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of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 20 April 2010

Mardi 20 avril 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 20 April 2010

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 20 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010**

**LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'APPRENTISSAGE
DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN**

Mrs. Dombrowsky moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / *Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin d'enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d'autres questions.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate? Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

This is an exciting day, indeed, as we are moving forward with this piece of important legislation. The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act is a monumental piece of legislation which, if passed, will make a significant and positive improvement in the lives of our students and in our education system. It would give our students more opportunities right from the very start. It would give more families a stronger support network. It would give Ontario a leg up in this globalized economy by contributing to the formation of a stronger workforce.

Children who participate in full-day learning will be better prepared for grade 1. Their parents will have peace of mind while at work, knowing that their children are being well cared for in an enriching, engaging learning environment.

Although full-day kindergarten programs currently exist in different school boards across Ontario, the structure and scope of our integrated full-day model is unpre-

cedented. We want to provide a clear, coherent framework for school boards to offer full-day learning and we want to put in place the various components of the initiative, including before- and after-school programs. The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010 will do just that.

It would, if passed, ensure that the entire full-day program and its staff are held to the highest quality and safety standards, as is any other component of our education system. This legislation would recognize the new role of early childhood educators in full-day learning. This new program would require teachers, early childhood educators, principals, school board staff and staff from municipalities to work together to benefit our children. This legislation, if passed, would ensure that collaboration happens smoothly.

In addition, Bill 242 would, if passed, give school boards the responsibility and the authority to implement this exciting new program, including the extended day programs offered before and after school. This would provide a seamless, integrated day for our youngest learners. Students participating in full-day learning would be in one location with high-quality, play-based activities and familiar faces all day long. Furthermore, Bill 242, if passed, would enable boards to offer extended day programs for older children aged six to 12, and to offer the programs throughout the year, including summer breaks, professional activity days and any other school holidays. This bill also clarifies that school boards would retain the right to enter into agreements with third parties to offer programs for children aged six to 12 and, on non-instructional days such as PA days, holidays and summer holidays, for four- and five-year-olds.

The role of third party providers in offering services inspired lively discussions during our committee hearings. We are very grateful for all of those who took the time to come and make their presentations at our committee. I do want to assure them that we listened very carefully to what they had to say. As a result of their input, we have made amendments to clarify the role that third party providers may play going forward. I want to make it clear: Third party providers currently operating programs on school premises can continue to provide care and offer programs for children in other age groups, such as children six to 12 years of age, and to operate programs in schools for children of all ages beyond the regular school year. In addition, we intend to allow supporting regulations that would allow, on a transitional basis, those school boards that currently have third party operators providing programs on school premises to

continue to offer before- and after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds. I think it's important to clarify that there will be a transition put in place. We've heard the concerns of stakeholders related to transition, and if this legislation is passed we will ensure that they have the support they need to transition to the full model. So ultimately, there is an expectation that we will have a fully integrated full-day learning program offered by school boards for four- and five-year-old children. We do recognize that there may be some agreements in place and we are prepared to work with boards on a transition plan.

There are also some amendments that respond to a broad range of stakeholder requests to clarify the roles of teachers and ECEs during the regular school day and the extended day programs.

0910

We are also taking other crucial steps forward to ensure that full-day learning is rolled out smoothly and effectively and that it is in place for nearly 600 schools by September of this year. The Ministry of Education recently released our new full-day-learning program document, which will guide teachers and early childhood educators as they work together in classrooms. The program document, called Full-Day Learning—Kindergarten Program, focuses on children's social, physical, emotional and academic development, and ensures that children in full-day learning will have a balanced day of learning and play, nurtured and supported by the adults in the classroom. It outlines different areas of learning and different ways that teachers and early childhood educators can help children approach learning.

Subject to the legislation being passed, we'll be holding training sessions next month and during the summer to introduce the full-day-learning kindergarten program to give teachers, early childhood educators, principals and board staff the tools and the resources that they need to make sure that the program is ready to get underway the first day of school in September.

In our budget last month, the Premier announced that we are investing \$245 million over the next two years in capital funding for full-day learning. That money will go to build, renovate and retrofit classrooms for full-day learning. A portion of the funding will also be used to support the costs of first-time furniture and equipment purchases and minor renovations to classrooms that will be necessary to accommodate the additional number of students that we expect with our offering.

School boards will receive \$10,000 per full-day-learning classroom. We have worked very closely with our school board partners. We believe that given the information we've received from them, this is an adequate amount of money to enable them to prepare for the students for full-day learning. This will ensure that children have welcoming spaces in which to learn.

Our government has also committed \$200 million in the coming school year and \$300 million in the 2010-11 school year, dedicated specifically to operating funding to make full-day learning a reality.

We asked school boards to submit their list of recommendations for phase 2 schools last week. Those are the schools that would be ready to offer full-day learning in September 2011; that would be the second tranche of this initiative. Just as we did before, with the first phase of schools for full-day learning, we have asked school boards to work closely with their coterminous boards as well as with the Best Start networks and their municipal partners in their regions to identify those school communities that would be best suited for the next phase of this exciting initiative.

We asked schools to consider things like geographic distribution when they were recommending schools for phase 2. For example, a primary consideration was to recommend schools in communities that will not have a phase 1 school.

Boards also considered available space in their schools. They were asked to prioritize schools that would not require major capital projects to be ready to welcome children in the first full-day learning.

I have to say that boards have been, I think, excellent in terms of how well they have worked, not just with the Ministry of Education, but with their coterminous boards and their community partners. We congratulate them and thank them for that. I'm looking forward to announcing the phase 2 schools soon, and to continuing to work with school boards and our partners as we continue to move forward with our phased-in implementation of full-day learning.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It has been going very well.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It has been going very well. Again, it's because of the commitment we've had and the excitement in our communities. Parents are excited about this. School boards are excited about it. Certainly students are going to benefit from this as well.

As I said earlier, feedback from stakeholders and the public has helped make this bill stronger. There's been a question over here, "Why are people excited?" Well, people are excited because this is a first-of-its-kind program. This demonstrates the government's vision for building the best education system of anywhere in the world. We have other jurisdictions coming to Ontario on a regular basis to talk to us about our vision, to talk to us about how we are supporting our youngest learners. We're very eager not just to tell them about our plan, but also to show them the accolades that we have received from parents, from educators, from economists and from the business community.

We are working very hard. It's important that we get this right. It's important that we hear and listen to the feedback that has been provided to us. I believe the third reading of this bill reflects that we have done just that. We're going to continue to have discussions as well throughout the spring, through the summer and ongoing through the next school year so that we can share our successes and learn from phase 1 how we can improve the initiation of future phases of this very important piece of legislation.

Everyone in the House should appreciate the benefits of full-day learning. Although the debate of this legis-

lation has covered a wide range of topics and given voice to a range of different opinions on those topics, there is one concept about which all seem to agree: Full-day learning is good for our kids, and it will be good for Ontario. I've heard members on all sides of this House say very positive things about our program, that it will give young children the strong start that they need and that it will give Ontario a stronger future. I've heard some of them talk about how they and their families have benefited from full-day learning experiences themselves, in their own families. Those kinds of stories are great to hear, of course. As well, there are many, many studies, reports and experts telling us that full-day learning will give kids a stronger start, set them on the right path for future success, make life easier for families and pay off enormously in the long run.

Many in this House appreciate that when we focus resources on our youngest learners, that pays dividends for them. This is really about focusing on what's best to enable our children to succeed at school. We know that full-day learning experiences have had positive impacts in enabling educators, people in our school system, to identify how they can best meet the needs of our students. When they do that, the earlier they do that, the better the opportunity for the student to be successful as they proceed through school. That is absolutely consistent with the goal of our government to do everything we can to improve the opportunity for student achievement and, by extension, improve the graduation rate and the public perception of our publicly funded school systems. That has happened, and we want to continue to build on that.

We've heard from many parents from all across Ontario who have told us how excited they are about full-day learning. Parents have told us about how they're looking forward to being able to better balance their work and family life and better support their families because of the advantage of the integrated extended-day program. They're very excited to know that their children will be in the care of qualified educators. They know that that will have a very positive impact on their child's ability to be successful at school.

There is great consensus on the social and economic benefits of this program. This bill, if passed, will help us move one step closer to realizing those benefits that not just parents but people across Ontario have told us they expect from our education system.

The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act is a key part of establishing full-day learning as a core element of our publicly funded education system. It would help us move forward and work with boards, early childhood educators, teachers and principals to implement this exciting new initiative. It would help us give our youngest children more opportunities and build a brighter future for them—in fact, for all of us. Full-day learning will be good for kids, good for families and good for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I understand that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga is going to share the time.

0920

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm privileged to join in the debate on third reading of Bill 242. As the minister said earlier, this is a monumental piece of legislation which will have a lasting impact on our children and on their families. It would, if passed, make full-day learning a reality in Ontario's publicly funded school boards. Full-day learning would require school boards to provide innovative, integrated services in their elementary schools. The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, would provide a clear framework for them to do so.

This bill would, if passed, amend the Education Act to give school boards the responsibility and the authority to implement full-day early learning for four- and five-year-olds, staffed by teachers and early childhood educators. It would recognize the new role of early childhood educators in the full-day-learning classrooms. It would give school boards the responsibility and authority to implement an extended day program before and after school for four- and five-year-olds, led by early childhood educators. We intend to introduce regulations, authorized by this legislation, which would give boards the authority and responsibility to set, charge and collect fees for those before- and after-school programs.

The Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act would, if passed, require collaboration among teachers and early childhood educators to provide high-quality and effective play-based education to support enhanced learning. It would ensure that the entire full-day-learning program and its staff are held to the same high quality and safety standards as any other component of the education system. It would, if passed, permit boards to offer before- and after-school programs for students aged six to 12. It would permit boards to offer programs throughout the year for pupils aged four to 12, including non-instructional days such as professional development days, school breaks and summer holidays.

Our stakeholders, including members of the education sector and the child care sector, provided valuable input on this bill. Their feedback led our government to propose several amendments to Bill 242 to the standing committee which considered the legislation before referring it to today's third reading. As the minister said, those amendments provide clarification around the roles that third party child care providers can play at our schools and within the full-day-learning program. We're thankful to all of those who took the time to tell us what they thought about Bill 242 and how the bill could be improved. The bill before us today is a stronger piece of legislation thanks to their input, and I'm pleased, of course, to be standing here today to speak in favour of Bill 242.

Our society has changed drastically in the last few decades. Those changes mean that we have to look at how we structure our education system to achieve the best learning outcomes for children and to support their families. The introduction of full-day learning is an exciting change to our education system, one that would

give children a stronger start and of course give their families better support. This legislation, if passed, would ensure that all four- and five-year-olds have access to that stronger start. It would ensure that their learning and emotional and social development is supported by qualified professionals. It would give their parents a guarantee that their child would be in a welcoming, engaging environment all day.

The experts have told us that full-day learning is one of the best ways to ensure the well-being and success of children, and it's our responsibility as public leaders to give that to them.

Now people from around Canada and across the globe are looking at what we're doing and watching how we move forward on this exciting project. Obviously, there's a lot of interest right here in Ontario for full-day learning. I've talked to students, teachers, early childhood educators, parents and all others who work in our schools, and there's a clear excitement, as the minister mentioned, throughout the education system and early learning world about full-day learning.

I'm sure that the excitement has grown over the last few weeks, as we have taken steps forward with our plans for implementation. We requested school boards to work with their other local boards and municipalities to identify which schools would be ready to offer full-day learning in phase 2 in September 2010. We introduced the draft full-day early learning kindergarten program, which would guide early childhood educators and teachers in the full-day-learning classroom. We announced capital funding which would help build, renovate and equip new classrooms for full-day learning. School and school board staff are looking forward to training sessions which will take place over the next few months and will help prepare them for the new program. And across the province, parents are enrolling their four- and five-year-olds in the program.

During debates in the House, during question period and in the media, there's been a lot of discussion about this piece of legislation and this program. Some have said it's too expensive. Some say the scope of the program is too wide, while others say it's not wide enough and that we should be doing more. The bottom line: Our government is taking a measured approach to implementing full-day learning. This legislation, if passed, would allow us to move forward on an initiative that would positively transform the lives of our youngest citizens. Full-day learning would help level the playing field, giving more children a stronger base so that they have a stronger chance of success at school and in life. This legislation would, if passed, provide a framework for a program that would give busy parents peace of mind, because they would know that their son or daughter was playing, learning and being engaged all day.

We would roll out full-day learning in phases, starting with approximately 600 schools this fall. That means that up to 35,000 children and their families will benefit in September 2010, and that number will just keep growing. We expect that up to 50,000 children would participate

the following year, and even more until 2015-16, which is our goal for full implementation. This measured approach is fiscally responsible, and it is important for the success of the program.

Full-day learning would be an investment in our children. It's an investment in Ontario's people, which is the most precious resource that we have. Studies have shown that the return on public investment for young children is at least seven to one. I think everyone here can agree that this is certainly an investment worth making.

Bill 242 is an important piece of legislation. If passed, it would provide us with a framework for implementing this transformational initiative. It would strengthen our education system and enhance our future workforce. It would give our children more opportunities and, of course, give their families more supports. It would bring teachers, early childhood educators and parents together as we work towards a better future for our children. It's the right thing to do for our children, for our families and for our entire province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide my comments to Bill 242, an act to amend the Education Act, that the minister and the member for Kitchener-Conestoga spoke of.

They both, in their addresses, talk about the excitement that they feel is coming because of Bill 242. However, I know there are some issues that even our member for Nepean-Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, brought up yesterday when it came to the issue of choice. She mentioned, in a question to the minister yesterday, the fact that she will be unable to have a choice to keep her daughter Victoria in the half-day program. In my own riding of Leeds-Grenville I've heard from a number of providers, including our local YMCA. I had a great conversation with their CEO, Sueling Ching, regarding their concerns about Bill 242. The fact is that the Y in our community has provided a wide variety of daycare centres, both within schools and at their own facility.

0930

They are very worried that this bill will limit their ability for partnerships and their ability to attract early childhood educators. The government, again, talks about excitement, but they're going a little too fast with this. There are some valid concerns that local Ys have. I'm certainly experienced with our local Y and the services they do. I helped raise some funds to allow people to get access to their daycare programs and to access recreation in our community, and I know that those groups have some extreme concerns about 242, about those partnership issues, and I really believe that they have an exceptional comment that the government should be addressing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the minister on her presentation. Once again, the government is praising themselves and heaping accolades on themselves, but

once again the government did not listen to the opposition members. Many of us have family members who are teachers and trustees and former trustees and heads of boards. In committee, once again, they did not listen to us.

The announcement commits a fixed sum of money to the creation of full-day kindergarten classes in Ontario. We've waited a long time for this. Many families will wait another five years. That wait time could put children behind, assuming that it will be rolled out in five years. Will the funding for the initial rollout be distributed equitably across the province, or will it go where the space is needed? Will the first programs be needs-based or just space-based? We are concerned that the class size of 26 is an average and that the class sizes may become too large, like many current grade 4 to 8 classes where there is no cap.

Charles Pascal called for an early childhood division in the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a coordinated policy around child care. This announcement stops well short of completely integrating the child care plans that Pascal put forward. We are still waiting for details of the actual form that the typical class will take. We want to see the actual distribution.

My wife was a kindergarten teacher. Even with 20 kids, it's a handful, even with an educational assistant. Now they're going to bump it up to 30. I don't think they have any idea what it is to take care of 30 children in that age group. I think it's going to be a bigger deal than they're anticipating, and they fall far short of what is needed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm delighted to rise to make a couple of comments about Bill 242. It's hard to hold back when you hear the opposition trying to struggle to find negatives about this. It's unbelievable. I spend a lot of time in schools, especially with grade 5s and grade 10s, and I get to speak to principals. There hasn't been one school that I've been to that hasn't praised us about this. This is world-renowned. Yes, there are growing pains. I met with my own Y, or one of the Ys that I represent in my riding, and they praised us; they wanted to work with us. At the end of the day, we are committed to working with them.

I just got a letter the other day from the Northumberland Y thanking our government for the amendments that we put in place to move those yardsticks. We listened. Is there still more work to be done? Absolutely. But outright criticism and trying to find those minute faults is not going to move the yardsticks. We're committed to moving those yardsticks. We're committed to having one of the best education ministries for youth.

The province of Ontario is being watched all over the world for our initiatives to move these yardsticks forward. To say what if and what if and what if—this is not a what-if world; this is a world where we're going to get it done. It's going to get done. Yes, it could be done quicker, but no other government even attempted it be-

fore. What did they do? They cut schools; they didn't repair schools. We're really making progress. I look forward to this piece of legislation moving through, because the kids need it, parents need it and our province needs it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Randy Hillier: On Bill 242, it's interesting that in this time when we have record deficits, when Ontario is in have-not status, when we are trending into a deep hole of debt, the government brings out a bill that, of course, increases expenditures and debt. This is \$1.5 billion. I heard the member from Kitchener–Conestoga saying that this will provide for a better future for our children. Listen, when we saddle our children with such huge and uncontrollable debts and mortgages and they say that this is a better future for them, a better future to saddle our children with insurmountable debtloads and an economy that's in have-not status—and the Liberal government talks about patting themselves on the back, praising themselves. They are so excited that everybody loves this. They refuse to look at the facts of life.

I also want to mention the Liberal government talking about how “children will have access to.” But they don't talk about the inability, the removal, the restriction of choice, as the member from Leeds–Grenville talked about. Other parties, the YMCA for example, will be excluded and not really engaged in this discussion. It's clear that this Liberal government believes that there is only one role for government, and it's every role; that there is no room for anybody else. There is no room for other choices. It is just—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The minister to respond.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to have the opportunity to respond—and I thank those members of the Legislature who have offered their comments—because it has given me yet another opportunity to correct the record.

First of all, with respect to choice, parents have had and will continue to have choice about whether or not to enrol their children in a full-day early learning program. In fact, the law in Ontario does not require that children be enrolled in a school until six years of age, so there has always been that choice. That choice continues.

I would remind all people in Ontario that this is exciting. We're excited because parents have told us and economists have told us that this is a vision that many other jurisdictions are looking to emulate.

