, and then the government doesn't call them again and they sit on the order paper, in some cases for months. No vote on the measure; no conclusion to it. Again, it's no wonder people are cynical about the way this place runs and what goes on here, but it is obviously troubling from our perspective on this side of the House.

I think my colleague the member for Thornhill made some very important points, and I'm sure the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka did; I just didn't hear his speech. But Peter Shurman talked about the fact that the HST will have an extremely deleterious and negative impact on our financial services industry in the province of Ontario. This is an issue that has been brought forward in the House and in the media and, I'm sure, in private meetings with the Ministry of Finance and the Minister of Revenue. Interestingly, the Minister of Revenue comes from a financial services background. As I understand it, he used to help people with their financial services planning. I don't know if he sold investment products, but he knows about this industry, for sure, having come from it, and he would know better than most the negative impact that this, the introduction of the HST, is going to have on the industry, yet he's the minister responsible for bringing forward the legislation and going around the province to defend it, which is the irony of ironies, but that's his role.

I would suggest to you that we should not be creating new impediments to people who want to save for their retirement, who want to save for the post-secondary education of their children, who want to invest in Ontario's economy or invest in the economy at large, because our savings rate, in my view, is too low in the province of Ontario. We all know the looming demographic challenges that the province faces with the aging baby boom going through, the demand that that's going to place on the health care system and on our pension systems and so forth. The fact is, we are not saving enough. Here, we know that the HST, when it's introduced—apparently, when it kicks in on Canada Day later on this year, it will have a negative impact on the financial services industry and make it harder for the Minister of Finance's dream of creating Toronto as a leading financial services centre in Canada.

I must say that I totally support the amendment to the motion that was brought forward by the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka. Our party does not have confidence in this government. We do not have confidence in their ability to manage the economy successfully. We do not have confidence in their ability to encourage job creation. We do not have confidence in their ability to

manage their budget. We hear today that the budget deficit is actually \$21.3 billion, announced today, before the budget. Actually, the budgetary news should have been announced in the budget speech itself tomorrow, but for whatever reason they wanted to manage the news and they wanted to have some sort of news out there in advance today. The previous budget number was something like \$24.7 billion, if I'm not mistaken. They're now trying to say, "Oh, this is good news. We've got a slightly smaller budget deficit than we thought. We're doing a pretty good job. Let's pat ourselves on the back and tell the people what a great job we're doing, because the economy's improving."

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Again, it makes you wonder how sincere they were, how honest they were, in terms of the original budget deficit projection that they tabled in the fall economic statement last fall, when we were told the deficit was going to \$24 billion. Even if it is \$21 billion in fiscal year 2009-2010, even if that's the budget deficit when the books are finally closed later on this year in the summertime, I guess, that is still an absolutely massive budgetary deficit. In the hour that our party is debating this motion this afternoon, that means that as a province we are borrowing approximately \$2 million an hour, every single hour, every day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, adding to the provincial debt, making the debt obligation to the next generation even more difficult, more pronounced and more profound.

I was reading the Globe and Mail today, and I was glad to see Jeffrey Simpson, who is one of our leading political commentators in Canada, talking about the fact that if we put off the tough decisions as a provincial government, if we deny or refuse to acknowledge the fact that we have this huge deficit problem, which is compounding, with every year's deficit added on to the mountain of provincial debt that has been accumulated over the years—and it appears that, by 2012, under this Liberal government's tenure of office, from 2003 till now, they will have doubled the provincial debt. It took how many years from Confederation, in 1867, to 2003 to accumulate the provincial debt that we had? And now they're going to double in it just a short period of time.

Obviously, that should concern us all. It concerns me as a parent who has children who are going to be, hopefully, growing up as Ontarians who want to participate in the economy, but certainly on our side of the House, we understand that these massive deficits and debts mean that the level of tax in the future is going to be punishing.

I would suggest that our generation has an obligation to future generations to live within our means, to make sure that we don't get into debt so deeply that the next generation is punished. I've been making this point for all of the 20 years I've been here, and I'm very disappointed that, unfortunately, since the McGuinty government has been elected, there has been very little in the way of spending restraint, very little in the way of recognizing that there might be an economic downturn down the road. They felt that they could spend money

with abandon, like there was no tomorrow, and, of course, in the fall of 2008, tomorrow arrived.

That is really what I wanted to say this afternoon. I do not support the Open Ontario plan of the government. I don't have confidence that they're going to be able to manage or provide the appropriate leadership that the province needs in the next 18 months. I look forward to the provincial election. I hope that the people of Ontario will see on this side of the House, and I believe that they will, the kind of leadership that's going to be required in the coming years in this decade to fix the problems that have arisen as a result of the neglect of the government since 2003 and to restore hope in the province of Ontario for the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to take the next few minutes to offer some comments on the motion that is being debated today. People need to understand that there are two parts to this motion: The first part says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator," and the second part says, "and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial industries" etc. What I want to indicate here is that by the terms of our amendment that we have put forward, we've rejected the part about the endorsement of the Open Ontario plan.

I should just remind people that that part of this motion comes directly from the throne speech, which received its 12 hours of debate in the last few sessional days, and as a conclusion to that 12 hours of debate, we in the Progressive Conservative Party, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, voted against that. Clearly, then, putting this piece from the throne speech into today's motion is an opportunity by the government to, I guess, see if we're actually reading the motion, but certainly to try to slide in something else besides the main part of the motion, which is a strong national securities regulator.