I also think it's important to clarify with respect to those very important community partners, the third party providers. We have listened to them and they will have a key role to play. Working with school boards, there will be an opportunity for them to continue to focus on what they've done so very well for, in many cases, a number of years, and that is to provide extended day wraparound services for six- to 12-year-olds in school locations. So this piece of legislation very much enables third party providers who have worked and who now see that they have a new opportunity, a new reason to look to forge agreements with their local boards.

I think I'm happy that I've had the opportunity to make those clarifications and to end on the note that what we are doing here is an investment in our future. This is an investment in the new economy, enabling students to be as successful as they can when they go to school. That's what full-day learning is all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

0940

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 242, the Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010. We had the introduction of this bill on February 17 of this year, we had second reading on February 23, we completed the Standing Committee on Social Policy clause-by-clause review on April 12, and of course we are here today to participate in third reading. But I want to make it quite clear from the outset that, despite the fact that we had public hearings and despite the fact that, I would say, the majority of presenters were probably representatives of child care programs, the government did not listen. Those individuals who are currently providing care for children four to five years old will no longer, after a transition period which hasn't yet been clarified or defined, be in a position to continue to do that. I think that's important.

I think it's also important that we in the opposition tried to listen to the deputants who appeared before us. We did have three days of hearings. In fact, we had more people than we had initially thought that we might have, and we tried to accommodate them. We had many more people write in with comments.

Despite the fact that we had the hearings, there were no substantive amendments made to reflect that input. I would say to you that the amendments that were introduced by ourselves, the Progressive Conservative Party, or those introduced by the NDP, that reflected the pleas for change by deputants weren't accepted.

Sometimes you question the process, because we still have a bill that is going to amend the Education Act to provide for the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten on a full-day basis. Of course we know that that is going to begin this fall, 2010, in boards but in selected schools. The only schools that will be providing the program are those schools that, obviously, have the physical capacity to accommodate these children. There will be others who will not be the beneficiaries.

This bill will also amend the act to provide for the operation of extended day programs outside the hours of junior kindergarten and kindergarten. This is the initiative that is creating so much concern. It is those after-school programs for four- and five-year-olds which have been provided by the not-for-profit sector, like the Ys, in the province of Ontario that now are going to be offered, after a transition period, only by boards of education.

It's really unfortunate in this day and age, when we talk about working with our community, when we talk about the need for collaborative approaches and when I consider the fact that in our high schools we have set up co-op programs with the private and the not-for-profit

sector, that we're doing exactly the opposite here. We are going to duplicate what—we're going to put up the silos again, and we're going to destroy the collaboration that we have seen in our schools.

The bill goes on also to appoint early childhood educators to positions in junior kindergarten and kindergarten and extended day programs. These childhood educators are going to be working with the teachers. However, the government made an interesting amendment which now puts in place a bit of a change and says that in certain instances where numbers don't warrant, it won't be necessary to have an early childhood educator in the classroom.

That's basically what this bill does.

I would have to say to you, this Premier made a promise, and he is rushing into trying to implement a bill which may be well intended, and the principle could be supported. But we've never seen any clear implementation strategy for the rollout of this full-day kindergarten for our four- and five-year-olds. We have never, ever seen it.

In fact, we don't know what's going to happen over the course of the next five or six years. We don't know how quickly different boards and different schools are going to be able to offer the program. A lot of parents are going to be deprived of the opportunity, depending on what happens, so they can't make the plans that they need to make either.

Parents really are in the dark about when their school will or will not offer this program. I would say to you, currently teachers are in the dark and school boards are in the dark. We've heard comments from trustees, educators and administrators about the lack of information. In fact, I was quite surprised during the clause-by-clause hearings as to how little detail the government was able to provide when we asked questions, the lack of specificity and also the fact that we should just be quiet and we should just allow the regulations to take care of some of the concerns and the questions that we had.

Well, they're not our questions; they're the questions of the people in the province of Ontario, the people that are going to be impacted. Our job as the official opposition is to speak on behalf of the people who don't have a voice in this chamber. That's what we have done. For the government to say that everybody loves this bill—it's not the case. We only have to take a look at the summary of the presentations that were received when we did clause-by-clause. Here's one from Ms. Tennier:

"Research shows that children" aged three to five "spending more time in school is not beneficial...."

"Serious educational reformers know that regardless of how much schooling children receive, the effects of the home will always, always be much stronger, and that is why they know that the only solution is to empower those very parents in that home."

There are other comments here as well. This is not unanimous. We need to be respectful of those who might have differing views. That's what I haven't seen, that people are respectful and appreciate that there are

those—and I guess there must be differing research; I have not read it—who obviously do have concerns.

There's another one here: "Young children need more time with their parents, not less. Increased funding should be directed to parents and families to enable them to be at home with their youngsters at this critical time in their development."

You know what? It goes on and on and on. So we need to be respectful of the fact that there are people in the province of Ontario who don't necessarily agree with this approach. Those people need to be respected, and certainly not put down. We need to also recognize that there are those who will not be choosing full-day kindergarten for their children, because they do enjoy spending time with their children. They would like to have them home half a day. But as we've heard from my colleague who's with the Ottawa board, that choice is not being given to her. If she wants her child to go half-day, she will have to go to a school where it's offered half-day. Parents who don't want full-day are going to be inconvenienced, as are the young children. There is no choice, and Pascal did recommend that there be choice.

But what are some other of the concerns? I think one of the concerns is the fact that this program is set to be implemented in September. Those of us who are teachers or have been chairs of boards or Ministers of Education all know that it's not September that we need to worry about, it's June. In the educational system, all decisions for September and the next school year, 2010-11, are made before the end of June. I remember, myself, when I was chair of a school board, we only met once in July and we met once in August. I also remember that the schools were not open during the summer. It was the time when people did take their vacation, which I anticipate they'll continue to do. Basically, we have just a little more than two months to put the detail on what I would say to you is just a skeleton right now.

0950

I just want to emphasize how disappointed I was, in the committee, to hear the responses from the government that they really didn't have much more information in the way of specifics, that it was going to be left to regulation. That was certainly concerning.

So at this late date, we have almost no information as to how this full-day-learning program is going to be implemented in schools throughout Ontario, yet we've got parents who have enrolled their children. We're looking at the government announcing the second year of schools that are going to be providing the program, but we don't know much about the programs that are going to be offered, the curriculum or the staffing. We certainly don't know what the before- and after-school programs that boards of education are now going to have to offer are going to cost parents. There are many, many unknowns.

We're also hearing from school boards that without more specifics, without more information about costs, staffing and resources, they feel they're going to have to cut some of their other programs. We anticipate, and we've certainly heard from some who feel that their

special education program could suffer as a result. Then, of course, we have the whole sector of daycare providers who have now been told, "Your services are no longer welcome in the schools in the four school boards in the province of Ontario." So whether it's English public, English Catholic, French public or French Catholic, those people, in future, will no longer be able to provide before- and after-school care to children aged four and five, and we have people who have offered these programs in communities throughout this province for years and years. Suddenly, their livelihoods are being threatened.

The government talks about going through a transition period. We don't know if they'll be allowed to continue, if they have an agreement with the board, for one year, two years, three years or no years. Here you've got a small business owner who doesn't know what his or her business is going to look like come September 2011—or September 2010, this year. How can you plan? Because we know that once the four- and five-year-olds are removed from the not-for-profit private daycare operations, it's going to be more expensive, because the four- and five-year-olds have been subsidizing the infants and toddlers, and of course you've got to make changes to your facility in order to accommodate younger children.

So again, we have just over four months before school starts, but we have just over two months before the educational system effectively shuts down for the summer, and we have little in the way of detail. Whether you're a school board, whether you're an administrator, whether you're a teacher or whether you're one of these daycare operators, you really don't know what's going to be going on. Of course parents, then, are put in a position as well, because if they continue to access the daycare program, maybe they're going to have to pay more in the fall. Again, the question will be, can they afford these new, high daycare fees? So it impacts more than just the schools.

A lot of issues were raised in the committee. At times you felt that as you were asking questions—and I suspect Mr. Marchese would agree. Sometimes people felt as though they were being brushed off. They weren't being given answers, or we kept being told that the clarity is going to come in the regulations, the specificity is going to come in the regulations. But when we'd ask more questions—"When are you going to provide that? What is the number going to be?"—nobody was able to give us an answer. Again, I go back to the fact that the educational system shuts down in about two months.

The government has not been upfront with the opposition—and we represent the people in the province of Ontario—nor have they been with the people that currently have contracts with school boards: the daycare providers.

We've had a case here where obviously the Premier desires to be known as the education Premier. He's made an announcement, and, as I say, the principle is good, but why would you not take the time to get it right? You introduced a bill on February 17 of this year and you expect to roll the program out in September.

There was a time in education when people took the time to get it right and they would do pilot programs, maybe for a year or two years, to get the kinks worked out, to determine what the consequences might be, not just within the school but in the community. And here we have a government moving ahead, not providing any answers in the clause-by-clause debate, to us or to the public, not giving any specifics or explanations to the question, but telling us repeatedly that it would be in regulation. So that's where we are.

What were the main concerns that we heard when the deputants appeared before us? Everybody, probably, except for those that strongly disagree with this—and there are those, and there are many. In fact, I know somebody said that they didn't appear because they were concerned that the government was going to disagree with them and they didn't want to suffer that. But I would say to you that most people came in and said that the intentions are good; however, the execution is bad, and there is no clear implementation strategy.

There was an acknowledgment on the part of even these daycare providers, who are no longer going to be able to maintain the contracts with school boards, that they support the initiative. They support learning for four- and five-year-olds. But they really were concerned about the government's lack of consideration for the impact on them. They were concerned that there was no clearly articulated strategy for implementation.

They were also very concerned that the government really had not given consideration to the impact of the elimination of the not-for-profit sector from providing the before- and after-school program for four- and five-year-olds.

They were concerned as well about the fact that we were establishing parallel systems, a duplication of services. For example, under the government's proposal, you could have four- and five-year-olds, who are the responsibility now of the school board, and you've got these after-school programs in one room, and in another room, because the not-for-profits, such as the Y, are going to be allowed to continue to offer programs for six- to-12-year-olds—they're going to be next door. I'm going to explain that a little bit more later on. You're going to have duplication of services, and you're going to have two parallel systems trying to deal with two different age groups.

One of the main problems that our party has with this initiative is the cost of the program at a time when we have the highest deficit ever in the history of this province. We're not going to see the budget balanced for at least eight years. In fact, I think there's some skepticism as to whether it will happen then. The federal government is going to be balanced in five years, but you know what? This is going to be eight years.

1000

It's concerning to people when there are so many priorities. We have health, safety, social services and many, many programs competing for money. We have this massive deficit, as I say, the highest in the history of this

province. We don't see jobs returning quickly to the province. So there is concern about the cost of the program, which will be in excess of \$1.5 billion annually, and that doesn't include the renovations and the additions that are going to be necessary in order to provide the space to accommodate the students.

Another concern we heard was about inequitable access. Not all students are going to be accommodated the first year. Again, it's going to depend on year one or two, primarily on whether or not your school has the space. Some people are going to get what some refer to as free child care; other families will need to continue to pay for child care for these same students of the same age.

Another issue is the whole issue of class size. This is a government that was really proud of the fact that class size was going to be 20, but we now know that class sizes are going to be larger, and I guess that's okay.

We also heard from people who were concerned about the impact on special education programs, funding and the accommodation of those students within those programs.

There was also concern about the fees and how they might be different from one board or one part of the province to another.

There were some who felt that the program was not being introduced in accordance with the spirit of Dr. Pascal's recommendations.

Of course, there was some concern about the lack of parental choice and the fact that it didn't seem possible to opt for part time rather than full time.

Let's take a look at some of these issues in a little more depth. The people who probably are going to be the hardest hit by this initiative—and that's our job, to stand in this House and let the government know the impact and to make sure that we are accountable to those people who don't have a voice in here—will be the not-for-profits. This bill is going to have a very severe impact on Ontario's not-for-profit child sector.

As I said before, we heard from many stakeholders. In fact, I heard from them here in the clause-by-clause hearings, but I also heard from many of them who made the trek to Waterloo to meet with me in my constituency office or came to my office here. Some of these are small mom-and-pop operations. Some of them are a little larger operations. They operate in different school boards throughout the province of Ontario, but regardless, they are individuals who have been committed to providing the best child care possible for the children in the province of Ontario.

One of them who appeared, whom I did speak to, was a very highly successful, licensed daycare centre, and they were over 150 years old. Bill 242 totally disregards the contribution that they have been making to supporting our four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. Without access to the four- and five-year-olds, many of these businesses will quickly become bankrupt, because it's the infants and the toddlers who have been subsidized by the four- and five-year-olds. You've got a very, very serious situation.

There was an interesting article about this issue in the Hamilton Spectator on April 1 by Lee Prokaska. He talks about the fact that these collaborative approaches between school boards and the not-for-profits are going to be destroyed. There is concern expressed. It talks about the fact that the new bill, for whatever reason, now is going to require that school boards directly operate these before- and after-school programs for children who are enrolled in the full-day junior and senior kindergarten. In fact, the new bill specifically prohibits school boards from partnering with local child care providers to offer this care for four- and five-year-olds. As I said, one operator, 150 years in the province—what a slap in the face: “You’ve been doing a great job, but suddenly we’ve come to the decision that only school boards can look after our children.”

So here we are. Why? Why could there not have been flexibility demonstrated by the government? YMCAs throughout the province of Ontario have been providing outstanding after-school programs for four- to 12-year-olds in our elementary schools. Now they will no longer be able to provide the care for the four- and five-year-olds. So they’ll be in one room, as I said before, but they will be able to for the six- to 12-year-olds, who will be in another room. Talk about duplication of services, additional costs, resources etc. It makes no sense. Why would you reinvent the wheel if people like the Y have been so successful all these years?

This collaboration has a solid track record throughout the province of Ontario, and suddenly we want to burden the school boards, many of whom, by the way, would prefer that these not-for-profits continue to offer the programs. But you’re now saying to them: “You set up the program; you create the program from scratch.” Talk about duplication, talk about increasing your costs when you’ve had a successful program already.

You have to take into consideration the fact that if that’s what happens, and if these child care organizations lose their four- and five-year-olds, the cost, as I said before, of the toddler and infant daycare is going to increase because they’ve been subsidized by the four- and five-year-olds. It’s going to make it more difficult for parents in the province of Ontario to be able to find affordable, good child care for their children under four years of age.

What are we going to do in the future? Are we now going to open up our schools and begin with infants so that they’re there all day long? I think that the government should have listened to the hundreds of submissions that we had on this issue and they should have backed off, according to the submissions, the majority of which wanted them to, and continued with what was in place. They could have tightened up the guidelines if they wanted to make changes, if they had some concerns about the partnerships, but why not continue? Why not have allowed the school boards that flexibility to continue to collaborate with the not-for-profits who were providing it? But, for whatever reason, it didn’t happen, and that is certainly a big concern and probably was the biggest concern we heard during the public hearings.

The other one, and I mentioned this before, is the unequal access to parents and children. The government says they’re going to roll the program out over five years, but who knows? The deficit is growing; the debt is growing; they have no plan to balance the budget yet. We’re not sure how the economy in this province will move, because people in this province are going to have less in the way of disposable income.

1010

We’re already learning that with the new energy initiatives this government has put in place, people can expect to pay about \$350, \$360 more per year. We know that with the HST, an average family of four will probably be paying about \$2,500 more per year. Folks, the public in the province of Ontario is being hit hard, and this is on top of the health tax that this government introduced right after they were elected in 2003, even though Mr. McGuinty had said, “I won’t raise your taxes.” So we’ve seen a series of additional taxes and fees introduced by this government, and then, on top of all of that, you have this initiative, and all of the costs that are going to be incurred.

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I hear the Liberals across the way; they obviously don’t care about the impact of the additional costs on people in the province of Ontario. But if you add that to the physiotherapy fees that people are now paying, because the government removed the coverage—they’re also paying their chiropractic costs, because the government took away coverage. There are many outpatient services that have been moved out of our hospitals that were publicly funded and that are now being funded by individuals.

You know what? The cost of living for people in this province has increased. In fact, I heard from one elderly lady who was beside herself because she was so concerned about the increased cost of the HST; she was concerned about the energy cost. She says, “I already don’t have any heat on in my upstairs. I only heat the room that I’m in. I turn off all my lights. I don’t use my dishwasher, because you know what? I don’t want to incur that cost. I do my washing, because I’ve heard about this time initiative,” which has caused people all sorts of concern. People are concerned. And then she said to me, “I think I’m going to have to give up my weekly trip to the hairdresser,” and she said, “I won’t have money to go to Tim Hortons.”

These are real elderly people who are reading in the paper about the increased costs of the HST; they’re reading in the paper about the increased costs of energy, and they’re concerned. We have to respect the fact that people are concerned—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: As long as you tell them about the rebate, Liz.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: —about these issues, because the media—

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I’m not sure what the whole story is. Is there not going to be an increase in energy

costs? Is there not going to be an increase in HST costs? I think so.

Another key issue that we keep hearing about is the implementation plan, the fact that the government does not have one, not even for this year, not even for next year, and they certainly don't know where they are going to go for year three, four or five. We haven't seen the curriculum—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think I've hit a nerve. I hear the opposition, and they probably recognize that there's some truth in what is being said.

We've got a program here, and as I say, most people did agree—many did agree, not all—that obviously the intentions were good. But there has been a real rush by the government to announce the program in February and get it up and running for the fall. As a result, there is a lot of analysis that should have been undertaken. There are unintended consequences that we're learning about now.

I haven't mentioned it, but these little kiddies are going to be bused to school; some of them are going to, obviously, have to walk to school. There are going to be lots of changes that need to be considered. It's probably the most major change that has ever happened in the history of education for a long, long time. We've only had a few months. The government just hasn't given it the due consideration and analysis that an initiative of this scope is requiring.

At the committee, all they could say was, when we had questions, "You know what? We're going to deal with that in regulation. No, we can't give you any specifics. No, we don't know when the regulations are going to be available." So the stakeholders are concerned because there's no detail. Obviously, we in the opposition are concerned on their behalf because there are no specifics and there just are no details as far as the implementation is concerned.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has elapsed. This House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like all members to join me in welcoming a number of guests from Middlesex county who are here in the Speaker's gallery today, former wardens and family: Jack Baker, Marion Baker, Aubrey McCallum, Rose McCallum, Doug Reycraft—Doug was also a member of the 33rd and 34th Parliaments, representing Middlesex—Barb Reycraft, Karl Nevin, Joey Nevin, Joel Blackmore, Alan Marr, Sandy Marr, David McDonald, Barbara McDonald, Al Edmondson, Ellen Edmondson, Ian Brebner, Tom McLaughlin, Mary Ann McLaughlin, Joanne Vanderheyden, Wes Hodgson, Albert Bannister, Verlyn Campbell, Betty Crawford, Kathy Johnson, Verne

Johnson, Kathy Bunting, Charlie Corbett, Jim Maudsley, Linda Maudsley, Ron Crawford and Gene Crawford. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce a family from my riding: from Coldwater, Ontario, Marlene and Chris Poisoin, and their children, Nazira and Noah. They're in the members' gallery.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On behalf of young Tudor Mititelu, a page from my riding of Ottawa South, I am pleased to welcome his mother, Corina, who will be joining us very shortly.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome, as they begin to file in, the students of John Fraser Secondary School on Erin Centre Drive in Mississauga. They'll be accompanied by their teacher, Heather Sinclair.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: Why has the number of assistant deputy ministers under your watch gone from 95 to 160 in six short years?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What I can say is that we've worked very, very hard to run as efficient a government as we possibly can. I believe we are now running the second most efficient government in the country in comparison to our provincial counterparts.

My colleague knows as well that we have made a commitment to reduce the total number of public servants in our government by 5%, which we think is a significant reduction. It is ambitious, but we're convinced we can do this in a way that does not compromise the quality of the services that we're delivering.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, yesterday we indicated to you that the so-called transitional agency, the Ontario Power Authority, had grown by a staggering 1,900% under your watch. Clearly, they are taking their cues from the Premier himself.

Let me repeat those numbers, Premier: In just six years, the number of assistant deputy ministers has expanded from 95 to 160. This is close to the Premier. These are the choices, sir, that you make. You try to say that you suddenly got religion, that you're going to try to restrain spending, but why should anybody believe you when they see that kind of bloat in your bureaucracy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to give you an example—I know that my honourable colleague stands against all government of any kind, but I think there are some important responsibilities assumed by our public servants. For example, one of those new assistant deputy ministers is the executive officer of the Ontario drug program. Based on that individual's advice, we are moving to lower drug costs in Ontario. I think that's a very important initiative that stands to benefit not just taxpayers, but those very many families who pay for their

drugs out of pocket. That's just one example of one individual who is helping us provide leadership with respect to a very important initiative that is going to bring drug costs down for Ontario families and for Ontario taxpayers.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Premier, the Ontario PC caucus believes in front-line public service that helps out everyday Ontario families. Clearly, the Dalton McGuinty government believes in growing the size of the bureaucracy. The number of assistant deputy ministers has skyrocketed. Your so-called transitional OPA is up some 1,900%, and what do families get? Cuts in their health care services and higher energy bills as a result.

Premier, what's truly happening here is that when your civil servants hit the upward bound on their pay grades, you simply reclassify them to assistant deputy ministers to increase their pay.

I'll ask you again: How can you look into the camera and tell Ontario families that you're looking for restraint when we see the size of this bureaucracy growing beyond proportion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to reassure Ontarians that there's always more work to be done, but that we are now the second most efficient public service of all the provinces. We're 34% lower than the national average. We're reducing the footprint of the OPS by 5%. That's 3,400 employees, which will save us, on a permanent basis, \$300 million annually.

My honourable colleague says that he's in favour of government and public services, but I remember the days when we lost nurses on the Conservative government watch. I remember when we lost meat inspectors and water inspectors on the Conservative government watch. There's a reasonable place in which to draw the line. I am convinced that we can continue to do that to keep costs down but ensure that Ontarians benefit from the services they need to be able to count on.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: While you're growing the bureaucracy, sadly, you're laying off nurses in the province of Ontario. You're closing down emergency rooms in the province, and you're going to cut the services that neighbourhood pharmacists give to seniors and worried moms and dads across our province. Premier, we have a better idea in the Ontario PC caucus, to put the "public" back into public service. That's why my colleague, the critic for public accountability, Lisa MacLeod, is bringing forward her Truth in Government Act later today. It will extend freedom of information requests to all provincial public bodies. It will ensure that hospitality expenses and travel are posted online, and any contract of \$10,000 or more will be posted online. It will ensure that your practice of reclassifying bureaucrats at a higher pay grade must be seen by the taxpayers who pay the bill. Premier, will you support this act, and turn every Ontario family—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says he's interested in transparency and accountability, and I think Ontarians will be interested in having an objective assessment of his intentions in that regard. I recommend to you the Guelph Mercury editorial of April 19. It's entitled "Hudak Didn't Tell the Whole Story." It says, "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak spun an interesting web in a stunt in Guelph last week that was purported to show his party would 'improve transparency and accountability of the government.'"

"It also turns out that the documents ... which Hudak relied upon ... offer no clear link to whether any of the recipients of the contracts are 'insiders' or 'Liberal-friendly,' as was asserted...."

Further, "The furious assertions weren't immediately bolstered by the documents that apparently gave rise to them...."

"The announcement was clearly torqued in an attempt to achieve maximum political impact."

I think we have to—

1040

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, what a sorry response from the Premier of Ontario. We're talking about accountability for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. Start the clock. The member from Hamilton East knows he should be in his seat.

Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think Ontario families are tired of a Premier who dismisses these good ideas to improve accountability and transparency in the way that tax dollars are spent, to turn every Ontario family into a watchdog of his government.

We don't need any lectures from this Premier, who saw \$1 billion leave the health care system in the eHealth boondoggle which lined the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants.

Premier, if you truly care about transparency, if you truly care about accountability and this is not some last-minute conversion, will you support Ms. MacLeod's private member's bill, the Truth in Government Act, which puts these things online for taxpayers to see what you're up to?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to return to this editorial because it introduces objectivity, and I think it's important—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can start warning members now. I don't prefer to do that, so I'd just ask that you tone it down.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague, just a moment ago in his question to me, again made

reference to eHealth and “lining the pockets of Liberal friends.”

I want to quote again from the editorial.

“It ... turns out that the documents ... which Hudak relied upon ... offer no clear link to whether any of the recipients of the contracts are ‘insiders’ or ‘Liberal-friendly,’ as was asserted at the event—and in press releases distributed in connection to it.”

It goes on to say, “The announcement was clearly torqued in an attempt to achieve maximum political impact. That’s an interesting play by a leader and a party vowing to deliver more openness and accountability....”

If we’re going to have a debate, then let’s have it on the basis of a factual foundation. That’s in keeping with what we owe, I think—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The only thing torqued here is the feeding frenzy of Liberal-friendly consultants like your friends at the Courtyard Group, who got fat and rich at eHealth, at the LHINs and, we suspect, across this bloated government.

Ontario families want to have truth in government. They want to have these accountability measures that the Ontario PC caucus is bringing forward: extending FOIs; posting online all contracts of \$10,000 a year or more and all grants and contributions of \$10,000 a year or more; and posting online these reclassifications that you’ve used to bloat the number of assistant deputy ministers by some 60%-plus in your time in office.

Premier, why do you stand against these real proposals to empower Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member says he’s in favour of good ideas that promote accountability and transparency, so I’d ask him in return, when we put Hydro One and OPG on the sunshine list, why did his party vote against that? When we gave the auditor the power to look at the books before an election and discover any potentially hidden deficits, they voted against that. Why did they do that? When we expanded the powers of the Auditor General to include school boards, hospitals and universities, they did not support that. When we banned government advertising, they voted against that twice. When we made publicly reporting expenses mandatory, putting it online for 22 agencies, they voted against that.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, we learned that Rochester-based North American Breweries made a serious offer for Labatt’s Lakeport Brewery. The deal would have saved 143 jobs—good-paying jobs—in Hamilton. Labatt rejected the offer and they’ve started to dismantle the brewery’s equipment.

One of the Premier’s former senior aides is a key Labatt executive. Has the Premier had any conversations with him or anyone else at Labatt about the future of the Lakeport Brewery?

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

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thanks once again for the opportunity to address this, not just for us here in this House but for the people in Hamilton and, in particular, those who work at Lakeport. We recognize that they’ve begun to move—that Labatt, buying Lakeport, has begun to move equipment out.

We are committed to working with anyone who’s prepared to make investments in Hamilton. We are certain that there is a bright future, not just for those workers but for that facility. We are determined to see that that facility can be used for other purposes.

What we do know of Labatt, with their equipment, is that they will be putting that equipment to use in Canada. We don’t know the details of that. It is unfortunate they have moved quicker in terms of their planning than what we had anticipated.

We are as concerned as the member opposite that the people in Hamilton who work at Lakeport will have a future, and we will do whatever it takes to do our part—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Hamilton want the Premier to respond to this very serious issue. We don’t want to hear platitudes from a minister who’s not doing her job.

The bottom line is this: The Rochester company wants to grow Hamilton’s export base, wants to do what this minister purports that she wants: They want to save 143 good-paying jobs in Hamilton. They’ve made a serious offer for the brewery and all of the equipment, but Labatt is refusing to accept that offer. They’re refusing to sell, even though the prospective new owner would not be a direct competitor in terms of local markets.

Will the Premier get on the phone with Labatt after question period, convene a meeting with them and help to broker a deal that will save those 143 jobs and save a brewery in Hamilton?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: What we know about Hamilton and what Hamilton wants is that they want a bright future with good jobs for the people who work in Hamilton.

What we know is that we have made significant effort and significant strides in investments by this government, and every one of those investments has been opposed by the members of the opposition, whether it was around infrastructure, hospital bills—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock—pardon me; no, leave it running. The member from Hamilton East will please come to order. If your leader wants to move your seat, then you’ll be sitting there permanently. If not, you should perhaps be in your own seat.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Shame on this minister. There are 143 families in limbo, and they are now scrambling to pay their bills. And shame on this Premier. Even though

there was a serious offer on the table to save the brewery and their jobs, these families are losing hope quickly. Meanwhile, the Premier rewards Labatt with a juicy, publicly funded tax cut.

Is this how the Premier plans to save Ontario jobs, by rewarding irresponsible corporate behaviour with even more tax cuts and by looking the other way as Hamiltonians keep losing their jobs?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I have to say that it's quite ironic that every time we have come to Hamilton with investments, every time we've used programs from economic development and trade to help business to create jobs, the same member on her feet today has opposed those efforts. So I find it very, very ironic that today this member is suddenly supportive of our initiative—

Mr. Paul Miller: That's a false statement. You're creating that. That's false.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.
Minister.

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This is the final warning to the member from Hamilton East.

Please continue.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Every initiative that we have made to be supportive of Hamilton, those same members have been opposed. What is very important today is, there are 143 people that are concerned about their future, and what we anticipate, like we have done before, is we will do whatever it takes and we will help those people.

PENSION REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. It's regarding a very prominent issue that's happening in the province; it's around pensions.

We know that at this point in time there is a serious discussion happening across the province. We saw articles recently in the newspapers about the fact that you have to earn a significant amount of money, \$1 million, if you expect to retire with a pension of about \$50,000 a year. You need \$500,000 if you want to retire with a pension of about \$25,000 a year. Yet, on average, Ontarians only save about \$60,000 in their RRSPs at the time of retirement. So the point is that Ontarians cannot rely on RRSPs alone to have a decent quality of life upon retirement.

The question is this: When will this government finally give Ontarians a public option to save and retire with dignity?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank my colleague for the question. This is something we've had a chance to speak to in previous question periods. I read the same article. It is nothing if not sobering in terms of where we find ourselves at this point in our history. The fact of the matter is that we are collectively and individually saving too little for our retirement years.

My colleague has settled upon a particular solution to the exclusion of others. I think that we need to take a bit more time. I think we've now engaged the federal government; I think they're now participating in a sincere effort to respond to a national challenge. We look forward to continuing to work with them. Among the many possible solutions that we are required to consider is the one put forward by my honourable colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to research conducted for the hospitals of Ontario pension plan, 84% of Ontarians are concerned about having enough money for retirement and 58% believe that it's the role of government, not individuals, to ensure that Ontarians have an adequate retirement income. During this historic debate, you either support cost-effective public pensions, as New Democrats do, or you stubbornly stick to fee-heavy private individual savings plans that have been shown not to work. Will the Premier tell Ontarians who are worried about their retirement income: What does he support?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is aware that in our recent budget we outlined a number of options that are available to all governments, including an expanded public pension. I had the opportunity yesterday to meet in London with a number of labour leaders as well as business leaders at a national pension forum hosted by my federal counterpart, Mr. Flaherty. We again heard a range of options that are available to enhance retirement savings. Among the options under consideration is the one the member has spoken about. I've also had the opportunity myself to meet with a number of labour leaders on these important issues.

I'll be attending, with other finance ministers in June, the next national meeting to discuss the options that are available as we move to what I hope will be an even better—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a very serious issue for all Ontarians, who look forward to their golden years but dread the economic uncertainty that those golden years often bring.

In a few weeks, as the minister mentioned, Canada's finance ministers are going to gather to decide the future of retirement savings in this country. New Democrats support public, defined-benefit pension plans like our proposed Ontario retirement plan, and both the Premier and the minister have acknowledged that it is a very solid plan. But with the clock ticking down to the meeting, there's absolutely no sense at all as to where the McGuinty government stands.

The Premier can actually offer some clarity here and now, so I'll ask the question again: What is his position on pensions? Which side is he on?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are continuing to examine a range of options. It could be a combination of those options.

We have engaged, for instance, Bob Baldwin, a noted economist who has very close ties to the labour commu-

ity, who advised us that there is a particular challenge among middle-income earners. His recommendations paralleled, interestingly, the recommendations of a more conservative prominent national economist on the same issue. There is a broad national discussion. I know that provinces like Nova Scotia and Manitoba haven't yet landed position on these things.

What's important is that all of us continue to work together. The member is right: There are challenges in the system, but I think all Canadians and all Ontarians should know that, overall, our system has served us well. We want to make sure that continues into the future.

LOCAL HEALTH INTEGRATION NETWORKS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. While the North East Local Health Integration Network is located in North Bay, the newly appointed CEO, Louise Paquette, resides in Sudbury. The position was posted as being located in North Bay. Will the North East LHIN continue having an absentee CEO, or are you planning to waste patient dollars on a special arrangement for Louise Paquette?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The North East LHIN covers northeastern Ontario, and northeastern Ontario includes all of northeastern Ontario. If the member opposite is suggesting that what we need to do is employ people who work only in one community in a very large area, then I have to respectfully disagree with that.

I am very pleased with the work that the North East LHIN is doing to drive the integration that is vitally important for the future of our health care system. I think the CEO of the North East LHIN is highly qualified to do the job, and I look forward to working with her as she takes this on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What's her name?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Louise Paquette.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This is just a perfect example of why this government's talk of restraint simply isn't credible. This government looked the other way while this LHIN handed out \$770,000 in untendered contracts to consultants. His government is paying Louise Paquette over a quarter of a million dollars, adding her to 11 others at the LHINs who have salaries on the sunshine list. Now it ends up that he has given his quarter-of-a-million-dollar CEO a special deal so that she doesn't have to report to work in North Bay, which is where the office is. Ontario patients are left to wonder what motivated the Premier to turn his back on all this talk of restraint.

My question is this: Is Premier McGuinty putting the Liberal family ahead of Ontario families because the new CEO's family donated over \$23,000 to the Liberal Party since 2004?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The attacks on giving community people a voice in their health care system

continue. I, for one, am extremely proud of the work that the LHINs are doing to integrate that care.

Let me give you just one example in the North East LHIN where having the LHIN there actually is improving patient care. The Espanola general hospital is a model of integrated care. The hospital serves a small, rural northeastern community with a population of approximately 5,000 people. This small hospital and small community was a finalist in the Celebrating Innovations in Health Care Expo in Toronto this past November. The Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre's natural bowel care program was one of three finalists in the improving quality and patient safety category. This innovative—

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

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Housing. After almost seven years of the McGuinty government, Ontario families continue to face a housing crisis. Today's Toronto Star says that the affordable housing system is in a "sorry state." Three years ago, the McGuinty government promised to put forward a long-term affordable housing strategy. Today, we are hearing concerns that the plan "falls well short of what's required."

Will the government deliver a comprehensive and well-funded housing strategy this June, or is affordable housing considered expendable just like transit funding and the special diet allowance?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that all of us are anxious to see the final unfolding of the affordable housing strategy in the province of Ontario, but I also know that your colleagues in the New Democratic Party always want us to do things right, to give full consideration to all points of view. I know New Democrats don't want to rush into things and make mistakes.

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What I'm saying to the member is, we received over 1,000 representations from people. We had 13 excellent meetings where people could bring forward their ideas; people submitted ideas in writing to us. We are analyzing those at the present time. We're finalizing the package. I think the member, if she is objective, will actually applaud the policy when it's brought forward this spring.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The McGuinty government likes to spout off about what they're doing. I hope, quite frankly, having heard the minister just now, that all of that consultation will not be a waste.

At any rate, the consultation doesn't change the situation on the ground. This is what is happening in Ontario: 140,000 families are waiting for affordable housing; one in five households is paying more than half their income on rent; a quarter of a million families are forced to choose between paying rent and putting food on the table. Yesterday, the Housing Network of Ontario set out five requirements for an effective housing strategy,

including a commitment to build 10,000 new affordable housing units a year.

The question is, will the government's strategy actually follow their lead and take into account their recommendations?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't think the member would want me to pre-empt the official announcement of the strategy.

But let me tell you what we have been doing, outside of the strategy even. We're committed to creating and repairing at least 76,000 housing units across Ontario. We're delivering close to 35,000 rent supplements to help make rent more affordable for Ontario families. Our rent bank has prevented nearly 23,000 evictions so far. On average, this means keeping 330 families in their homes every month.

Through our agreement with the federal government we're investing \$622 million, and the federal government is matching that, for a combined total of \$1.2 billion for affordable housing; \$704 million of this was allocated for the social housing renovation and retrofit program. To date, we've seen \$260 million spent for repair—

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

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I was happy to hear that this government expanded access to the cancer drug Avastin last year. This was good news for Ontarians fighting cancer who are in need of this particular drug. However, there are many other types of cancers that Ontarians are struggling with every day.

Cancer touches us all. It affects our parents, our children, our brothers and our sisters, and many of our loved ones and friends. We all need to rally together to fight the causes of cancer. I know that everyone in this House does.