The other part of this is "by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role..." I find it really interesting, because in virtually all opportunities that the government has to either blame the federal government or draw them into something, the current government makes sure that they use every possible opportunity to do so, and this motion is no exception.

I want to look at the part we can support, which of course is the need for a national regulator. When I read the motion—an earlier speaker referred to the fact that we didn't have much opportunity to review this motion, but as soon as I saw the motion, I remembered that I had the privilege of chairing the Standing Committee on Government Agencies in December 2008 when the Ontario Securities Commission came to the standing committee. I'm going to refer to information that was presented at that time, on December 2, 2008, by Mr. David Wilson, the CEO and chair of the Ontario Securities Commission. He had been called at a point, as everyone will recall, in December 2008, when markets around the world were reeling from the fiascos in part of

the banking system, particularly the American banking system, and people were very nervous in Ontario, as naturally they would be. The committee decided it was a timely opportunity to have the Ontario Securities Commission come before the committee and provide some insight and some confidence in the system that we have in Ontario. While most of the presentation obviously dealt with the day-to-day business of the Ontario Securities Commission, naturally it allowed for an opportunity to talk about Ontario and the need for a regulator.

I think there are two messages here where the government needs to recognize what is at stake. Mr. Wilson began here when he was talking about Ontario, and he said:

"We need to remember that Ontario is in competition with other markets and that competition is based on the efficiency, as well as the safety and integrity, of our markets for investors. If Ontario is too burdensome, too slow, too bureaucratic, then issuers—businesses that need capital—will simply go elsewhere. Ontario's financial services industry would then suffer, and this is a very important business for all of us.

"The financial services industry that we help regulate is essential to Ontario's economy. First, the investment industry has the vital function of efficiently allocating capital—people's savings—to businesses that can use it to grow and foster economic development. That's the alchemy of turning savings into jobs.

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"On its own, the financial services industry employs some 350,000 people in Ontario, jobs that are part of the knowledge economy. And it's estimated that the financial sector indirectly supports at least an equal number of jobs outside the sector. In the Toronto area alone, the financial services industry pays out more than \$10 billion annually in wages.

"The financial services industry paid \$2.6 billion in net provincial corporate tax last year, not including provincial sales tax, GST and other personal income taxes paid by its employees."

Here's an indication of exactly why I think people on this side of the House are very much in favour of endorsing the need for a strong national securities regulator and certainly recognize the importance of Toronto. But what concerns me is that part of the whole HST debate has a huge implication for the financial services industry. We have people, then, in the business in Toronto offering a very chilling warning that if they are faced with increased costs, an 8% increased cost to their customers, they are going to look for a more friendly jurisdiction.

What we know from our own information and from understanding what I just read from Mr. Wilson about competition with other markets is that this province is in extreme danger of in fact losing part of that financial leadership that we have, and one of the things about losing part is that then you lose it all.

So I think that while the notion of a regulator is something that has been discussed for in the neighbourhood of 40 years—and Mr. Wilson at a later point in

his testimony says that Canada is the only industrialized country in the world that doesn't have a national securities regulator. Obviously, the crisis of the fall of 2008 is a demonstration of the need for international co-operation and the kind of one voice that Canada needs. But I would say to you that there's a peril that is not spoken about in this motion today, and that is the danger of losing the financial services industry in this province. Then this motion would obviously become redundant. So I would suggest that the government needs to look at the very serious risk it is putting the financial services of this province in and to make it clear that that's not an issue.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been looking forward for weeks to this debate. I anticipated it was coming and I stayed up all night thinking about the things that I wanted to say and just how important this whole debate is. I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that I take my full time in this particular debate.

The motion reads, and I just want it for the record, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan"—which I'll speak to later—"to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto, where it belongs."

An interesting motion, considering the government probably has a number of pressing issues that it needs to deal with. I wouldn't say that this is not important, but that we're here debating this particular motion—it's a bit of a habit these days. We find ourselves coming to the House to debate motions that are basically motherhood and apple pie.

But what's really interesting about this motion is that where the government in fact could get unanimous support of all members of this House to call for a common securities regulator to be established here in Toronto—if the government were just to write the motion in that way and ask the House to vote on it, the government would get 107 members voting in agreement with that particular statement, because who is opposed to Ontario going the way of having a national regulator? I think there are some issues that need to be dealt with, and I'm sure there are people who would feel you need to have regard for some of the issues that the Ontario Securities Commission now can deal with that we might not be able to deal with as a national securities regulator. But who would argue with the federal government setting up this particular organization that's going to work at standardizing all the rules across the various regulators in this province, and establishing it in Toronto? Like I say, it's a bit of motherhood and apple pie.

The government has got to put a wedge in this thing, and this is what this debate is all about. They put a wedge in it and they say they want the opposition parties to vote in favour of the Open Ontario plan. That in itself makes it

the bitter pill that the opposition can't support, because the Open Ontario plan, I will argue, does very little to actually open Ontario. If anything, it allows and precipitates Ontario's decline. So, on that basis, I can't support the motion because I'm not in favour of the Open Ontario plan.

I do want to say that I understand there is a need to standardize some of the regulations that exist with the regulators provincially across this country. The federal government has been working towards this for some time. Ontario has been in support of this for some time. Mainly Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia have opposed this for some time.

The government, as a way of being able to entice the provinces into discussions about how we can talk about standardizing some of our regulatory rules around securities, the sale on the stock market etc., decided, "Well, we're not going to have an office. We're going to have a virtual office. It's going to be on a computer somewhere in the country, and we're going to do this virtually, across the country."

The federal government is playing it a little bit cute. They want to make sure that they keep Alberta at the table, they keep Quebec at the table and they keep British Columbia at the table, so they don't speak to the issue of where the office of this particular national regulatory standardization body, I guess you can call it, would be located.

They're trying to do two things in this wedge. They're putting in the Open Ontario plan so that they force the Conservatives to vote against their own federal party, which is trying to move toward some national standards on the regulatory commissions and the securities commissions; and also, New Democrats and Tories, trying to get us to support an Open Ontario plan.

I've got to say, that's rather unfortunate because, as I said right at the beginning, I think—I don't think; I'm pretty darned sure—if you did a vote in the House on the motion itself and took out "Open Ontario plan," members would vote in favour of that.

I want to say upfront that we, as New Democrats, will be supporting the motion that was tabled by the Conservative Party that takes the words "Open Ontario plan" out of the motion. In fact, I have a similar motion here that I was going to introduce myself, and I don't need to introduce it now. Quite frankly, it would be out of order, because the motion that has now been tabled takes the words "Open Ontario plan" away from the motion. Therefore, my motion would be out of order. I just want to say we are of the same mind, and I just wanted to put that on the record.

I want to deal with the securities commission in the first part of the debate. What are some of the issues that we need to deal with, and why do we need to standardize the regulations when it comes to these securities commissions across this country? I think the answer is a fairly simple one. If you're trying to attract capital, and that's what this is all about, in order to invest in Canada—hopefully, in Ontario, for us here in Ontario—

you need to have a securities commission that has regulations that are easy to understand on the part of those who want to invest; that provides for a fairly seamless process for how that investment is to take place, and at the same time, provide security and, I would say, a certain openness to the process so that people are protected when it comes to the practices that the investors make on the stock market. I think all of us can agree that we need to have standards that are national in scope, that allow to us deal with those issues. I don't think anybody's going to argue against that.

The other thing that we're trying to do—and this I think, as an issue, is an interesting one—is that one of the recommendations that came out of the committee that was dealing with this here at the Ontario Legislature was to separate the adjudicative and investigative functions of the Ontario Securities Commission. I think it's rather important for us to deal with that. That particular issue is important, because when you have both the adjudicative and the investigative divisions as sort of part of the same shop, I think that's to a degree putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. One of the recommendations that came out of the committee that my colleague Mr. Prue sat on dealt with that particular issue, but that's nowhere to be found inside this motion.

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There has been a certain amount of cherry-picking on the part of the McGuinty government in moving this motion forward. The committee has been dealing with this issue for a number of years now, at least two, three, four years; I forget exactly how long. They have been looking at the whole issue of how the Ontario Securities Commission functions and what we can do to make it function better; how we can ensure that investors are protected and have an ability to access capital in a much easier way. Unfortunately, none of the work the committee members have done for all these years on that particular issue is contained anywhere inside this motion, so I've got to ask myself why. If we're going to deal with a national standard when it comes to the regulatory functions of the Ontario Securities Commission, it seems to me that we should be putting forward some of the recommendations that were put forward by the committee that dealt with this very issue. So I would say it's a case of cherry-picking.

I think this particular motion—motherhood and apple pie, as I said initially—deals with only one part of the issue of how the stock market operates. It doesn't deal with the many other issues that I think people are interested in. So this is a bit of a motherhood-and-apple-pie political statement that the government is trying to make.

Most of us are invested in the market in one way or another when it comes to our pensions: either in defined pensions or, unfortunately for most of us, not in defined pensions but in contribution-type pensions such as an RRSP. A lot of people took a bath. When you look at what has happened the world over, the markets took a huge dip, 40% to 50%, a couple of years ago when we

had the meltdown of the stock market across the world. Ontario fared a bit better. We have to say that Canada and Ontario did better as far as protecting investors and their investments than other parts of the world, because we do have a fairly robust system of regulation and a very robust banking system. That allowed us to make sure that we didn't have the sub-prime mortgage rate thing going on in Canada to the same degree. That's not to say that we don't have sub-prime in Canada—of course we do—but not to the same degree as we saw in the United States.

The point I'm making here is that I think most of us who have seen the vagaries of the market, where all of a sudden your investments are over here and less than a month later they've dropped to 30% or 40% of their value, are looking to government—whoever that might be, federal or provincial—to deal with how you make sure that if people invest money they understand that, yes, when you go into the stock market there's a risk, but the risk is not compounded by people doing trickery in the market. I think that is a very fair thing for investors to ask.

I think of a friend of mine—and I won't say the name because I'm sure he wouldn't want me to use it, because it's not a good story. He retired at about age 60. He had been retired for probably around three or four years at the point of the meltdown. When he retired, he had close to half a million dollars in the market. So when he saw the market dip, he ended up losing \$200,000. Imagine you're sitting in retirement, you're not 65, you're living on CPP at age 60, which is not a lot of money—for him it was probably, if he's lucky, \$800 a month—and all he and his family have to survive on is the money that he has in his RRSPs. He had calculated that he and his wife were going to have so much income based on the amount of money they had in the RRSPs. Unfortunately, he was far more exposed to the equity markets than he needed to be. That has to be said. I think somebody who retires shouldn't be 100% in equity markets; you're looking for trouble. You should try to protect yourself and be in safer investments such as GICs and others. Have some in the equity market, but not all. Anyway, he lost over \$200,000, and this poor man was standing there saying, "What am I going to do now? I planned my retirement on the basis of how much money I had put away and now I've lost almost"—well, it was about 40% of his value. He was having to recalculate what he was able to survive on. So he was pretty upset.