Can the minister please tell the House about any other steps the government is taking to increase access to cancer drugs in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know how important it is to patients and their families affected by cancer to have access to the right drugs. That's why we're proposing new drug reforms that will make it possible to continue to add new drugs to the formulary. That's why we're supported in these reforms by the Canadian Cancer Society.

Since 2003, we've funded an additional 39 cancer-fighting drugs. New funding means that the following cancer drugs have been added to the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary: Gleevec for chronic leukemia; Sutent for stomach and kidney cancers; Thyrogen for the treatment of thyroid cancer; and Nexavar for kidney and liver cancers. On top of the above-mentioned drugs, we've also spent almost \$500 million between 2007 and 2009 for intravenous drug uses.

This government is committed to increasing access to drugs for all Ontarians, and we will continue to achieve this goal through our proposed drug reforms.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm grateful to the minister for that answer, as myself personally and I know people in this place are affected by the cancers that we speak of. I look forward to passing this information on to the constituents in my riding. It shows that Ontarians stand to gain access to the many drugs we have in our new proposed reforms.

According to the Brant Cancer Report, which was released in January 2009, 646 cases of cancer were diagnosed in 2004. In Brant, as in Ontario, the average rate among males was significantly higher than females. Generally, four types of cancers explained half the rates of incidence in Brant: lung, colorectal, prostate and breast.

Could the minister please elaborate on any new specific drugs that are offered for these cancers that we can fight?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Lung, colorectal, prostate and breast cancer are among the most common cancer diagnoses in Ontario. That's why our government has taken action, and we continue to add important cancer drugs to the formulary. Our proposed drug reforms will increase the frequency of these additions and give Ontarians more access to lower-cost drugs.

On the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary, new funding means the following cancer drugs are now listed: Trelstar, for prostate cancer; Xeloda, for colorectal and breast cancer; and Tarceva, for lung cancer. As well, we're expanding the funding coverage of Femara and Aromasin for breast cancer—and many more.

These reforms are the right thing to do for all Ontarians, and this is the right thing to do for Ontarians who are fighting cancer.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is for the Premier. Premier, with 72 days left before your greedy HST tax grab becomes a reality for Ontario families already struggling to make ends meet, here's what Susan Stevenson of Wheatley has to say: "We cannot afford another tax. We can barely make our mortgage payments, then there is hydro, gas and all the other necessities we have to pay."

The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex hasn't asked this question, so I will: Will you scrap the HST on hydro, gas and all the necessities that the Susan Stevensons of the world and the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex will have to pay in just 72 more days?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I agree with the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex that what we need in this province is 600,000 more people working, and working in his riding. There is no more passionate member in this riding than the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. What he has been telling his constituents is that there are two parties in this House who believe that we should have a 20th century taxation system while our kids need jobs in the 21st century.

So I say to all of the members that it is so very, very important that we keep our eye on the ball. What we need

in the 21st century are those jobs—the jobs we need for our children and our grandchildren—and we will reform our tax system to get those jobs. It's so important for the people of Chatham–Kent–Essex to understand that their income taxes are going down, and they need to file their income tax return to get the benefits of the tax reform—

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't think Susan Stevenson or anyone else from down there would believe that either—if they've got a bridge to sell, maybe.

Susan Stevenson isn't the only one who doesn't believe her concerns are getting through to Dalton McGuinty and his government. Jodi Bryans of London knows the HST means everyday items like home heating oil, haircuts, gym memberships and gas at the pump will cost more. She says, "Taxpayers here are tapped out—you have all you're going to get."

The Minister of Health, the Attorney General and the member from London–Fanshawe could have stood up to the Premier for Jodi Bryans, but they didn't. So I will. With just 72 days left, Premier, will you scrap your greedy HST tax grab on every item?

Hon. John Wilkinson: When it comes to London, there's a reason that the good people of London and the county—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You could buy a job at the LHINs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm telling Jack Brewer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful, Minister.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the MPPs for London and, particularly, for Middlesex, who've been able to share with their constituents the fact that their income taxes were permanently cut on January 1. I know that they've been doing a wonderful job making sure that their constituents understand that there is transitional funding available—from the Harper government, I might add—to the vast majority of taxpaying families and singles in London and in Middlesex.

I would say that those members understand that, for a brighter future, we need to reform our ancient tax system and get it into the 21st century to make sure we're getting the jobs that the people in London and area, particularly in Middlesex, need, and that our farmers appreciate the fact that we are lowering their cost of business so they can be profitable.

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CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, you'll know that

last Thursday, the workers for the centre Jeanne Sauvé, which services kids' needs in regard to child protection services in the region, had a rally, along with municipal leaders and others, to protest the financial situation that your government has put these child protection services in.

My question to you is simply this: Will you admit that the budget adjustments made by your government this year have not resolved the budget crisis of centre Jeanne Sauvé and other child protection agencies?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to speak about this issue and talk about the transformation of a sector and the work that we're doing to stabilize and sustain child protection across this province.

We understand and believe in the important work that's done by children's aid societies. We also know that we need to work with them to make sure, because of the importance of that work, that they are on a sustainable pathway. That is exactly what we've done, and the member opposite knows this. We have worked hard in this past fiscal year to stabilize the sector to get us to the large-scale conversation with respect to the future of the sector and how we can find a way for child protection to operate and function amongst the many complexities that exist associated with the families and children that they serve.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, you're missing the point. It is your government and this Legislature that has mandated by legislation that these child protection service agencies must provide protection to children when in need. The issue is that they're having to lay people off because your government is not funding them to meet those needs that have been mandated by this Legislature.

I ask you again, are you prepared to do what needs to be done in order to address the financial crisis that exists within the child protection services, or are you going to do something else in order to meet with this particular issue?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I tell the member opposite—and he does know this—that we are absolutely prepared to do what it takes. We funded an additional \$26.9 million across the province to ensure that children's aid societies would be able to function and find a pathway to sustainability. In fact, Jeanne Sauvé Family Services received an additional \$199,000, in addition to those funds that they had received in the past fiscal year.

As we embark on a new fiscal year, we continue to work with the commission whose responsibility it is to find a sustainable pathway for children's aid societies. Our regional offices work in collaboration with those CASs to ensure that they are able to deliver the protection that children need. That is why we've put additional resources into the sector: to ensure and meet our commitment that no child would be at risk, and we have—

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

JOB SECURITY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Our

government, like many other jurisdictions around the world, is only now beginning to emerge from one of the most difficult economic downturns in our lifetime. The economy is showing signs of improvement. People are going back to work, and production levels are moving up slowly.

But the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex are still concerned about returning to new employment and job security. In fact, job security remains a top concern for many people across the province who still worry that we aren't quite out of the woods yet. As a result of the recent global economic crisis, many of our constituents find that their confidence is still shaken.

Minister, what is our government doing to secure jobs in this province and to restore confidence for the people of Ontario, who are just now beginning to see signs of a recovery?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very pleased to take this question from the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. It is important, in particular in southern Ontario, where such a big base of our GDP is manufacturing, which is the sector that took the biggest hit in the global recession. We know that there are communities, cities and towns that were very much affected in a negative way. We are starting to see Ontario re-emerging as a leader in the nation with our GDP growth, every quarter now, going in the right direction with those indicators.

We know that there is more work for us to do. Today we're facing a dollar that's 98.8 cents against the American dollar. Those challenges still remain for that sector. Programs like our advanced manufacturing strategy, advanced back in 2005, were launched at exactly the right time, where the Ontario government could partner with these companies to bring them investment into—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: In her response, I noted that the minister highlighted at least one of the ways in which our government is acting to protect jobs, increase job security and strengthen our economy. The minister referenced a total amount of \$500 million for the AMIS fund.

While things are on the mend in our province's economy, it is important for the government to demonstrate where public monies are being spent and how investments are benefiting Ontarians.

Could the minister provide the House with a few examples of how these funds are being utilized to benefit the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Ontario, and how your ministry is putting taxpayers' dollars to work to benefit them, their families and the province as a whole?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I had mentioned the advanced manufacturing strategy, which is a loan program that we have had in the past. Those are programs that have worked for communities.

A city like Hamilton: Karma Candy accessing a loan to make a significant investment in a historic part of Hamilton.

In this member's own riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: seeing Precismeca in Wallaceburg creating over 100 jobs by having a small loan from our government leveraging a huge investment.

Last Friday in Sarnia: Nova Chemicals, H.C. Starck—both of those companies making significant investments in their community.

People are starting to see that things are starting to move again, that we can be hopeful. The Ontario government, with significant, good tax policy, will help our companies re-emerge and take on the world.

USE OF TASERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

You're aware that the policing community is extremely disappointed in you for not providing a program to train and equip all front-line officers with taser technology. You even said yourself that tasers save lives, and then, in what seems to be almost comical, you suggested equipping tasers with video cameras to spy on the few officers who do carry tasers.

Minister, can you explain to the House how equipping a taser with a video camera would improve law and order in Ontario? Or do you simply not trust our front-line men and women?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: That truly is a bizarre question. The placing of cameras was a suggestion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton will withdraw the comment.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The suggestion of mounting a camera on a taser is an operation that's used in some jurisdictions—and when asked in the question, would I look at it: of course.

What is important with our study of tasers is that we have implemented all the recommendations from the committee that studied tasers. That was made up of the police standards advisory committee, which is made up of the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The police officers want equipment and training, not video cameras.

Minister, you want to be Big Brother and look over the shoulder of the few people who are trained to carry a taser. I have mentioned your joke to many front-line administrative officers over the past few weeks. They simply cannot believe that you would even comment on such foolishness.

The OPP tell me that you will not provide funding for a valuable justice program like video cameras in police cruisers, which is very successful in many jurisdictions, but you have the gall to suggest something as pathetic as

being Big Brother while equipping a taser with a video camera.

Minister, why do you no longer have respect and confidence in the men and women who protect Ontario and put their lives on the line for us 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let's be perfectly honest: If anybody in the policing community is laughing at any comment, it's his comment, because this government has demonstrated over its life that it supports policing, that it invests in policing, that it hires police officers, not on a five-year basis but on a permanent basis. And that's what we ask him to do—we ask him to talk to his public safety minister in the federal government to support the continuation of the federal program, not for five years but for the life of the program.

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There is absolutely no question that I will put our record of support for policing against his and their record of policing any time, anywhere. Any suggestion to the contrary is completely erroneous.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Later this week, I'll be in the Timiskaming area, in Marathon and Thunder Bay. Families in these communities have been hit very hard by the forestry crisis. Five years ago, the government promised \$500 million in forestry sector assistance. A freedom-of-information request submitted by my office found that \$236 million, nearly half of that fund, sits unused. My question is this: Why do hundreds of millions of forestry dollars sit in a Toronto bank account while families in northern Ontario continue to lose good jobs?

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I certainly look forward to seeing the leader at our Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association meeting in Marathon as well. Let me tell you that I will be there along with some of my colleagues. We look forward to being able to speak to them about the good news that came out of the Ontario budget of a couple of weeks ago that obviously has been received extremely well in Thunder Bay, northwestern Ontario and all across northern Ontario.

In terms of the forest sector initiatives, I think the member knows very well that, indeed, we have made significant incentives to the forestry sector that have helped keep mills open, that have helped reopen other ones and that will be able to put us in a position to help others as we go through these challenging times.

The fact is that we've uploaded costs to the province that previously were part of the responsibility of the companies. This party actually brought those responsibilities down to them. We look forward to bringing forward more incentives, including the wood supply competition that's going—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm going to actually share the FOI information that I have with the Premier and his minister and ask a page to bring it over to the minister, because, notwithstanding what he says, he should know very well that in Thunder Bay region alone, nine paper machines have been closed.

Not only were hundreds of millions of dollars left untouched as job losses decimated forestry communities in the north; this government refuses to provide a complete list of the companies that have actually received the public money. Large parts of that list, large parts of the information that we've requested, are simply blacked out. Why is the Premier hiding the details of \$180-million worth of government grants and loans?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The facts are very, very clear. Overall, Ontario's forest sector programs under our government, which are unprecedented and were never done previously, have leveraged more than \$870 million in new private sector investments, a huge amount—through our forest sector prosperity fund, \$205 million; our loan guarantee program, \$141 million; the northern pulp and paper electricity rebate system, \$94 million going directly into the pockets of the companies; and how about the \$296 million in road construction maintenance that was uploaded back to the province; stumpage relief, which is obviously hugely significant to them as well; and forest inventory funding that has gone forward—there is example upon example.

Again, we are also looking at new opportunities through the competitive wood supply process. That application process closed on March 31. We look forward to putting Ontario's wood to work, and I know there's tremendous enthusiasm all across northern Ontario.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. People in Ontario are facing growing challenges as a result of the economic recession worldwide. In my community of Mississauga South, I've seen first-hand the challenges families are facing. This government has made great strides in improving the social assistance system—everything from raising rates to making necessary rule changes. However, we cannot stop there.

As part of the poverty reduction strategy, it was announced that the social assistance system will be reviewed. Minister, could you inform the Legislature and Ontarians as to the progress of the social assistance review?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Mississauga South for his question. As part of the poverty reduction strategy, I have appointed a Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, chaired by Gail Nyberg of the Daily Bread Food Bank. I am proud to say that we will be implementing a number of changes as a result of short-term recommendations from the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council.

Initial policy work will focus on the exemption of small payments and in-kind gifts, shortening the suspension periods for non-compliance with participation requirements, clarifying the rules for disposing of assets in relation to eligibility and changing the shelter allowance calculation to potentially benefit people who share the cost of their accommodations.

I'd like to thank SARC for their continued support. I am looking forward to—

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

Mr. Charles Sousa: I know that people in my community appreciate the continued commitment to increasing social assistance rates. In fact, it was one of the recommendations made at two community round-table meetings that we held in South Mississauga during our government's public consultations on poverty. I was pleased that as part of our poverty reduction strategy, social assistance rates were raised again this year by 1%—that's 12% since taking office—despite the economic downturn.

However, this is only part of the answer. Ontarians don't need just short-term changes, but changes that will help people overcome barriers in the long term and give them the tools to get ahead in life. We have an opportunity, with the social assistance review, to provide and help provide those tools.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, is the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council examining the overall social assistance system, and if so, what are they looking to address?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I refer the question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this issue. I thank the member from Mississauga South for being such a strong advocate.

He is right: The social assistance review is one part of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy. We do know that people need both short-term relief—and those are the steps that are being undertaken—and long-term strategies to improve life for them and their children.

I want to give just a few examples of the work that we are doing to make progress for individuals: \$63.5 million in funding to child care, maintaining 8,500 child care spaces; increases in the Ontario child benefit; our comprehensive tax reform will remove 90,000 low-income families from the tax rolls; full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. All of these things, and much more, are part of changing the future of Ontario families for the better. It's something that we're very committed—

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. A special purpose account was established so that all licence fees, royalties and fines collected under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act were to be used exclusively for fish and wildlife

management. Every year, an annual report must be completed for the fish and wildlife special purpose account, yet no report has been given to this Legislature in the past two years. Minister, why have these reports failed to be tabled?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm grateful for the question and I thank the member. This is an important issue. Certainly, it has been part of the briefing documents that I have been subject to in the last few weeks. I look forward to tabling those documents in the near future for the member and for all of the members in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, a letter from the previous Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Etobicoke Centre, to Mike Reader of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters on January 5 of this year says that both reports have been completed, but they still haven't been tabled. The letter goes on to say that the reports are expected to be tabled shortly. Minister, that was three and a half months ago and counting. These reports do not become public documents until they are tabled. Why is it that the ministry and you have failed to table these reports, and what is it exactly—or potentially appears to be—that the Ministry of Natural Resources is trying to hide?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I thank the member for the question and I appreciate his interest in this subject. Certainly, I have been looking at those documents and have directed my staff to table those documents. A letter is on its way to the Clerk, Deb Deller, as we speak, I believe. I'm happy to provide those documents and I appreciate his interest in the subject.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Toronto East General Hospital is a huge part of my community. As a result of this government's lack of commitment to excellent, quality health care, the hospital has closed the physiotherapy clinic and has announced the layoff of 118 nurses. Now, one of my constituents, who suffers from advanced arthritis and is a volunteer leader of our local arthritis management program, has informed us that the hospital will be forced to charge a \$480 fee to the Arthritis Society to run its arthritis self-management program.

Many people in my community living with arthritis benefit from the program. Participants learn to manage their arthritis and require less medical attention.

1130

Why has this government forced our hospital to stop investing in community-based health education?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question from the member regarding Toronto East General Hospital. I think he might be interested to know that we've increased their base funding by \$33 million since we were elected in 2003. In addition to that, they've received funding to reduce wait times, and an additional almost 19,000 procedures have been funded by this government.

In addition, we've put over \$75 million in the Toronto Central LHIN for our aging-at-home strategy.

When it comes to the physiotherapy services the member referenced, I'd like to quote the CEO, and I will do that in my supplementary.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: The question to the minister is, why is this hospital being forced to charge people to use the facilities?

We know that both the Arthritis Society and the diabetes society run self-management classes at Toronto East General Hospital. It is obvious that these classes help people manage their conditions and that this results in less need for costly medical intervention. This is a no-brainer or should be a no-brainer. Educational programs help reduce health care costs in both the long and short term and keep people healthy.

Why is this government forcing Toronto East General Hospital to start charging for space to hold these important classes that help people stay healthy?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our hospitals have had to make some very difficult decisions as they have come to realize, as have we, that the year-over-year increases in funding simply are not sustainable. Hospitals across this province are working hard with their LHINs to land on the changes they have to make.

When it comes to physiotherapy, Rob Devitt, CEO of Toronto East General Hospital, says there are 10 OHIP-funded clinics in the community and another 15 private clinics, all of which have shorter wait-lists than the Toronto East General Hospital has. So, really, this is a case of streamlining the system. These are the kinds of choices that hospitals are making.

For those of us who think that having a sustainable health care system is an important goal and responsibility, frankly, that we have, I think they will welcome this kind of—

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

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Until the late 1990s, elk were an extirpated species in Ontario, one that was not found in the province but still found elsewhere. It's my understanding that, starting in 1998, your ministry, with partners around the province, introduced elk from Elk Island National Park in Alberta to four locations around the province.

The program is now 10 years old and some elk populations have begun to thrive to the point that there has been conflict between elk and humans, specifically in the agricultural community. I know that in some areas of the province, especially, I'm told, in the Bancroft area, the problem has become quite acute.