Unfortunately, he decided to get out of the market on the low. I remember having these arguments with him, saying, "Listen, it's only paper. For God's sake, at this point in the game, don't get out. It's a little bit late to be thinking about getting out. In fact, you should be looking at putting more money in. You'll probably make money, because the market has never been so low." Unfortunately, he has compounded the situation by being out of the market as the market has gone from, what—about 7,800, I guess, at its low—7,600—somewhere around there on the TSX. I believe that now we're just

somewhere over 12,000, as I looked at it today. So he would have actually still lost a bit of money, but he'd be in pretty good shape today if he had stayed in. It's those vagaries that people worry about.

So why should somebody who has worked their entire life and done what they were supposed to do, worked hard every day, gone to work, saved their money, put it into RRSPs, managed their money well in order to have a little nest egg when they retire so that they can afford to retire early and enjoy the travel and the things that you want to do in retirement, be caught up in the vagaries of the market as we saw with the meltdown? I will predict that this will not be the only meltdown that we see in our lifetime. This is a cyclical thing. We see the market on a fairly regular basis going from a high to a low and skimming out the profits for the rich guys, and us little guys at the end get it in here, and then it starts to climb back up again.

We need to figure out—and I think that's the issue—how are we able to adjust the rules for the Ontario Securities Commission and other securities commissions across Canada about how they do their business so that, yes, we will be exposed to risk when we invest in companies, but we will not be exposed to fraud. That's, I think, a very fair question for people to ask.

We look at some of the examples that we saw in the news over the last couple of years where people were literally milking investors for millions of dollars on all kinds of Ponzi schemes and all kinds of hare-brained ideas that basically made the fund manager a whole bunch of money but made the investor pretty poor. So there is a need, I would argue, to try to modernize our regulations in order to deal with those particular examples of abuse on the part of fund managers and brokers so that we don't find ourselves in a situation of having to lose to those unscrupulous practices.

Is that contained in this motion? No. Why isn't it? It seems to me that that would be the number one issue that most Ontarians would ask their provincial government to look at: to make sure that, in fact, we don't get caught up in those types of schemes, where we end up losing a whole bunch of money.

I think of one particular—and I can't remember the name now. It was a person who sold investments, I believe out of Cochrane, if I remember correctly, who had been driving around the northern part of my riding—the southern part of my riding and the northern part of the riding of Mr. Ramsay. His specialty was managing investments for seniors. Seniors would write him cheques for \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$50,000 in order to invest, and he would say, "I'm going to guarantee your money. You're going to get so much money a month. It's guaranteed." When you're older and you've only got \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000, and somebody comes knocking at the door and guarantees you that you're going to get a good return, some people fell for it. Unfortunately, it was a Ponzi scheme.

At the end of the day, it was a bit like a pyramid. He got to a point where he was not able to pay the monthly

annuities that he was supposed to be paying his investors, and the whole thing came crashing down. When the investors started calling, we found out that there were unscrupulous practices. I've got to tell you, the process that we went through, through the Ontario Securities Commission and others, in order to deal with how we make those investors whole were really, quite frankly, pretty scary. Imagine you're a 70-year-old retiree and, all of a sudden, you're having to deal with some of the regulations that we have here in Ontario about how safe is your money? Is any of it insured, as far as being able to recoup some of your losses? What is going to be done in order to charge this individual to make an example so that other people are discouraged from doing the same and taking advantage of seniors that were, quite frankly, fleeced of their money? A lot of those issues are not contained inside this motion and won't be dealt with in this motion, because they're issues that is more properly dealt with out of the recommendations that came out of the committee that looked at the whole issue of how the OSC functions.

So I say that the government could have brought forward a number of recommendations from the committee. I think that would have been an interesting debate, and it might have given us an opportunity to give some comfort to those people who are really worried about what the market means to them. I think if we've learned anything over the last couple of years, it is that people now, I think, better understand that although money in the stock market sometimes is attractive as far as returns, because at times you can make decent returns, it is really open to the vagaries of the marketplace and you could end up taking quite a loss. We need rules that deal with not so much the ability of the market to go up and down because of actual issues in the economy, but with the issue of people who are taken advantage of by all kinds of schemes, such as we have seen. So I'm a little bit sad—well, I'm not a little bit sad; I'm pretty disappointed—that those particular parts are not inside this motion.

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Those are my comments having to do with the Ontario Securities Commission and the common securities regulator part.

I want to talk a little bit now about the other part of the motion, which is the Open Ontario plan. Now, the government introduced in the throne speech this initiative that on the surface sounds pretty interesting. "Open Ontario": What does that mean? I suppose what the government means is open Ontario for business so that outside investors are able to come to Ontario, invest their money here, open businesses, create prosperity, and all of us have jobs and live happily ever after. But the Open Ontario plan means a whole bunch of different things to a whole bunch of people.

If you look at what the government talked about in the throne speech as it relates to the Open Ontario plan, it deals with everything from opportunities around water—we saw Mr. Caplan introduce a bill yesterday, I believe it

was, that revived his bill around water and the rules around what municipalities would have to do with water in their communities. It deals with the Ring of Fire, to open Ontario for business, which I'll talk about a little bit later. It deals with a financial services strategy and a whole bunch of other issues that are tied to it.