What is the status of the repatriated elk herds and how is your ministry responding to the incidence of human-elk conflict?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the honourable member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for the question. The elk restoration program is something that all Ontarians should be proud of. It represents a success story and an example of what conservationists, hunters and the government can do when we all work together.

The four sites where elk have been reintroduced around the province have been seeing differing trends of population growth, and the herd around Bancroft has seen some population growth. That being said, the best estimate of the total population in the province is just over 700, compared to the hundreds and thousands of deer in Ontario.

The honourable member is correct to point out that the emerging success of the elk restoration program has come with a new set of challenges. Ontarians are pleased that elk have begun to establish themselves in the province. However, they've become a nuisance, especially in the agricultural sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is once again for the Minister of Natural Resources. It appears that the unintended consequence of the success of the elk reintroduction program is difficulties for farmers and landowners in some areas of the elk range.

Elk are an important part of Ontario's biodiversity, a natural resource to be managed sustainably for the enjoyment of all. That being said, how did the government hear of this problem, and is the government listening to the people on the ground? What steps, if any, has the government taken to address the concerns of farmers while encouraging the further growth of the elk population?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: The honourable member is correct: When farmers are experiencing crop damage, clearly we need to work with them to find a community-based solution.

I've spoken about this issue with a number of conservation groups, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, affected farmers and ministry scientists. The Ministry of Natural Resources has been working with farmers in the Bancroft area to assist them in finding constructive elk control techniques. We're also completing the first stage of public consultations on the draft elk management plan. The plan is consistent with the direction set out in the cervid ecological framework and explores all options for habitat requirements, population sustainability and managing human-elk conflict.

I look forward to reporting further on this matter to my colleagues here and to the people of Ontario.

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

The House recessed from 1136 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: In the members' gallery—and soon to join them—are members from the Ontario Chiropractic Association. Today, they are visiting us all. I'd

like to introduce Dr. Bob Haig, Dr. Tom Isaacs, Dr. David Brunarski, Dr. Melanie Locke, Dr. Warren Keyes and Anne-Marie Quinn, who today will be talking to all members and having a reception this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome, on behalf of the member from Scarborough–Agincourt and page Khaleel Rajwani, his father, Moez Rajwani, who will be joining us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm privileged to rise today on behalf of the PC caucus and recognize the 62nd anniversary of Israel Independence Day.

The state of Israel was established in 1948 as a result of the British mandate granting Lord Balfour permission to establish a Jewish nation-state. It was established with a written constitution which granted equal rights to men and women, regardless of ethnicity, religion, race or creed.

After 62 years of wars, attacks, celebrations and developments, Israel and the Israeli spirit remain strong and vibrant. Israel remains the only democratic nation in the Middle East that does not subscribe to theocratic practices.

Its citizens come from all walks of life. Always open and accepting, Israel has welcomed those from former Soviet countries and African nations, amongst others. Israel, apropos of a current Toronto debate, is the only Middle Eastern country that affords equal rights to gays and lesbians.

It is making significant developments in the medical, environmental and agricultural fields. For example, Israel has developed a plastic recycling technology that is more efficient than current standards. It is highly advanced in the high-tech sectors with institutions like Technion university, IDC Herzliya and the Hebrew University.

The spirit and tenacity of Israel and its people are evidenced by the fact that they have taken a physically small body of land and turned it into a thriving nation. It is a modern-day miracle.

While we celebrate this anniversary of Israel's independence, it is important to recognize that while Israel has made many advances, there is still more work to be done to ensure that its past successes are not marred by terrorism and the hatred of those who call for the elimination of a Jewish state.

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very happy to recognize today North York General Hospital in my riding of Willowdale for receiving the highest level of accreditation from Accreditation Canada. Accreditation Canada is a non-profit, independent organization that acts as an

external review for health organizations to assess their individual levels of quality, based on national standards. North York General's results were more than impressive, meeting 100% of applicable requirements in the area of infection control. The award is a testament to the hospital's high standards and reputation of excellence in patient care, safety, and quality improvement. To quote North York General Hospital president and CEO Bonnie Adamson, "Our top priority is to provide safe, quality care to our patients and their families—I am very proud of our staff, physicians and volunteers, who work hard each and every day to accomplish this."

I'm proud to be from a riding that has such an outstanding facility. Although already a great success, North York General continues to embrace opportunities for future improvements. Patients and their families should take comfort in this achievement. It demonstrates the priorities of North York General, being focused on an ultra-safe environment providing the highest-quality care.

Again, I congratulate North York General Hospital on this achievement. They will continue to provide outstanding health care in the North York area and the GTA.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Earlier today I was joined by Kevin Gaudet, the federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and Peter Coleman of the National Citizens Coalition. They're here in the gallery today. We discussed government accountability, and they helped me unveil the PC five-point plan for truth in government.

Later this afternoon, I will table legislation that will include five robust accountability measures that will aim to restore public trust and confidence in Ontario's government and will shed some sunlight into some of the darkest corridors of political power here at Queen's Park and throughout our government. The legislation contains a series of taxpayer protection measures that will expand freedom of information across the government. It will ensure that at public sector bodies, proactive disclosure of hospitality and travel expenses, job reclassification, and contracts and contributions over \$10,000 are all fully disclosed.

These five points, had they been law, would have likely prevented scandals and taxpayer abuses at eHealth, the OLG and other government agencies. They would have also prevented the scandal at the Minister of Citizenship's office that ended with an Auditor General's report that uncovered a cricket club receiving \$1 million when it had asked for \$150,000.

If this bill becomes law, it means that the secretive LHINs and the tax-raising Waste Diversion Ontario will be accountable to the public. I'm calling on all members of this assembly to support this common-sense, practical and sensible bill.

EARTHQUAKE IN TIBET

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would like to express my heartfelt condolences for the tragic loss of lives in the

devastating earthquake in Kyegundo, Kham, Tibet. Many media outlets are reporting the earthquake as having taken place in the Yushu prefecture in the Qinghai province of western China. I would like to recognize that the earthquake took place in the eastern Tibetan province of Kham, Tibet, not China. The official death toll is reported to have reached over 2,000, with over 12,000 injured and 100,000 homeless. My riding of Parkdale–High Park has the largest Tibetan community in exile outside of Nepal and India.

I applaud the swift action of the members of the Tibetan community of Parkdale–High Park in the relief efforts, by raising funds and offering prayers for the victims and survivors of the disaster. Just days ago, a heartfelt letter from Tibetans in Kyegundo was sent to China's leaders, requesting that the Dalai Lama be allowed to visit the area. The Dalai Lama released a statement expressing his wishes to visit the earthquake-affected areas and offer comfort. The people of Kyegundo are deeply religious, and a visit from the Dalai Lama would ease much of the suffering.

Notwithstanding this tragedy, the strength of spirit of the Tibetan people in my riding continues to be a sign of endurance of the human spirit. I stand with all Tibetans at this time of great sadness and offer my support and my prayers.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Each spring, Peter Orphanos, chair of the Sierra Club of Peel, invites me, along with other members of the western Mississauga community, to participate in the Earth Week tree planting in various parks and green spaces in western Mississauga.

1510

This year I joined with the Credit Valley Conservation organization, the Sierra Club members, the city of Mississauga and other community environmentalists, who either didn't want to sleep in last Saturday or who didn't mind the wickedly cold weather. They planted trees at the Meadowvale Conservation Area to extend the wooded area by the Credit River to permit better animal migration.

Visitors can see birds of prey searching for food along the Credit River and spot remnants of early settlements and farm ruins scattered throughout the conservation area. The nearby Meadowvale Village is an Ontario heritage site.

In previous years, hundreds of trees were planted in Streetsville Memorial Park, on the banks of the Credit River in north Mississauga and also along the Culham trail. Trees not only stop soil erosion, but they permit shade in the river. They allow the river to stay cool, and they allow the Atlantic salmon to migrate back up the Credit River in order to spawn.

I congratulate the Sierra Club of Mississauga, and I certainly congratulate Peter Orphanos on his ongoing terrific work on behalf of environmentalism in western Mississauga.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Last week we learned that the federal, provincial and territorial governments entered into a civil settlement agreement with tobacco manufacturers JTI and RJR to resolve potential civil claims related to the movement of contraband tobacco in the early 1990s. This is the second time this government has received the so-called "tainted tobacco money."

Tobacco farmers are the hardest hit by the contraband trade, and this \$71-million windfall belongs in the hands of tobacco farmers. My question: When can farmers expect an announcement to this effect?

When the previous \$1.15-billion settlement was reached in 2008, the federal government used part of the funds for the tobacco transition program to eliminate quota. Although the province also received cash from the tobacco companies, it didn't provide the traditional 40% share usually provided for agricultural programs.

Last week, this government's ag minister called on the federal government to provide money for cash crop, beef, hogs, hort, veal and other programs, along the traditional 60-40 split.

I ask why this government's ag minister believes that income stabilization and the 60-40 split is good for some and not for others. If Ontario is demanding that the federal government come up with 60% for cash crop and cattle, why aren't they demanding the 40% for tobacco?

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I rise today to bring to the attention of this Legislature the upcoming Vision Health Month. The CNIB is celebrating Vision Health Month in May 2010 to raise awareness about the importance of safeguarding vision health.

More than 800,000 Canadians are living with significant vision loss, half of them in Ontario. An additional 4.25 million Canadians have some form of age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma or cataracts, and if left untreated most of these people will be at risk of significant vision loss.

Regular eye exams are the best form of early detection and prevention, improving the chances of detecting any of the four major eye conditions early enough to help control and treat the disease.

CNIB passionately provides community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life.

All of us need to take steps to protect our eyes. This includes wearing sunglasses. On May 27, all Canadians are being encouraged to wear sunglasses in support of Vision Health Month. I will be wearing mine, and I encourage everyone to participate and show their support.

ONTARIO CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. Dave Levac: It is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House to offer a warm welcome to the representatives

from the Ontario Chiropractic Association who are with us in the Legislature today, and indeed in the House, as I introduced earlier.

It might interest you to know that the Ontario Chiropractic Association represents approximately 3,000 of the province's practising chiropractors. As accomplished health professionals who deliver care to over 1.2 million patients in the province, chiropractors provide diagnostic treatment and preventive care for disorders related to the spine, the pelvis, the nervous system and joints.

OCA members are committed to educating patients and the public about their health while empowering them to make informed decisions about treatment options and their overall wellness.

For the second year running, groups of chiropractors will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about the contributions made by the profession to the health care system and share experiences from other various constituencies. Of course, it would not be a Queen's Park day without the Ontario Chiropractic Association reception for all MPPs and staff.

A number of the OCA's members have travelled from ridings from all across Ontario and are here today to let us know that they are making a difference for patients living in our communities and for their wellness. I encourage each and every member of this House to attend the reception the Ontario Chiropractic Association is hosting here this evening in the legislative dining room from 5 o'clock until 7 p.m. so that you can meet with the representatives from your riding.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Levac: I hope to see you there, Speaker, and I hope those people heckling will be there, too.

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On behalf of Premier McGuinty and my colleagues, I rise for the purpose of recognizing an historic event that took place 62 years ago: the establishment of the state of Israel. It is the fulfillment of prophecies, prayers and dreams. On this festive occasion, all of us join in the hopes and prayers of Jewish people here and in Israel that the day may not be far off when the people of Israel and the nations of the world lay down their arms, turn their swords into ploughshares and realize the word of peace, "shalom."

Israel may be a small dot on the map of the world, but it is a giant model of democracy. In spite of economic hardship, wars and threats of war, Israel has not lost its sense of purpose: to shine as a beacon of freedom, democracy and fulfillment of the promise of the ancient Hebrew prophets.

In 1986, as Minister of Citizenship responsible for multiculturalism, I had the pleasure of proclaiming Israel Independence Day on behalf of our government for the first time. I wish to acknowledge today the touching letter we received from the Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, the late Yitzhak Shamir, recognizing the significant gesture of friendship of the people of Ontario to the people of Israel.

One hour ago, we hoisted the Star of David outside this chamber. I wish to recognize the presence of the Consul General of Israel, Amir Gissin; Alan Winer of the UJA of greater Toronto; Dr. Leon Genesove of B'Nai Brith; Len Rudner of the Canadian Jewish Congress; and the president of the Canada Christian College, Dr. Charles McVety. I wish to say to them shalom and congratulations.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated April 20, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

962 BLOOR STREET WEST LIMITED ACT, 2010

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 962 Bloor Street West Limited.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

TRUTH IN GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA VÉRITÉ AU SEIN DU GOUVERNEMENT

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to provide for the disclosure of financial information in the public sector / Projet de loi 39, Loi prévoyant la divulgation de renseignements financiers dans le secteur public.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This bill applies to certain specified entities in the public sector. It requires those entities to make disclosure of the following information on a quarterly basis: contracts that it enters into for goods

or services other than services provided by employees for a total value of \$10,000 or more; grants that it agrees to make of \$10,000 or more; expenses for travel and hospitality incurred in the course of carrying on its activities; and reclassification of any position of any of its employees or persons whose services it retains. A public sector entity is required to make the disclosure on a website that it maintains on the Internet.

1520

The bill also amends the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to make the public sector entities to which the bill applies institutions within the meaning of the act.

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / *Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. If the minister, under section 116 of the act, enters into an agreement with a municipality to provide a rebate of tax under the Gasoline Tax Act to the municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating a rapid transit or public transportation system, the minister shall not refuse to enter into an agreement to provide a rebate of tax under that act to any other municipality for a purpose related to public highways under the jurisdiction of the latter municipality. The amount of the rebate that the latter municipality receives shall be based on the number of inhabitants in the municipality and the total distance of public highways under the jurisdiction of the municipality.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Eric Hoskins: April 18 to 24 is National Volunteer Week. We set aside this week each year to

celebrate the more than five million Ontarians who generously give their time to make a positive difference in their communities. Ontario has a long tradition of volunteerism, and the contributions of volunteers have been vital to the growth, prosperity and cohesiveness of our communities.

Volunteers built our early education system, many of our early hospitals and our first fire departments. Today, they run breakfast programs, drive seniors to appointments, coach our sports teams, help tutor our newcomers, support our vulnerable and protect our environment.

The work of volunteers holds our communities together and makes them resilient in the face of adversity. And today, volunteers are as diverse as the people of Ontario. They are part of our families, they are our co-workers, and they are our neighbours. Through their selfless actions, they help us to reach our full potential, and in doing so, they make communities all over Ontario better places to live.

The value of Ontario's volunteers was never more evident than in the past year as our province, along with the rest of the world, faced an economic downturn. But in this trying time, volunteers were prepared and ready to help, and they did.

Each and every Ontarian benefits immeasurably from the assistance that volunteers provide.

The McGuinty government applauds these volunteers and is committed to supporting and encouraging them. This government's recent budget demonstrates our ongoing commitment to Ontario's volunteers by allocating \$120 million to charitable and not-for-profit organizations through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to help build strong, vibrant communities.

The government is celebrating volunteerism through the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Since its inception, we have recognized more than 100,000 volunteers. This year, we will honour 10,000 more in 47 ceremonies in every corner of Ontario.

The government is also promoting volunteers through the third ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge. This program is an opportunity for Ontario young people to make a difference in their lives and in their communities through volunteering. Our ambitious goal this year is to motivate 10,000 young people, ages 14 to 18, to volunteer for three hours during the challenge. This year I am asking members from all political parties to join the challenge by continuing their already considerable volunteerism and volunteering in their communities at some point in the next three weeks, so that they can continue to lead by example when encouraging Ontario's young people to volunteer.

Volunteerism helps to define who we are as a people and brings out the best in all of us, in our communities and in Ontario. It is a way for people to show their values and to reaffirm that as citizens, we all have the potential to build a better Ontario and a better world.

Ontario's volunteers give so much throughout the year. National Volunteer Week is our opportunity to show them how much we appreciate their tireless efforts.

I urge all members to encourage and to celebrate the volunteers in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to echo the comments made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to recognize National Volunteer Week, April 18 to 24. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase the work that volunteers do in the province of Ontario. Over five million Ontarians volunteer yearly, contributing over 800 million annual volunteer hours. I might add that our volunteer rate for youth between the ages of 15 and 24 is 63%.

I join with the minister in congratulating the 12 youth who received Ontario's highest honour for young people, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, for their national, international and community contributions. In addition, as the minister said, the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards honour thousands of individuals who have contributed many years with a single organization. These local heroes make our communities better. I should also mention the ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge and the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards ceremony, which also highlight exceptional Ontarians. All week there are events being held in every corner of our province celebrating volunteers and the good work that they do.

To take up the minister's challenge, I am proud to be participating with the Volunteer Bureau of Leeds and Grenville at this Saturday's mayors' community fundraising walk. The mayors' walk is a perfect kick-off. It offers the opportunity for many organizations to piggy-back their event and say thank you to deserving volunteers. There are over 15,000 active volunteers throughout my local communities, and my Volunteer Bureau of Leeds and Grenville serves 38 communities and 250 active member agencies and affiliates.

I also want to take this opportunity to highlight the private member's bill that my colleague the member for Dufferin-Caledon, Sylvia Jones, tabled yesterday. It's Bill 38, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers. Many volunteer organizations, particularly those dealing with children and individuals with a disability, require their volunteers to submit a criminal record check. In many cases, volunteers have to pay out of their own pocket for that record check or the organization has to fundraise to underwrite the cost of the criminal record check. The goal of her bill is to allow volunteers to pay for this record check once per year, yet other agencies, multiple agencies, could access that at no additional cost. This cost-saving initiative would encourage more volunteers to donate their time to multiple causes and reduce unnecessary duplication of our police services.

Over the years I, like other members of this House, have fond memories of either personally volunteering or meeting other volunteers who have enriched the lives of others, giving their generous time. Ontario's volunteers truly make a difference and I'm proud to have the opportunity to respond to the minister's statement and join in this week's celebration.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I too want to join in celebrating our volunteers, but I would like to tell a parable. It's an ancient one. There's a little village and it's downstream, and every day down the stream come injured, distressed, lonely individuals on rafts and makeshift boats of various sorts. The village becomes a kind of triage unit to patch up these bodies, to look after the distressed, to comfort the lonely. And then a light bulb goes on in one of the villagers' heads, and they say, "What's happening upstream?" They go upstream and they find out that what's happening upstream is neglect and ignorance, and they decide that they need to do something about that, too.

1530

My volunteers—and there are a myriad in my riding: St. Joe's, PARC, CultureLink, Parkdale food bank, our faith communities, West Toronto Support Services, Redwood shelter, Out of the Cold—sent me here with a message. They said they're tired; they're exhausted. They are five million and growing across the province of Ontario. They need help from this government. They need adequate funding. They need adequate housing. The UN charter of rights says housing is a human right. They sent me here from the Out of the Cold program, which, by the way, is just creaking under the weight of the workload for all of those volunteers. I remember when one of the first food banks in Ontario started in a church. They're exhausted.

Churches, synagogues and mosques are running out of volunteers, and so are the social service agencies, victims' services—we're talking about the number of volunteers it takes to just keep their service on the road—because of inadequate funding from this government. Because the funding is not in place to have those trained to do the jobs do the jobs, they're falling to volunteers. So the most vulnerable, the neediest, the most distressed individuals in Ontario are being cared for by incredible volunteers. But they're tired.

They said they are grateful there's a week set aside to honour them. They're grateful for the awards—they are not ungrateful—but they need help. They need more than a medal. They need more than an award. They need more than a week. They actually need adequate funding for our social services. They actually need housing for the homeless. They actually need a reversal of the horrible policy of this government to cut the special diet allowance, which is leading more people to use food banks in my riding than ever before. They need action, and they need action for the most marginalized and the most oppressed, the hungriest and the most homeless in our communities.

They all sent me here with a message. They're all of one mind on this: Please, not another volunteer week, not another medal, until this government has done what governments are supposed to do, and that's look after those who cannot, for various reasons, look after themselves. So until five million volunteers become 10 million volunteers, out of necessity we are asking, we who have long worked in the non-profit community, please help us just a little bit more, sir—Charles Dickens

again. They come hat in hand. They ask for more than just another award.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

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

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

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the" dreaded "health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

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

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

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

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it read as follows:

"Whereas Metrolinx is planning to expand diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor in North America; and

"Whereas according to the chief medical officer of the city of Toronto, diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains, including tier 4 locomotives, are extremely harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change, and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 350,000 people live within one kilometre of this line, and 30,000 children attend one of more than 250 schools within one kilometre of these tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who demand that our leaders act now to ensure that the

rail expansion in the Georgetown South rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset, and that there be no further expenditure on tier 4 diesel technology."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sending this petition along to you with page Ara.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. It was collected at Shoppers Drug Mart at the 1000 Islands Mall in Brockville.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1 billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"Reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"Increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"Increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"Reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I agree with the petition, and I'll give it to page Owen for the table.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly which was collected over in Bruce county around Southampton and Port Elgin.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

I've signed this, and I will give it to page Mitchell.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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

"Whereas we currently have no psychiatric emergency service at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to support the creation of a psychiatric emergency service in emergency at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre in Thunder Bay, Ontario."

SERVICE CENTRES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 401 service centres at Mallorytown, Ontario, were closed in September 2009 and 250 jobs were lost; and

"Whereas the community has identified the need for a staffed full-service tourist kiosk as part of the redevelopment of the Mallorytown service centres; and

"Whereas the completion date for reconstruction of these centres could be delayed past spring 2011; and

"Whereas the reeve and council of Front of Yonge township have passed a resolution giving the government approval of construction 24 hours a day, seven days a week to expedite the project;

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

"That the Ministry of Transportation accelerate reconstructions of the Mallorytown service centres based on the local council's wishes and commit to enhanced tourist service improvements at these sites."

I certainly agree with it, and I'll give it to page Sabina for the table.

1540

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition here, collected from Grey county this time, from people around Owen Sound, Williamsford and Chatsworth. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

I have also signed this and will give it to page Harry.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly. Actually, I was in North Grenville on the weekend to pick this up at Shoppers Drug Mart in Kemptville. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1 billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"Reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

"Increase wait times and lineups for patients,

"Increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

"Reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I'll affix my signature to it and pass it on to the page.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I've just found another petition here. It's also to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

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

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

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

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

I’ve also signed this and will give it to Harry again.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me twice today on these issues of petition. The petition subject I have in front of me is “Stop Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles”—a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

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

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities.”

This was sent to me by Mr. Jack Fava, who is the president of a local association of Symington Avenue. I’m giving it to page Khaleel to give to you.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition from the good folks at Pharmasave in downtown Brockville. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1 billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“Reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

“Increase wait times and lineups for patients,

“Increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“Reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with the petition. I will affix my name to it and I will pass it on to Sabina.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

“Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

“Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

“Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single sales tax; and

“Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

“Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario’s plan to implement the” harmonized sales tax “and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers.”

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

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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've signed my name.

WATER QUALITY

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

“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; and

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts, when the bill is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

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

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Thursday, April 29, 2010, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings on the bill and during its regular meeting times on Thursday, May 6, 2010, for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

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That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Tuesday, May 4, 2010. At 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 6, 2010, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, May 10, 2010. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, 60 minutes shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 4. Further debate?

Hon. John Milloy: Very briefly, despite the length of the motion that came forward, basically the motion calls upon the House to move ahead with the budget bill, a very, very important bill. I don't think that anyone here would question the reason for some speed in terms of moving ahead with this bill. We are at a crossroads in our province. We are emerging from a very serious recession which has racked the globe, really, and we're also in a transition as an economy as we move forward with new areas of innovation and embrace new economies.

The budget that came forward built upon the speech from the throne. It embraced an approach to governing here in Ontario, an agenda for the future: the Open Ontario agenda. Some may want to run away from these global challenges, but our government wants to embrace them, and sees them as opportunities that we can build upon in the economy here in Ontario. We can move forward with the types of measures that are going to help us through this transformation and will help us achieve the prosperity that Ontarians need moving forward.

So by bringing forward this motion, we are asking the Legislature to deal forthwith with the budget bill, which will enact so much of our Open Ontario plan and allow Ontario to, as I always put it, not only weather the current economic storm but emerge from it stronger than ever and in a position to embrace the opportunities that exist throughout the world—part of our Open Ontario agenda. As I said, this is a very long motion, but in essence, in those few, brief words, I've described what its intention is.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I must say, first off, that the logic of what I just heard escapes me. We're talking about a bill here—the budget bill with, I think, 31 schedules—that deals with matters of incredible import.

This takes me back to my days as a talk radio host. This is a number of years ago now, but I had a particular caller who would call me repeatedly when we had repetitious subject matter, which there always is in talk radio, and he'd start the debate by saying, "Here we go again." I remember George very well, so I'll quote George today: Here we go again.

Somebody asked me recently what it was like to work in the Parliament of Ontario, the assembly here. I said, "You know, it's a bit of a subversion of the British parliamentary system, in the sense that you elect a party every four years to govern Ontario, but it's an awful lot different from what I think was intended when the British parliamentary system was invented. At that time, the government of the day introduced legislation—that's not unlike what we have now—and it was for the opposition to critique that legislation, and ultimately for changes to be made for the common good.

These days, what we do is, we elect a dictator every four years, and that dictator gets to put through what he wants. This time allocation type of motion is precisely the embodiment of what we're talking about. Okay?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You can hoot and holler on the other side all you want, but the fact of the matter is, you're doing what you want to do.

This is a time allocation motion that says, in effect, that a bill with 31 schedules, that deals with the finances of the province of Ontario to the tune of \$100-billion-plus and spends \$20 billion more than you're taking in, can be dispensed with, as myself and my colleagues take our last crack at you for 40 minutes in total, you allow the third party to do the same, and then you get to talk a little bit, if you want to, on the government side, and it's all over.

This thing goes to committee for what? One day. In that one day of hearings, followed by one day of clause-by-clause review, what you talk about is the composition, structure and administration of funds by local health integration networks. You talk about the introduction of a harmonized sales tax and how it will affect citizens in the province of Ontario. You talk about what you're doing by downloading health costs through pharmacists to

people who will no longer get the service quality they want in the pharmacy community. That's what you are doing, and the time allocation motion forces that through.

I think to myself: Do you ever wonder, if you weren't a member here, what you'd think about debate and how it works? Debate in this place is dictated by bills. You're the government, on the other side. Your job is to defend the bills you present, and our job on this side is to oppose the bills you present. We don't always do that, because occasionally there's something that we want to agree with. But the give and take that's supposed to be there, which I alluded to in talking about the British parliamentary system, just isn't there. It's that give and take that would result in better circumstances for the province of Ontario. It's the reason why, I dare say, every single person watching this today knows that they voted, if they voted, for each and every one of us, regardless of party, to come here and do just that. I fear that with these kinds of motions, we don't get a chance to do that job.

When bills are debated, members talk about what's in the bill. You can say, on the face of it, "Well, that sounds pretty logical. Let's talk about what's in the bill." I say, let's talk about what's not, because oftentimes the problem with bills is not what they say; it's what they miss. Since there's basically, in the budget bill, nothing much new under the sun, members are left with only one option, and that's for us to talk about what's not in the bill—and that is business as usual in the province of Ontario under the Dalton McGuinty government. Dalton McGuinty had a great opportunity here, in a time that we keep being reminded is indeed a time post-recession, the largest recession that we've seen in many years—he had an opportunity to demonstrate bold leadership that Ontario urgently needs, and he failed to deliver. Basically, it's because he never wants to believe, much less accept, how things are.

It brings me back to June 2008. Members will recall that the recessionary period began in the fall, roughly October 2008. So we're dealing with three or four months in advance—12 weeks, if I can quantify it. There I am sitting in a CBC studio with a member of the NDP, if I recall correctly, the member from Timmins, and with the member from Vaughan, a former finance minister of this province. It was an interview being conducted on radio on the French CBC. The host, Benoit Cantin, asked about how we felt as the session came to an end in June 2008 on behalf of our individual parties, and I used the term, in French, "déclin profond," a steep decline. I was mentioning that in connection with the economy, and the first retort that came out of the mouth of the member from Vaughan was, "This is not a steep decline. This is a marginal decline. It will smooth out."

It was around the time that the Premier of the province was using phraseology like, "This too shall pass." It was at the end of a session in which any time our party or the third party asked a question that pertained to the economy of the province, we got back a recitation of how bad we were because we left a supposed \$5.5-billion deficit in place. Then we got a recitation of the government's

five-point plan to resolve everything. That's what we got. Twelve weeks later, we were in, if I may say it again, a déclin profond, a profound decline in the economy, which of course the McGuinty government takes absolutely no credit for doing anything but turning around.

1600

Let me tell you, if you take a look at what we see today, "turnaround" is the last word that I would apply to the province of Ontario as it sits today. As it sits today, we're in a jobless recovery. We don't see any real motion in the unemployment rate. And what we've got to face, and what our children and our grandchildren have to face, is a very significant debt, the most significant debt in the history of the province, not payable by this generation and certainly going forward.

We've got a problem, and that bold leadership that one would have expected wasn't there. Ontario needed a budget that demonstrated a real plan so we could once again become the best place in the world to invest, not a have-not province; where you could start a business, where you could expect to create jobs, to thrive and do more than survive.

What we heard was a phrase, and that phrase was "Open Ontario." What exactly were we before the government brought a phrase forward like "Open Ontario"? Were we closed? I would suggest that this government has done everything that it possibly could to close Ontario, and it throws a catchphrase at us like "Ontario is open for business." Ontario is not open for business.

A scant few weeks ago in this Legislature, I put forward a series of questions about venture capital, venture capital which has fallen off a cliff. Back in 2003, we were getting billions of dollars of venture capital investment in this province. Now it's down to a couple of tens of millions, around \$30 million. In the period of time of that recession, we watched a decline in 2009 of approximately 50% of venture capital investment in the province of Ontario. You could say, "Well, that was the recession at play." Sure, it was the recession at play. Then why, in the same period of time, did Quebec, next door to us, see an increase, marginal though it may have been, of 6%? The reason was that Quebec was open for business and we were closed. We eliminated tax credits on venture capital, we put ourselves in the back seat, and that's where we still are. That's the kind of thing that we could be addressing in terms of creating a truly open Ontario.

In a world where other jurisdictions are introducing bold new ideas to recover from this recession, to create jobs, we instead saw a tired, out-of-gas government continue with the same high taxes, the same reckless spending that failed to prevent or prepare us for the hard times.

Need I remind members, and need I remind viewers out there watching the Ontario legislative channel, that before we ever got to a recession in the fall of 2008, that government, on its watch, had seen a decline in good, well-paying manufacturing jobs in excess of 200,000? That had nothing to do with the recession, and none of them have returned to the province of Ontario. Try to tell

one of those unemployed people that Ontario is open for business.

Today, Ontario has fallen so far that our standard of living is below the troubled state of Michigan, and our jobless rate is not only higher than the Canadian average; it is also higher than the imploding economy of Greece. Think about that.

I don't know how many of you watch television; I don't watch too much of it myself. The other day, there was a Dateline program on NBC that looked at Detroit, and it shocked me. I knew that Detroit was in decline, but that was a city—which 20 years ago was at the heart of the auto industry in the United States—in a state that's not unlike the province of Ontario. It's our next-door neighbour. They had 2.5 million people living in metropolitan Detroit, and it's now under one million. You can buy a home in Detroit for \$1,500—I said \$1,500. There are 800 vegetable gardens, farms, growing in the central urban core of the city of Detroit. Why? Because people have to eat and there are no more food stores. You can walk into those things and pick tomatoes at will. Are we heading for that? I suggest to you that given the economy of the state of Michigan, given what it has been through, and given the fact that it hasn't been addressed in a mixed way, the way Canadians deal with their problems, it's fallen that far, and it's fallen that far that fast.

Given the fact that we have that kind of an economy, don't dismiss the possibility that we may face something similar, as you continue to debate in a time allocation motion, lasting 40 minutes per party, the fact that you're going to pass a budget of the levels that we've been talking about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to get up, and it's always fun to follow my friend from Thornhill. He has one of those sonorous voices. He comes from a broadcasting career, and it shows. We may not agree on much in the final analysis, but we certainly agree on this.

First of all, this motion is a motion of closure; that is, a motion to shut down debate, not to open it up. I find it quite ironic that the McGuinty Liberals brought in a closure motion. Were they not the party in opposition that was always screaming about closure motions under the Mike Harris government? Well, they've out-Harrised Harris by doing it frequently themselves—and particularly a budget bill, presumably one of the most important pieces of legislation.

It's also ironic because, speaking of the McGuinty Liberals in opposition, I remember the screaming and the yelling when Bob Rae—albeit now, of course, a Liberal; then arguably a Liberal as well—Premier of Ontario, hit, supposedly, the debt wall at \$10 billion. Well, this budget positions us at more than twice that in terms of a deficit. Yet where is the hue and cry about the debt wall? I remember sad stories appearing in the press about an elephant that ran out of food at a zoo because of the worldwide recession and how it might have to be put down. Every day there was a knocking upon that govern-

ment because of the incredible debt. Yet here, when it's more than twice as much, "Ah, no big deal. It's only \$21 billion."

In a sense, what this budget does, by doing very little or almost nothing, is it puts us in a position of losing even more: possibly losing everything.

I want to talk about my areas of portfolio interest and really focus on those, because I know a little later this afternoon I'm going to be followed by the member from Beaches-East York, who will be talking about his areas of expertise and his portfolios.

First and foremost, let's talk about small business. This is not a government that is on the side of small business. Evidence A: They don't even have a portfolio for small business anymore. In the last cabinet shuffle, small business was shuffled right off of the cabinet table onto the floor and presumably swept out of the room, because nobody is responsible over there for small business. So in our shadow cabinet over here in the New Democratic Party, I don't have anyone to shadow. Surprise, surprise. Why should we be surprised?

I hosted TABIA, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas—and a shout-out to them, by the way. They just celebrated their 40th anniversary on Saturday night. It was a pleasure to attend that celebration. It started in my own riding: Bloor West BIA was the very first BIA in the world—and they are also 40 years old, so we celebrated that. TABIA came here representing almost 30,000 businesses in the greater Toronto area. They came here to protest the HST. They had a conference. Eighty per cent of their members, small business personified, are against the HST, and we'll talk about why in a minute. Suffice to say, they came here hoping to get an audience with the government and received no audience. Almost 30,000 small businesses and their representatives come to Queen's Park, and nobody wants to meet with them? Nobody gives them the time of day? I receive this kind of outlook, of course, on the behalf of the McGuinty Liberals over and over again. I've seen it ever since I was elected.

1610

I remember the issue of Karl's butcher shop that went out of business after 40 years. Why? Because of onerous, onerous laws and regulations applied to small butcher shops. When we look at the problem areas, it wasn't small butcher shops. That's not where listeriosis came from. It was the big butcher shops. It was Maple Leaf Foods.

Now we're seeing the same pattern repeat itself with pharmacies. Methinks Shoppers does protest a little bit too much on this one. Shoppers is going to be fine. Shoppers is going to withstand whatever this government throws at it. Who's not going to withstand whatever this government throws at it? The small pharmacies, the ma-and-pa pharmacies, the rural pharmacies, the northern pharmacies and the pharmacies right in the heart of downtown Toronto that have to compete with Shoppers: Those are the ones that are going to close. We're receiving hundreds of petitions from them because they're

going to be wiped out by this government. Again, we see the slant: big business, yes; small business, absolutely no interest.

Yet when we look at the supposed job creation strategy of this government—they say they have one; it's hard to find anywhere—surely that should include small business. After all, small business accounts for 90% of the jobs in this province. If the government policy is to go around wiping out willy-nilly small business, butcher shops one week, pharmacies the next, where are those jobs going to be created? It's a question.

No, this government's strategy for job creation is very, very clear, and it doesn't work. We know it doesn't work because it's been tried for 20 years in jurisdictions around the world, and it's never worked. That is, you throw money at large corporations and you hope it trickles down into jobs. You throw it, quite frankly, without any guarantees of job creation. You throw it without any guarantees they'll even stay in the province. You throw it without much analysis.

You call it a tax reduction when, in fact, the tax reduction only goes to the most profitable of the large corporations because you have to make profits before you pay taxes. It only goes to profit. It doesn't help the manufacturers. It doesn't help the corporations that are barely hanging on, many of them Ontario-based. It doesn't help them. We saw the case just earlier of the brewery in Hamilton—doesn't help them—hanging on. Not so much anymore; they're going to close up. It doesn't help them. It helps banks; it doesn't help them. Very much, that's the slant, and small business knows it. They see it. They know that McGuinty Liberals are no friend of theirs. It's sad. It really is sad.