I just want to say that the experience I've seen in the resource industry is quite to the contrary of Ontario being open for business. Yesterday, we had miners here from across the province. The mining industry was here in force at what we call the annual Meet the Miners. If you look at Ontario today, as a result of how much money is invested through the market into the mining industry today, it is quite, quite different than what it was, I would argue, 15, 20 or 25 years ago. A larger and larger share of investment money that would go into exploration at the beginning of the mining stage, finding the mine, and later on for the development of the mine, more and more of that money is going to Quebec and going to other jurisdictions outside of Canada, and the reasons for that are many. The reasons for that, I would argue, are everything from what's happening in regard to the Mining Act—the government crows and says, “Oh, my God, we've done a great thing by way of the Mining Act.” I would argue that the amendments to the Mining Act, although well intentioned, didn't deal with some of the key issues that we had to deal with that I think would have provided more certainty for the mining sector to be able to invest through the stock market into Ontario.

You take a look at a lot of the regulations that have been put in place in some of the legislation that's been put forward by this government, which deal with a lot of uncertainty not only for the forest industry but for the mining industry, and specifically the Endangered Species Act.

I was on a panel with Mr. Ramsay and others where we talked about that at length on The Agenda with Steve Paikin in Timmins on Monday. What was very clear from everybody there was that northerners support the idea of protecting endangered species. That's motherhood and apple pie. But the regulatory process that the government has set up in that act very much adds a regulatory burden to what companies have to do in order to get access to the land, and, second, takes a lot of the land away from the ability for any development. So if you listen to Jamie Lim, for example, of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, or others in the mining sector, they're pretty hopping mad because they are saying in fact there is going to be less land available for forestry and less land available for mining than there is now as a result of the Endangered Species Act and the Far North planning act.

I would argue that we could virtually protect 99% of the land if we just had clear rules. The issue for me is not protecting 50% of the land as a goal; the issue should be how we instil rules and tell mining companies and forest companies what we want when it comes to protection, tell them what those goals are and let them achieve them without having the sort of regulatory approach that we

have in Ontario that is quite, quite bureaucratic when it comes to how it functions.

I will get an opportunity to speak to that in more detail in other debates, but my point is, there's far less money coming into Ontario when it comes to investment in the mining and forestry sector than we've seen in the past. In fact, there's a plant just here in Toronto—I can't remember which one it is—but it's a recycling plant that was looking at getting a large investment by their parent company that operates not only in Canada but the United States. They were lined up in order to do a large modernization within their plant. Unfortunately, that money went to New York state because the company decided it was easier to invest in the United States than it was to invest in Ontario, because of electricity prices and a whole raft of issues, including some of the regulatory issues around the securities commission.

I've got to say to the government: Open Ontario plan? First of all, I didn't know Ontario was closed for business. But slowly you're closing the door, I would argue, on a number of initiatives that you've put in place in order to deal with that. I say to you that if your goal is to open Ontario for business, I am prepared to support that at any cost, provided that we're able to actually see an increase in activity in Ontario. Unfortunately, what I see is a reduction.

I look at Xstrata in Timmins as a good example. There are only three copper-zinc refineries in Canada: one in Manitoba, one in Timmins and one in Quebec—their refinery in Montreal and their copper smelter up in Rouyn. The one in Flin Flon is shutting down this June. Xstrata has decided to shut down their refinery-smelter here in Timmins on May 14 of this year. All of that production supposedly will end up inside Quebec. So if we're saying that Ontario is open, as you call it—your Open Ontario plan—the only thing you've done is open the door and allowed Xstrata to leave. It seems to me that the government should have engaged in discussions with Xstrata to say, “All right. You have a problem? What is your problem?” I would imagine that Xstrata would have told the government what Xstrata has told to us and what Falconbridge has said to us many a time: “We have problems with the amount of money we're paying for electricity in Ontario. We are the largest consumers of electricity because of the nature of our business, and when we pay substantially more for hydro than you do in Quebec when you refine and smelt ore, it is hard for us to keep our doors open in Ontario.”

The new air emissions that the government has come forward with: They have put in place air emissions for which there is not even the technology to meet the standard. The science hasn't been developed. So Xstrata is standing there saying, “We're going to have to invest upwards of \$30 million to meet these emissions, and we don't even know if we're going to be able to meet the new standards because the technology to get there isn't quite achieved.”

That and a whole bunch of other things have precipitated Xstrata in their decision to close the metallurgical site in the city of Timmins. You're saying, “Open

Ontario plan”—it’s some plan; what you’ve done is managed to open the door. Instead, what we’ve got is a Premier who said that he met with Xstrata a couple of weeks ago, and at the end of the meeting said, “If you want to leave, fine; the door is open, and have a great day.” Basically, that was the extent of the meeting. It seems to me that the government of Ontario—Mr. McGuinty—should have been actively involved way before there was ever an announcement last fall in December about the closure, and should have been trying to deal with these issues to prevent it, and I think they are preventable.

I put forward the suggestion that that is one thing you can do, but we can also do what Newfoundland, what Nova Scotia, what New Brunswick, what Alberta, what Quebec and other jurisdictions do in Canada, and that is to have policies that encourage the transformation of natural resources and value-added products here in Ontario. For example, Newfoundland took the position when they built the Voisey’s Bay mine that Inco was going to build the mine and they were going to have it concentrated, but they certainly weren’t going to have a smelter and refinery. The government of Newfoundland said, “Whoa. These are our natural resources. You’re not going to come in here and pilfer our natural resources and not add value to them, because then what’s the net benefit for Labradorians and the people of Newfoundland?” So the government of Newfoundland passed legislation similar to what we have in our section 91 of the Mining Act, which permits the minister to say, “We’ll allow ore exchanges to happen because those things have to happen for all kinds of reasons, but if you’re going to build a mine, there is going to be a transformation of that ore to some process of value-added.” In this particular case, a refinery and smelter were required to be built in Labrador if they were going to mine that ore body. Newfoundland: If it’s good enough for them, why isn’t it good enough for us?