Here's a government that's on the side of Bay Street. This government is not on the side of Main Street. Here's a government on the side of the mall, not Main Street. It's the mall or Bay Street, not Main Street. That's the McGuinty Liberals, and Main Street knows it. As they shutter up their pharmacies and their butcher shops or whatever the next target is of the McGuinty Liberals, they'll know it even more—small business.

Housing is in my portfolio as well. Yesterday we had the Housing Network of Ontario here, an umbrella group of many tenants' groups and housing activist groups across Ontario. Here are some chilling statistics. One in five tenant households in Ontario spends over 50% of their income on rent. Over 260,000 households—not individuals, households—are forced to choose between paying the rent and buying food or other necessities. One in six children is living in poverty in this province, and a large reason for that poverty is the high price of housing. Yet this government continues on; housing is not mentioned in the budget, as if that's not a reality, as if we don't live, to coin the name of an organization, in a disaster area where housing is concerned.

I brought forward a motion that was supported by housing activists, a very simple motion, really. It was a motion that just said we should uphold the UN Charter of Rights, and that calls for housing as a human right. This

government would never sign on to something like that. Why? Because it might put the onus on them to actually provide housing.

Housing is one of those fascinating areas, because when you look at how to create wealth, do you buy the trickle-down theory, give it to the biggest, most profitable corporations, hope it trickles down, somewhere down here to the poorest in the province? Or do you invest in infrastructure and housing? Do you invest at the base, as it were, to uplift the people who are marginalized so that they can become consumers, so that they can become contributing members of the economy? Obviously, my bias is towards the latter, and I'll tell you that it makes economic sense and that, in fact, it does work.

Even if you look at the Celtic tiger, much as they've had some problems, one of first things they did in Ireland was invest in housing. They invested in housing. How does that work? I know when John Gerretsen was the housing minister we had a very interesting little discussion in estimates committee one year in which I brought forward a couple of studies: one from New York, one from Vancouver. Both of those studies showed it costs between \$45,000 and \$55,000 a year to keep someone homeless. And people say, "Why?" Well, you've got shelter costs; you've got health care costs; you've got criminal costs, legal costs—all of those costs are involved in keeping somebody homeless.

This is a false economy. To invest in housing is to save money. To invest in housing is to invest in the future economic prosperity of the person who is housed. It's been shown over and over again in jurisdictions around the world. It's actually cheaper to build a housing unit than it is to keep someone homeless, yet this government seems to think, "Well, a penny spent today is possibly a pound saved tomorrow." It doesn't work that way with human beings in a human-centred economy and society.

Compare that, for example, just one jurisdiction—but there are many I could compare it with; New York is one that jumps to mind where that study was used to then build housing units. But Sweden, a community of nine million—we have 13 million some-odd in Ontario—built 100,000 new units of housing per year for 10 years. We can barely get it together to live up to the McGuinty promise of six years ago of 20,000. We don't have anywhere near that, of truly affordable housing, six years later with 13 million. Sweden did 100,000 every single year. They did it at a time of economic challenge. They saw it as an investment because it put people to work building; it invested in bricks and mortar and infrastructure development; it got the trades going, and at the end of the day, it was cheaper than keeping people homeless. It worked. It simply worked.

Sweden is a vibrant, capitalistic economy. It has Sony Ericsson; it has H&M; it has Volvo; it has Ikea. We all know Swedish companies; they trade around the world—nine million, and again, an interesting look at how you invest in manufacturing and how you get your companies up and running. Interestingly, I didn't mention that they

invested in Korean companies or American companies. This government likes to invest in companies that will take the profits from here to there. Uh-uh. European jurisdictions, for the most part—Sweden in particular, since I'm using that example—invest in homegrown industry, start when they're medium-sized or small, and help them grow to be large. That's how smart government does it. They don't give money away without any guarantees. They invest in research and design here, so that those companies prosper here and those companies hire people here. That's the point.

So again, to get back to housing, because I veered a little there, one of the bills that I brought in last year regarding housing that has had the support of just about every municipality that has had a chance to look at it and talk about it at their city councils is inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning doesn't cost a tax dime. Inclusionary zoning, which is huge throughout jurisdictions in the United States, used in Vancouver, used throughout Europe, used in London, England—London, England, has used it extremely successfully, among others. My bill, by the way, a very small-c conservative bill, didn't ask a lot of this government; it just asked of this government to move aside so that municipalities, if they so chose, could bring in inclusionary zoning bylaws and laws. That's all it did. It got the Ontario Municipal Board out of the way so that municipalities could actually move ahead on that file.

1620

Many municipalities, whether they thought they wanted to move ahead or not, really welcomed the move—the inclusionary zoning bill. That's why I'm going to bring it back: because they want me to. People from Mississauga to Toronto to North Bay all see that as a step forward, a step towards progress on the housing file, which is pretty moribund. They say that this is a way forward in a recession. No tax dollars are needed here; just the negotiating skills of councilpersons and cities with the developing community. Quite frankly, even for the developing community it's not a bad deal if the market is poor. If it's a hot market, of course, it's a little bit more of a negotiation. If it's a poor market, what it does is take those empty units, those unsellables, and actually put them into use as housing. The developer gets some money back; the community gets housing; everybody wins. It's a win-win bill, which is why Americans love it. It's throughout the United States now, in many jurisdictions.

I expected to see that in the budget. I expected to see it in the budget—with the word "housing," which I didn't see in the budget either—because it doesn't cost anything. By our calculations, it could provide tens of thousands of new units over time without costing anything. Inclusionary zoning, for those watching at home who don't know what I'm talking about, is simply the requirement that when you develop—and most people have a minimum number of units—say, over 50 units, you have to set aside, say, 10% of those units for rent-to-own or some sort of affordable housing. Usually it's rent-

to-own because that's what people want. That's what people want in my community. Tenants would like to one day own their own homes, but they can't scrape together the down payment in a hot market. They can't get the first payment out the door to get that home that they need, deserve and could use. This way, they can pay rent to own it eventually.

Again, it's a no-brainer, one would think, because it doesn't require anything of this government except to get out of the way of municipalities who might want to introduce legislation. That's it. There's nothing prescriptive about it. Even that isn't in the budget bill where housing is concerned. That's sad, because we will continue to spend more and more money keeping people homeless. We will continue to spend \$45,000 to \$55,000 a year to keep someone sleeping on a grate on University Avenue, which is pure and utter insanity, and most other jurisdictions of the world see it as such.

Employment standards: I only have a couple of minutes left because I want to leave some time for my colleague, but suffice to say that maternity leave—there are many no-brainer moves this government could make. One of them is, right now if you get pregnant on the job—people don't know this until it happens to them, unfortunately—you could actually be fired and not rehired. That falls, really, under employment standards and my women's critic portfolios. This is unconscionable, and it's happening across Ontario. When times are tough, employment standards are the first things to be weakened and to be lost. That's one of them. That's a very simple loophole that this government could close to protect women, women at their most vulnerable, to protect their jobs. They're not willing to do that. We brought in women who were expecting to talk about that loophole, to no response and to no reaction in the budget. In fact, women and women's issues, period, aren't really mentioned in the budget, despite the fact that women still make 71 cents on the dollar for every dollar a man makes—again, absences that fall under my jurisdiction.

Just to wrap up in the minute left, we're talking about a closure motion, just to get back to the basics here. We're talking about a shutting down of the debate about the most important piece of legislation that will probably pass this House in the last dying days of the Dalton McGuinty empire. Here's our chance, backbenchers in the Liberal Party. Here's our chance, because I've seen some shifting and moving over there. I've seen some concern, starting with the HST perhaps, moving throughout—electric trains: I've heard a petition. I ask of you that you don't vote in lockstep, that you question your own government.

When I was in England just recently, I watched Labour backbench MPs, who are frightened for their seats, no doubt, not send lob questions at the cabinet. They actually asked real questions of their cabinet—pointed, barbed questions—because they knew that's what their ridings and constituencies wanted. I ask the same of the members across the way. I ask the same of them: that they take on the corner office, just now and

then, just once or twice, on behalf of their constituents. You know what they're saying. You hear them just as well as we do on this side of the House.

So I ask: Listen. Don't shut down debate. It's always a bad move. It's really a tyrannical move, let's face it. Open up the debate. Let's have more deputations on this important bill from all those stakeholder groups that haven't been heard and don't feel that they've been heard yet. Let's remember that there's such a thing as small business, even if we don't have a portfolio representing it in the cabinet anymore. Let's please remember housing and finally, after three years of waiting, bring in a report and let the report do what the report needs to do, which is house people. Finally, let's look at the issues that affect half of the population under employment standards and let's start to make our workplaces places where, again, fairness is the order of the day.

All of this and much, much more could be said. Unfortunately, I'm running out of time. But again, I would just ask that the members opposite finally, in the final analysis, truly look out for the needs of their constituents. Listen. Bring those voices here. Bring those voices here even if they happen to contradict the voices emanating from the corner office. Bring those voices here. Listen to those voices. React, because that's, finally, what you're elected to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to join the discussion with respect to the time allocation motion on Bill 16, the 2010 budget measures act. I listened with interest to the member from Thornhill and the member from Parkdale–High Park, and I am really surprised at some of the comments that I am hearing.

First of all, before I make some of the comments around the budget and tell you why I'm supporting the budget, why I think it's good for northern Ontario, good for my community and good for the province of Ontario, I just want to respond to a couple of the comments that were made. There were some comments made around the former finance minister being interviewed with respect to denying that we were heading into a recession in 2008. I think the former finance minister has done an incredible job for this province. Certainly, Minister Duncan has done a great job listening to the northern caucus around the needs for northern Ontario and listening to the people of Ontario through all of the pre-budget consultations that took place and helped to make up the budget that we are voting on in the coming week or so.

But the member probably should have been interviewing Stephen Harper or Jim Flaherty. Comments, at the time when we were heading into the recession, around, "You know, there are some good stock buys," and denying that there was a recession even taking place, I think are probably more telling about a government and a party that was out of touch with the people in this country and this province.

In the last budget, in reflection of those challenges that we were facing as a province, we made huge investments

in stimulus funding; huge investments, certainly, in my community. There is a litany of projects that are now moving forward, and I would bet that in ridings all across Ontario, represented by the members here in this House, there are some great projects that were part of the stimulus allocation that members in this House voted against. They're proceeding, and yet the members continue to call for more money for those projects—and probably showed up for the ribbon-cuttings, the ground-breakings and all of those other things as though they were delivering on those things, but they voted against them.

Today, we have an opportunity to continue to move forward with another budget that builds on the previous budget, where a lot of that stimulus funding found its way to communities all across Ontario.

I know that in northern Ontario we have had a challenging time with the economy, like many other parts of Ontario. In this budget, there is a northern industrial electricity rate program that's worth about \$150 million annually for large industrial users. It has the potential to reduce energy prices by a further 25%. This builds on the northern pulp and paper transition program that helped to see dollars return to forestry sector companies to help them with their energy costs. So this is another step in reducing energy costs for large industrial users in northern Ontario.

1630

I want to speak to another important program, which is a northern Ontario energy credit, both for individuals and for families. Single individuals would receive up to \$130 and families up to \$200.

I want to call on the northern members in the NDP caucus to support this budget and these programs. These are initiatives that they have been calling for and complaining about, yet they are still not prepared to do the right thing and support this particular budget.

There are a couple of other really important initiatives. The northern Ontario heritage fund program: When we began this term of government, the funds sat at \$60 million. It's a strategic program to help create jobs and spur economic development in northern Ontario. We committed in 2007 that this fund would be increased to \$100 million over four years of this mandate, and we are doing that in this budget. There's a further \$10 million injection, bringing that fund to \$90 million. So again, I want to encourage my colleagues in northern Ontario who are in the NDP caucus to vote in favour of this, because it's really important.

The other thing I want to point out that is contained in the budget for northeastern Ontario is \$15 million for an investment in short-line rail from Sault Ste. Marie, my riding, to the community of Sudbury. It is a 288-kilometre stretch of rail that will be upgraded. We've stepped up to the plate and we are waiting for the confirmation that the federal government will do the same. Minister Baird has indicated that they will, which is good news. I know that the Huron Central short-line company is waiting for that official confirmation, and we expect that to be forthcoming.

In 2003-04, the northern Ontario highway budget allocation was about \$248 million. Today, it stands at approximately \$650 million. It is proof that our government is working for northerners, listening to northern families, and working to improve the vital infrastructure that helps to keep northern Ontario vibrant.

We know that there are a number of other important investments: \$1.2 billion in infrastructure that will be spent in northern Ontario; \$45 million over the next three years to assist aboriginals by giving them the skills and training that they need to be more active participants in the northern Ontario economy. They've done a fantastic job with the De Beers project and the funding that we have helped to provide through MTCU in developing that site. I had the opportunity to go to the De Beers diamond mine site off the coast of James Bay and listen, firsthand, to stories of many of the individuals who are receiving some of that training. We're very, very excited about that project.

We know that there's another great project that is about to get under way in the area of northwestern Ontario referred to as the Ring of Fire, which has a massive chromite deposit. We know that the aboriginals and the First Nations people in northwestern Ontario see this as very exciting news and an opportunity to further participate in the economy and in improving their quality of life with some great opportunities there.

So with respect to northern Ontario, I'm very excited about the initiatives that are contained in this budget, and I want to encourage all members to support the budget.

Just on a couple of other aspects of the budget that I think are really important that we should not overlook: I think health care and education are a couple of really key areas, for obvious reasons.

Since we came into government in 2003, we have increased funding for health care by 57%. It's a remarkable amount of resources going into our health care system. We've got 10,000 more nurses working and almost 3,000 more doctors working. We're building 17 more hospitals. In my community, our hospital is set to open next March. It's a \$400-million project. It's great news for our community. It's something that neither government in the past moved forward. Our government certainly was willing to do that, and we are very appreciative in our community to see these projects come to life.

With respect to the education sector in the budget, we've also added another \$310 million to further create 20,000 spaces. Since 2003, we've already created 120,000 new spaces in our post-secondary education sector, which is great news for people across Ontario. I know that in the K-to-12 area, we've got four school projects going on, a \$47-million new high school that is under construction. We haven't built a new high school in Sault Ste. Marie in over 40 years. No other party was willing to make the investments in the renewal of the infrastructure for our young people. We're doing that today. It's so important.

I was at a groundbreaking for an elementary school last week, a \$15.5-million school for the Algoma District

School Board. I know my colleague the MPP from Algoma–Manitoulin, who also represents the geographic area that that school board serves, is certainly very proud of these investments that we are making that will serve the entire Sault and Algoma region.

There are a couple more projects that are going ahead, both in the francophone board in our community as well as in the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board. They will be building a new elementary school expansion, if you will; it will start next spring.

There's really exciting news. I know the per-pupil funding has gone up by over 50% since we've come to government, and I know that in our community alone, or in the Sault and Algoma district, with both major boards combined, that has meant about 85 teaching positions have been retained that have helped to reduce the class sizes, helped to drive the test scores up and reduce the dropout rates. It's really great news, and those are the results of changes to the funding formula since 2003.

I know there are other colleagues who want to comment on the time allocation budget motion because it's so important that we comment on this and reference the importance of this budget, certainly to our community and to our ridings and to the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. David Oraziotti: I hear comments across the way. I'm surprised they don't want to support the budget. There are obvious investments that we need to make, and they would have us take another course.

I remember the days when we closed hospital beds and we cut funding for education and we ignored northern Ontario as a region. No one in our community wants to go back there.

I will just encourage members to support the budget. I think it's a great budget, certainly a great budget for my community. I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't really know where to begin, honestly, on Bill 16.

First of all, this is time allocation. This really is the guillotine motion of all guillotine motions. In fact, here's the issue: They are trying to silence us in our role as opposition for the people of Ontario. We are the remaining voice for the people of Ontario. They're not listening anymore. They've lost control.

The real issue here is about jobs and the economy. There's not one mention of that in here. It's all about spending. Of course, I think I have to put much of this in context. I can look, first of all, at my own riding of Durham, and I know the outstanding issues. Jobs is number one, health care would be number two, completion of projects—the 407, the completion of the GO east expansion study, the new-build nuclear.

Just today, what is the proof of this government's lack of a plan? Today, they cut—I don't have the exact number—a number of full-time positions at the Durham Children's Aid Society. I was called by the media. These are vulnerable children and families. That's the delivery

of this government's budget measures, and they're proud of it.

I want to put it in context by saying, what do the third party commentaries say about this? I just arbitrarily picked a few clippings. These are right from our mainstream media each day. I'm just going to, in no particular sequence here—this is the first one. It says, "Bankrupt of Fresh Ideas," and this is from the Toronto Sun. It outlines a number of—

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: See, they're laughing. The indifference here—they think that they're somehow entitled. They don't care about the people of Ontario. This is the sad dilemma.

I'm going to continue, and these aren't all from the Toronto Sun; I won't attribute, necessarily, to where they come from—this is the Toronto Star, and it says, "No Big Cuts ... Despite Deficit."

They go on to say, quite honestly, "If the review concludes that change in Ontario's assets is in the public interest, your government will use the proceeds to better support Ontarians' highest priorities...."

1640

What would those be? Well, I know they're going to start, or sort of start, hiring more consultants. They're spending \$1 million a day on consultants. Keep in mind—and they're laying off at children's aid, persons who are providers for our children.

Another article here says, "Canada's Greece? Ontario Better Get Its Act Together." This is from the Globe and Mail, and it refers to Ontario as being the Greece of the European common market. But here's what's more important, and I think the member from Peterborough, Mr. Leal, should listen: Bank governor David Dodge suggests that it "is a significant 'structural' deficit that will persist and grow even when the economy fully rebounds."

Mr. Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, "told a business audience in Toronto last week that Ontario's spending is outpacing revenue growth so quickly that the result will be a structural deficit equivalent to 3.5% of the province's economic output by 2020, even in good economic times. By comparison, Greece's structural deficit currently stands at about 5.8%."

It goes on to say that really the whole story is not being told here. They're citing positions that are completely unrealistic. They're citing a million jobs here and a million jobs there—the green bill, 16,000 jobs. There are no substantive plans for any recovery in this province dealing with the private sector or the business sector except the HST.