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I think the reason is very simple. If you had that legislation in place, as I am proposing, which will come up for debate later in April, the government of Ontario would be forced—because the debate would change from Xstrata. Xstrata would say, “Oh, yeah? You want me to stay here? Deal with the hydro costs,” and all of a sudden you’d have everybody lobbying the government to deal with the hydro costs.

So I think the government has a bit of an escape valve by saying, “We’re not going to support amendments to section 91 of the Mining Act,” because that way we don’t have to do anything. Well, your energy policies are killing jobs in this province by the thousands. My good friend Mr. Brown, who, like me, is from northern Ontario, has seen many of the jobs in the natural resources industry close and disappear in his riding, as they have in mine, as they have in all the ridings of northern Ontario, and as they have in southern Ontario in places like Windsor, Essex, Oshawa and others. So I say to the government, we should be doing something to try to

alleviate the pressures that these businesses are feeling so they can keep their doors open.

It’s interesting, though, because the government says, under the amendment to section 91, that if we were to adopt that, you wouldn’t be able to do ore exchanges, that the legislation would prevent that from happening. I just want members to know that is not the case. Section 91 as written would be exactly the same in my private member’s bill, should it pass. The only difference is, instead of saying “Canada,” we say “Ontario” when it comes to the permissive role that we give the minister to ensure that in fact you’re able to process those ores here in Ontario.

The Open Ontario policy? Listen: I want to say again that we are in favour, in the New Democratic Party, of developing policies that will assist industry to operate in the province of Ontario, to prosper and to provide the many needed jobs that we have in our communities. But I look at what the policies of this government have been up to now and I’ve got to say they have not been stellar. Has the government done everything wrong? Absolutely not. Governments of all stripes have done good things over the years, and this government has done some good things. But when it comes to the economy, from where I sit in northern Ontario, it is a real difficulty.

One of the issues that we’re dealing with now—and this is going to become an issue that I think members are going to start clueing in to—is what’s called the global adjustment on hydro. That is, the government, to pay for its green energy plan, is taking the entire cost of the contracts that they are signing with green energy producers, which are quite elevated—for example, if I’m signing a deal on a solar farm, you’re signing deals at 60 cents per kilowatt hour, and you’re locking people in; no matter what the need for Ontario hydro is going to be, we’re going to have to pay for that capacity that is able to be generated out of that particular plant for a period of time. For example, if you get a FIT program and you’re able to sign a contract with the government for 20 megawatts, let’s say, the government is locked into paying for those 20 megawatts whether they are needed or not. The cost of that is put into what’s called the global adjustment. As a result, we’re seeing the price of electricity, even though the rates have gone down—the government says, “Oh, but the rates for electricity have gone down.” Yes, but the global adjustment has doubled, so the net effect for the utiliser is that hydro is more expensive. So I say, Open Ontario—is that what it’s called, the Open Ontario plan? A good part of your plan would be to deal with the global adjustment.

In the case of Tembec up in Kapuskasing, about a year ago—maybe a year and a half ago, but I would argue a year ago—the global adjustment was a net benefit to the company, because what it does is it allows them to manage their consumption so that they are not buying power in the peak, when electricity prices are higher, allowing Ontario Hydro to flatten the amount of electricity that’s needed rather than having large peaks, as we have now. You’ve gone from a net benefit to a company like Tembec to where they’re having to spend, in Kapus-

kasing, an additional \$1.8 million a month on electricity just because of the global adjustment. Imagine if you're a paper mill and you are having to pay \$1.8 million in addition to what you were paying last year. It increases your production by almost \$100 a tonne. That's the difference between keeping your doors open or having to close them.

Now, in Kapuskasing, I've got to say the community, the workers and the management have come together. Huge efficiencies have been made in that plant. The workers have done tremendous work in order to find efficiencies with management. A contract was signed just recently this year where there was a 10% reduction overall in everybody's wages and benefits, management and union, for a period of a year to help them adjust to this global adjustment. But I've got to say, you can't keep on going this way, because at one point the piper is going to have to be paid, and the global adjustment is going to be a real problem for companies like Tembec.

I just want to say now that if you were to shut down a paper mill like Tembec—and, God, we don't want that to happen, and I'm sure the government doesn't either—it means to say that every sawmill on Highway 11, from Kirkland Lake all the way up to Timmins, is going to shut down, because there won't be anywhere to sell the chips.

I say to the government, there's a real cost to the Open Ontario plan that you're putting forward if you're not dealing with the global adjustment and not dealing with hydro rates for our large utility customers. They have to be able to operate at a profit. If they're losing money because of high electricity prices, they will close their doors and they will go away.

What's worse is, it makes it hard for Ontario companies to attract investment in order to modernize their facilities, because they're having to compete. Most of these companies now are no longer stand-alone Canadian companies; they're part of multinational companies, which are constantly competing for investment within their parent company for money for them to modernize. So it's going to become much more difficult as a result of what the government is doing, in not having a real Open Ontario plan to deal with some of these issues.

The other thing in regards to Open Ontario—I just want to speak about this in the few minutes that I've got left—is the Ring of Fire, because the Open Ontario plan, again, deals with the Ring of Fire.

I was actually quite shocked, because up until the throne speech, the government's plan for the development that is north of Highway 11, what we call north of the undertaking, is to have what's called the—what do they call it? Bill 191, the act that deals with protection of land in northern Ontario north of the undertaking—I can't remember the name of it. Isn't that something? Anyway, the point is, the idea within that act is to protect 50% of the land. Up till now, the government has said, "We want to protect 50% of the land mass that's north of the undertaking, in perpetuity. There will be no development there whatsoever." The process is, if the act is passed after third reading, you're going to have a 10-

year process to develop. What is that 50%? Where is it physically on a map? Where can you develop and where can you not have development?

All of a sudden, inside the throne speech, under this Open Ontario plan, the government announces that they're going to go full bore with the Ring of Fire. I'm sitting there, saying, "Well, that's great." I've got a mine up in Attawapiskat, which is up in that area. It's very beneficial to Ontario, it's very beneficial to my riding and the people of Attawapiskat and others. But how can you go from wanting to protect 50% of the land, to all of a sudden, "Let 'er rip and have development, no matter what"?

I think what's happening is that the government is starting to realize it's got a bit of a problem in northern Ontario. They've finally woken up and found out that there's a big problem in the economy of the north, that the natural resource sector is not being supported by good rules around investment, rules around hydro, environmental regulation, and things under the Endangered Species Act. The government is saying, "Well, we've got to announce something in the throne speech. What have you got, Mike?" "Oh, I've got the Ring of Fire." "Okay, put that in the throne speech." So all of a sudden, an announcement is made that we're going to have the Ring of Fire.

I just want to tell people that I think it's a great idea to develop the mine north of Marten Falls, which, again, is in my riding. Elijah Moonias and his community, along with the neighbouring communities that are in Howard Hampton's riding, are going to be very happy if a mine is developed there, because it will create employment and opportunity for them. So I think it's a great idea.

But if anybody thinks, because the Premier announced it under the Open Ontario plan, that we're going to have a Ring of Fire development in Ontario any time soon, I say give your head a shake. We are still far away from ever developing a mine there. The feasibility study still has to be finished; that's going to take some time. But more importantly, where are the rules when it comes to the negotiation with our First Nations?

Open Ontario means that if you're going to have development, First Nations are going to have to have some sort of comfort when it comes to what they're going to benefit from when these mines open in the Ring of Fire. What amount of jobs are we going to get for our First Nations friends living in the far north? What kind of training opportunities are we going to provide to First Nations who qualify for these jobs? What business opportunities will be available to First Nations businesses and communities to be able to start up businesses to benefit? What impact benefit agreements will be negotiated with those communities so that we can go forward? None of that is defined. There's nothing in the northern growth act, I think it's called, and there's certainly nothing in the Mining Act that deals with that. So the mining companies are going to have to go out on their own and negotiate their own training deals, their own IBAs. They're going to have to reinvent the wheel every time a new mine is being brought into production. I've

got to tell you, it's hugely expensive for the mining sector to do that on their own, and they're looking to this government to put in place some rules.

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I believe that all members of the Legislature—and this is a non-partisan comment—want to make sure that First Nations benefit from mining and forestry in their communities. I don't think there's a member here, Liberal, Conservative or New Democrat, who will disagree with that. But to agree with the concept without putting in place the rules about how this is going to happen is meaningless.

For example, the Ring of Fire, as announced in the throne speech, as part of the Open Ontario plan—An expectation has been created that we're going to have a mine there in a very short time and that it's going to employ 4,000 to 5,000 people, both at the mine and in the processing facilities connected with the mining. Well, I've got to tell you, that ain't going to happen. Some people are saying seven years, but I think seven years is really stretching it; I think it's more like 10. Because by the time you finish the feasibility study on what the mine will look like and how much it's going to cost for development etc., and raise the capital necessary—and that's part of the Ontario Securities Commission stuff as well—it's going to take a while. You're going to have to negotiate an impact benefit agreement with each First Nation. And let me tell you, First Nations want development, but First Nations are starting to learn more and more what development is all about.

De Beers negotiated the first—well, actually, the second—impact benefit agreement in the province of Ontario; Musselwhite and Goldcorp were the first ones to do so in northwestern Ontario. Those IBAs took the better part of five years to negotiate. I know; I was part of the negotiations. It took five years for Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Kashechewan, Moose Factory and others to come to terms with De Beers Canada, to negotiate an IBA. Luckily, De Beers said at the very beginning, “We will not bring this mine into production until we have an IBA that has been ratified by the community.” So they gave the First Nations a certain comfort in knowing that the project wouldn't go ahead without their say-so. But it took five years to put that process together, to sign an IBA, and what we've learned through that process is that we need to have the government create rules about what we expect mining companies, forestry companies and others to do regarding making First Nations whole when it comes to the use of their traditional territory. We don't have that in the Open Ontario plan. In the Open Ontario plan, other than saying, “We want to see the Ring of Fire go forward,” the government has not dealt with the issue of how you put IBAs in place.

Another issue—and I think members have to get their heads around this—is the issue of capacity in our communities. I was in Constance Lake last Monday. Northland Power is looking at building seven dams on a river just south of Constance Lake. That particular company, Northland Power, is going to build fairly low-impact dams on that river—they're what they call “run of

the river”—but there are going to be about four or five years of construction to build those dams on the river. You're going to need machinists, millwrights, electricians, welders—all kinds of skilled trades. The community is negotiating an IBA with Northland Power, and part of the IBA is, “We need to have opportunities to access jobs on those construction sites.” I asked the community members who were there—and they were there in large numbers on Monday night of last week—“How many people here qualify for an apprenticeship?” Not a lot of hands went up, because most didn't have the math or the skills necessary on the education side to qualify for an apprenticeship. You can't get an apprenticeship without grade 12 now. So I'm going to be asking the government to engage in discussions between Northland Power and Constance Lake First Nation to develop pre-apprenticeship training in advance of the construction. We know that if this project goes ahead, by the time all of the regulatory stuff is done we should have enough time to put in place pre-apprenticeship training so that community members living in Constance Lake and others will have an opportunity to qualify for those apprenticeships, which will lead to permanent jobs in the construction of these particular dams. When the dams are constructed and the project is over, as far as the construction phase, you will have electricians, mechanics, machinists, welders and all kinds of skilled trades individuals who live in Constance Lake. They can then take those skills and transfer them to other industries in northern Ontario that are close to their community.

It's going to be the same thing with Detour Gold. Detour Gold, if people don't know, is building a 55,000-tonne-a-day gold mine at Detour Lake, where there used to be the Detour Lake gold mine. That's huge: 55,000 tonnes a day for 15 years—quite the project. Again, I've talked to Detour Gold. As a matter of fact, the CFO was here, Mr. Paul Martin—not the Liberal Paul Martin, former Prime Minister, but the CFO for Detour Gold. I've talked to Derek Teevan, and I've talked to Moose Cree First Nation and others, and I told them about the issue around trying to set something up in order to get the ministry involved with training, and they were just nodding their heads and saying, “Yeah, we have experience. We understand we're going to have an issue there. We want to hire as many local people as we can who come from New Post, who come from Moose Cree and other places, but we're going to need some help with pre-qualifying people for those jobs that are going to be at the mine.”

Again, a large construction phase—about 700 jobs while it's being constructed. It will be about two or two and a half years, and once into production, that mine should probably employ around 400 people. So it's a really good thing for the region.

But again, if you have an Open Ontario plan, the government, I think, needs to put into that plan something that deals with giving companies and communities an ability to deal with those issues that allow citizens to participate in that economic activity. We can't put it on

the back of the shareholders. We as a province have to recognize that we are in the training business, that the taxation system is there to socialize the cost of certain activities such as training, and that we should be using provincial dollars in order to train individuals so that they are able to participate in those activities that will come from the development of the Detour Lake gold mine, the Ring of Fire, or Northland Power, whoever it might be—or the OPG project in the Mattagami River basin, which is probably going to employ about 700 people during the construction phase. A number of dams are being refitted, doubling the production of those hydro facilities. What are we doing in order to make sure that people are able to qualify for those jobs from First Nations and others?

So if the government is serious about having an Open Ontario plan, as suggested in this motion, I think that we definitely have to think about the policies necessary to really say that Ontario is open for business. That is part of the problem, and one of the reasons I can't vote for this motion, because the Open Ontario plan, I would argue, doesn't put forward any of those concepts. We've got to hope that the government, with the budget coming tomorrow, has had a chance to think since the throne speech and put some of these items inside the budget. The test will be tomorrow—I guess about this time tomorrow; actually at 4 o'clock tomorrow—when the budget is done.

I also note that in the Open Ontario plan the government plans on increasing the number of seats available in our universities and colleges for expat students—students that come from away. I think that's a good idea. I think that's something that we should be working towards. But are we—and this will be the test, again, tomorrow. If we're saying that we're opening Ontario by allowing foreign students to come into our universities and colleges, which is desirable, what are we going to do to ensure that our colleges and universities have the financial capacity to deal with that increase? Because in some cases, you're going to need more spaces. There's going to have to be some money available for physical infrastructure, but also we're going to have to have money in order to increase staff. Not all of that is going to be paid by way of tuition. Yes, those students pay a larger tuition when they come from abroad to study at our universities and colleges—well, universities—but at the end, that is not enough money to pay for the type of expansion that the government is looking for inside the system. So Open Ontario will necessitate that in fact we're going to have to have some pretty serious investments in our post-secondary institutions in order to deal with that.

The other point I would like to make—I'm running out of time, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I could probably do it in two minutes. I'm a real trooper when it comes to that, aren't I?

The other thing—and I want to speak to it very quickly, because I noticed Mr. Caplan actually introduced his water bill again yesterday—is that the government, as part of the Open Ontario plan, seems to be indicating that it wants to deal with water efficiency standards and other issues that will affect municipalities. I just want to say that municipalities in my riding are probably no different than the municipalities in your riding. I got a whole whack of phone calls, emails and letters from municipal councils, by way of resolution, that are really concerned about what Mr. Caplan was bringing forward, they believe, on behalf of the government. Now, I told them that it's a private member's bill, that this is an individual member bringing forward a motion. But there's really a sense out there that Mr. Caplan—being a former, and fairly senior, cabinet minister—bringing forward such a bill is not doing so without the blessing of the government, and that it's some sort of a test to see to what degree the government can actually go this way.

We know that in the Open Ontario plan the government talked about the issue of water when it comes to being an opportunity for the province of Ontario. So I've just got to say that municipalities are pretty panicked about what that means to them, because we know what the effect has been over the last number of years: As the federal government has balanced its books on the backs of the province, the province has balanced its books on the backs of the municipalities. And they see this as more of the same, where the provincial government will put in place standards and regulations and legislation that will affect how they deal with water in their communities and that will escalate the cost to the point that they will not be able to afford to do what's called for in the legislation. So if you're saying Ontario's open, it seems to me it should be about you can make it affordable so people can actually invest here. I think that's the biggest problem that I see within this particular motion.

Seeing it being 6 of the clock, I will continue my debate tomorrow as we come back.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): In fact, it is 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, Thursday, March 25.

The House adjourned at 1800

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
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Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
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**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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