In the HST, which is the combined tax, there's an exemption for any business with, I think, \$10 million of gross income. They don't get any of the benefit until about 2018. The small business sector is getting a reduction of 1%. That's what they're getting, 1%, and they're calling this a victory.

I'll tell you the real numbers. I read a group article here that's not necessarily—this is the Toronto Region Labour Market Monitor. I'm not making this up. Pay

attention. Listen to your constituents. Here's what's being said. This is the Toronto labour market report dated February 10—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, they're barracking over there. Bill, you should be on this side anyway.

Here's the other part: "From February 2009 to February 2010, the labour force in the economic region of Toronto increased by 42,700 due to growth in the working-age population" coming to the market. There are 42,700 people in the Toronto market who were ready and looking for work.

Here are the actual results: "The employment rate in the region fell to 61.3%, 1.1 percentage points lower than the same month last year. Unemployment increased by 29,500, leading to a rise in the unemployment rate from 8.1%" to almost 9%. Now, a couple of months later, it's at 10%.

So what they're missing here is that the jobs that create the wealth and the revenue for the province are going in the opposite direction to the plan. This is a jobless recovery. We all want Ontario to recover, but to look at how this is actually working—respectfully, everyone can't work for the government. Those are important jobs; I understand that. But what about the forestry industry? What about the pulp and paper industry? What about the mining industry? What about the auto industry?

Mr. Paul Miller: Steel.

Mr. John O'Toole: What about the steel industry? Look at Sudbury. The city of Sudbury is paralyzed.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's a strike.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Brown mentions the strike, and the strike is based on what? The Vale Inco strike is based on a \$4.3-billion deficit in the pension fund, and your government has no plan to deal with it. In fact, you're dealing with another mining issue where they're going to do all the processing outside of Ontario. It's called the Ring of Fire.

I am so surprised and disappointed that people haven't found out that Premier McGuinty has no plan. If there's a problem, he writes a cheque and solves the problem for today, but he has no long-term plan—none, none at all.

Where does he go to look for energy? He goes to Samsung. What about our universities? The University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, the University of Western Ontario, Queen's University, top academic institutions—ignored. Go to Samsung, go to Singapore; anywhere but Ontario. I think they've lost their focus. Singapore throws a few bucks at them to buy in and tie up most of the grid, unfortunately. This is just the proof. To the people of Ontario: The members on this side are trying to be your voice. That's the labour situation in Toronto, and it's worse in other parts of Ontario. In fact, there's a whole section in the budget trying to help out northern Ontario with lower electricity rates. I would say that Samsung in Korea is one example, but it's not the only example. Where are they going next week? They're going to Israel in May to try and export jobs over there, too.

Where are the jobs and innovation? Where's the innovation strategy? There isn't one.

I'm going to go on. Here's another article. I said that I'd try to bring third party commentary to this thing. This article here is entitled, "It's Dalton in Wonderland":

"To listen to Monday's throne speech, you'd think everything was ticking along nicely in this province."

Then she talked, in the details of the article, about rural health. Well, don't get me started, but anyway—I have started myself, I guess.

Here's the next article. It says here, "Taking aim at health costs." Well, we're dealing tomorrow with an opposition day motion on the pharmacy debate, the issue of pharmacies. It is a tragedy in disguise, and even the members themselves don't understand the issue. Finally, they're reading the notes that Premier McGuinty and Premier Matthews, Deb Matthews—well, the next Premier, probably.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, George Smitherman isn't here any more, so she'd be the next logical one. She's quite bright, but she's got it wrong on this one.

The point is this: On the pharmacy issue as part of health care, we know it's the soft piece of health care, growing at 15% a year in expenditures. The next piece is being talked about now under CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which has stated in a report floated out there how overpaid our doctors are.

At the same time, Linda Haslam-Stroud of the Ontario Nurses' Association—I have an article from her, if you'd like, I'll just cite it here. It says, "Ontario Nurses' Association ... President Linda Haslam-Stroud ... says that today's provincial budget means more service and nursing cuts for patients in this province."

There it is. It's not from our leader, Tim Hudak; our deputy leader, Christine Elliott, who's our critic; or Elizabeth Witmer, for that matter, who has a long history and a lot of knowledge. Taking aim at health costs—we're going to see that it's not just going to be the pharmacists.

On the pharmacists piece, I'm going to try to help out the members on the government side. There are four constituents in the pharmacy debate.

One is Big Pharma. These are the drugs that are the predecessors, the patent-protected drugs. It's called Big Pharma, and 70% of all drugs sold in Ontario are Big Pharma.

The smallest part is the generic. That's when it drops out of Big Pharma into the generic, which are the imitation drugs. Those generic companies provided to the pharmacists incentives called promotional allowances to encourage people to use the generic, which is more affordable. That allowed pharmacists to work to make sure that there was no conflict of prescribed medications for their patients. They were available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, in many cases at nights when hospitals and doctors' offices were closed.

So there's Big Pharma, there's the generic, and then there's the pharmacist, the person face to face with the

customer, the person who actually knows the difference between the generic drug and the patent drug. I have a case where it's clear that some of the generic drugs are being dropped and the patent drug is going to replace it at double the cost.

I would say that long-term care is another part where there's not sufficient funding in an aging population. There's no plan there at all—none. You're actually trying to license the retirement homes.

The final thing I should say—I'm sort of being cut off here—is that when there's a lack of a plan, it starts to worry us. So Bill 16—it's being time-allocated. The time allocation is primarily to force this into committee to move a couple of amendments, and then there's one day of hearings, which is irresponsible. One day of hearings on a budget implementation bill? And then there's going to be one day of clause-by-clause to move some funny amendments.

They're wreaking havoc on the economy of Ontario, not just in the health care sector but in almost every ministry. It's tragic, it's a disappointment, and certainly our opposition side under the leadership of Tim Hudak will be voting for the people of Ontario and against this bill.

1650

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to speak to a time allocation motion that, really, the government shouldn't need to make. Our province needs the 2010-11 budget. We need those budget measures and we need them implemented now as Ontario emerges from this recession. Ontario has before it an ambitious budget to enable our 13 million people to flex their muscles, to use their business acumen and to create jobs and opportunities for all of us.

The pain of this recession is beginning to fade. People need Ontario partnering with our municipalities and our leading companies. Ontario needs our province's plan to invest \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy. To do that, we need to pass this budget. We need an Ontario that's more open for business, but it seems that the Progressive Conservatives need more time to read their neo-conservative talking points. So we have a time allocation motion. We don't need a time allocation motion; we need to get on with the business of Ontario.

Ontario's employment levels are growing. People are coming back to work here in numbers greater than anywhere else in Canada. Tories need more time to read their talking points into the records. Conservatives want to tell Ontarians that their province is imploding around them; Ontarians know different. Ontarians want to trade with the rest of the world. We do that very well. Tories don't want Ontarians doing business with Asia, Europe and South America, so they'll denigrate the business acumen of the men and women who create opportunity here and tell them that if they can't beg for work in the United States, they have no right to expect it. That's nonsense, and Ontarians know it.

We speak every language on the planet in this province. We can do business everywhere on the globe. We know every culture in the world right here in Ontario, and we have experience doing every type of work, every type of business with every type of company. We need that 2010-11 budget getting Ontarians not only back to work, but out to our global markets. We need that budget putting the very money in the hands of families and small businesses that they need to create jobs in ones, twos and threes. Ontarians need that tax reduction. We need to have the confidence to invest in a sales trip, perhaps to sell what we do to another country or to another continent.

Ontario entrepreneurs need the implementation of a single sales tax to get \$4.5 billion in sales tax out of our economy each and every year so that businesses can make products and perform services here in Ontario, and be competitive with everywhere in the world. Ontario's Second Career program is not just a first in Canada. Second Career represents an opportunity for Ontario workers to make a career change and to keep the risk reasonable. Second Career means that if you believe in yourself and in your future and you need some help training, Ontario is going to assist you in upgrading your skills, and when you've earned the qualifications and acquired the skills that you need, you can have Ontario's budget measures working for you. You can find someone to employ you. You can find someone to finance your idea. You can find someone to believe in your company.

This budget does that. This budget offers that hope and that opportunity. This budget is that light at the end of the tunnel in the recession. This budget needs to get passed; this motion will make that happen.

But the neo-cons don't want that to happen. The neo-cons want to pit one group against another. Consider, for example, the conduct of the Ontario Conservatives toward the 1,251 men and women who work in the Ministry of Revenue and who will lose their jobs after Ontario repeals the outdated, expensive and cumbersome provincial sales tax. None of these men and women have ever worked with or have ever collected the newer, more efficient harmonized sales tax, which is, for all practical purposes, the goods and services tax that we've been working with for nearly 20 years. But the Ontario neo-cons refer to them with the sneering expression "HST tax collectors." Never mind that all of them, when they leave the Ontario public service, will lose all of their accumulated seniority; never mind that when these men and women transfer to the payroll of the Canada Revenue Agency, they're considered to be new hires and they're given just a two-year employment guarantee; never mind that these people have a legally negotiated and signed contract—signed, by the way, on the watch of a Conservative government in Ontario and renewed multiple times by a Conservative government. The neo-cons among the Ontario Conservatives believe that if you tell Ontarians these facts, perhaps if you label them "HST tax collectors," which they are not now and never will be, you can somehow render them less human, less worthy

of fair treatment and not worthy at all of honouring a fair and legally negotiated collective agreement.

Look out, teachers; look out, nurses, social workers, seniors and small business people and so many others. This is what they want you to vote for, and if you do, they'll stick it to you too. But not if you have this budget working for you. This is a budget that says to people in the financial sector—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The House will come to order. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a budget that says to people in Ontario's financial sector that they're part of Ontario's competitive edge too. The rest of the world knows that Ontario knows how to do financial services better than anywhere else in the world. Ontario-wide, some 625,000 people who provide or design or administer financial services for a living stand to benefit from these budget measures. But not if the neo-cons ever get their way—

Mr. Peter Shurman: You're a jackass.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thornhill will withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdraw.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: They'd kill those jobs in a heartbeat. Ontario's government would have a single national securities regulator located here in Ontario, except that the Tories don't want that to happen.

Opportunity flows from leadership and vision, and this budget has leadership and vision in abundance—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Respectfully, the standing order states that you can't impugn motive on a member without a substantive argument. I challenge what he's saying here today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you for your input. I'll let the speaker continue.

Member from Mississauga—Streetsville, continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: This budget has leadership and vision in abundance. The budget and the plan are going where Ontarians want to be. This budget takes Ontario forward into the first quarter of the 21st century. Of course, the Ontario Conservatives are now looking backward to the post-World War II era. The Ontario Conservatives have no focus and only a retrograde vision.

Ontario is reaching out to the rest of the world. We're reaching into China, whose population is 100 times ours. We're reaching into India, whose population is 85 times ours and is an English-speaking parliamentary democracy with the very capital that our province needs to partner with its entrepreneurial and creative culture. Ontario needs to reach out to Brazil, a nation with 15 times our population. This is a budget that reaches out to the world and says that an open Ontario is a place to do business, to create jobs and to build world-beating careers, products, services and companies.

To Conservatives, the future is all about going to the United States and saying, "Please, sir, we want more."

We want this time allocation motion to pass. We want this time allocation motion to pass so that Ontarians can go where they need to go, so that Ontarians can go forward into the future and take a vision that takes us where we need to be at the time the rest of the world will arrive where we're headed.

1700

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise to join with my colleagues on this side of the House to speak to this motion as presented by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I find it shocking that this government professes to have an Open Ontario, yet we're sitting here this afternoon debating a time allocation motion which is closing debate. I just find it amazingly funny that all I hear from that side—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: You can keep talking, but all I hear is you talking about Open Ontario—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The House will come to order. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: —when we're talking here about closure.

The minister talks about speed, and I found that funny, having just gone through an election six weeks ago. Minister, the people of Ontario don't want speed; they want good decisions first. They're very, very concerned about where this government's going.

I listened attentively to the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, and I found it an incredible piece of fiction that he was spewing for the last few moments.

The minister talked about embracing local challenges. I want to take a moment to talk about some of the local challenges that I faced. People were genuine in their desire in Leeds—Grenville to have some relief provided by this government in the budget, and I must say they were extremely disappointed. That's the feedback that I have received to date.

Again, this government talks about Open Ontario, yet in my riding some of the main issues were things that the government was doing to close facilities and lose jobs.

I look at a place like the Brockville Mental Health Centre, a fine facility with many wonderful workers, that this government is closing. In addition, as I've spoken about a couple of times and directed questions to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care about, front-line health care and beds will be closed at the Brockville General Hospital in this government's hands.

Earlier today, I brought up a petition regarding 401 service centres that this government closed. I was so glad that we on this side of House were able to delay some of those closures. You drive by Mallorytown, in my riding, and you see the two service centres that this government closed, putting 250 people out of work in a very small, rural township. You drive by them, and the buildings are

still there. It's been seven months since they closed them, and neither of the buildings are down.

I'm so glad that that municipality passed a motion recently to give the government the authority to have 24-hour-a-day, seven-days-a-week construction. I hope the government takes the challenge that the township of Front of Yonge has put forward to them to try to get these facilities built and try to get those people back working again.

As well, it's amazing, some of the decisions. During the election, we talked at great length about our licence bureaus, both in Brockville and in North Grenville located in Kemptville, two wonderful facilities that were run by the private sector. The government, again, closed these down. You know what? I remember talking to staff, and they even admitted that both of those facilities were extremely well-run, efficient facilities that provided a wonderful service to the ratepayers in Brockville and North Grenville, yet they closed them down in favour of another government option. Again, people are extremely concerned that those people were put out of work. So there was just a number of decisions that this government made to take jobs away from the riding.

The Brockville Mental Health Centre is an interesting case because there is a local plan that we've presented to both the federal and provincial governments to build upon the wonderful facility. We have a secure treatment facility for male patients, and we're looking for the government's commitment to a service that would serve female secure-treatment inmates, one that the government, the Minister of Corrections, acknowledges would fill a need in this province. Yet again, the federal government is waiting for the province to come to the table to add jobs to that site, and those jobs are not forthcoming by this government. They're not moving. So we look at that portion just in the riding.

Listen, I knocked on a lot of doors six weeks ago during the election. It was a very lively election. We had four wonderful local candidates who worked extremely hard and talked about those local issues. I found it very refreshing to enter my first foray into provincial politics in a by-election because it gave us an opportunity to talk about local issues.

After my election—my swearing-in didn't take place until the 22nd—I was up in the gallery here for the throne speech. I must admit that when I looked at the government backbenchers, I didn't see that they showed much enthusiasm for the throne speech. They looked a little unsettled by the message that was there.

As well, when I was involved in my first budget lock-up, I was really a keener, and I walked over with my seatmate, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and I couldn't believe that we were stopped from coming into this House. I know that that matter has been addressed, but again, I'm just a little unsettled that we were held back from coming into this place.

I look at some of the schedules, and one that really troubles me is schedule 17, the Local Health System Integration Act. I know that the unaccountable, unelected

local health integration networks, or LHINs, were an issue that certainly came up in my election campaign, one that people were extremely concerned about. Certainly, you have to question this government for enacting that schedule to delay the review of those agencies until 2012. You just have question why the government would do that, given what has happened in the province under eHealth.

I hear a lot from my constituents regarding the fact that Ontario, which was once the engine of this country, is now a have-not province. Last year in 2009-10, we received our first equalization payment of \$347 million. In just one year, that payment will have tripled to \$972 million. It's just tragic how we've fallen behind.

I know the people in my riding want a break. I know that during my election campaign, the HST was a tremendous issue.

I want to close by talking not just about the PC vote during that election, but that of the NDP and the Green Party. This government should stand up and take notice that 80%—80%—of the people who voted in our by-election voted against this government and voted against the HST.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure again to rise and talk about this budget. It seems that I've talked a lot about this budget in recent days.

Here we are, talking about a closure motion. In the eight-plus years that I've been here, I've spoken to many closure motions. Particularly when the previous government was here, the Conservatives, it seemed like almost everything was subject to closure.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no. I'm saying the NDP had the record—that is not at all the case.

I know the first two years I was here, almost every bill was subject to closure. What I particularly remember is the Liberals in opposition speaking against those closure motions with such extreme passion, with such verve in their voice, talking about how the closure was an affront to democracy, an affront to this House, and how the people needed to be heard. It's sad when I hear members in this government now saying completely the opposite, speaking of the necessity of having a closure motion on something as important as a budget. If there is one single thing a government does every year, one single piece of legislation they bring forward, one debate that we have, surely the strongest and fullest debate has to be the debate about the budget and where the money is spent.

After all, we are taking \$100 billion of taxpayers' money and spending it in a way that we hope the taxpayers appreciate. The taxpayers need to be consulted, and they need to be talked to, and they need to have an opportunity to understand how that money is being spent.

So when a government stands up and says we're going to invoke closure on the most important debate we're going to have in the entire year and gives no rational reason for it—there is nothing on the government agenda

that is pressing. There is nothing on the government agenda that is going to take up the time of this House between now and June 3, when we are probably going to adjourn for the summer, and there is certainly ample opportunity to allow extra time to speak to this budget measure.

1710

They invoke closure, and what that does, in effect, is it gives two hours for all of the parties, 40 minutes each, to stand here and talk about the budget again. But the government is not talking about the closure. They're not talking about why they feel that this is an important measure. Does the budget have to be passed within 48 hours? Is there some real need that it pass within 48 hours, that you're doing this? I don't understand. You've not explained, and you probably will not explain, why you have done this, except that you're tired, I think, of hearing people critical of what you once thought was a good document and what you're now understanding is a document that is full of holes. Because there's really not a whole lot in this budget.

When I spoke the other day, when I had my 20 minutes, I talked about two things that were particularly troubling to me in the budget. The first had to do with what was happening in the hospitals and the fact that in this budget, the government, in its wisdom, confined the hospitals to a 1.5% increase. The hospital administrators across this entire province will tell you that the costs for Ontario hospitals this year are probably in the 4% to 5% range, so that in order for them to maintain the services that we have today, they will require 4% or 5% because they have wage inflation, they have ordinary inflation, they have wage drift, they have new technologies, they have new government programs—

Mr. Paul Miller: Maintenance.

Mr. Michael Prue: —maintenance of older buildings. They have all of that with which they must contend, and they need 4% to 5% in order to maintain that service; they've been told they are going to have 1.5%. The administrators across the province have told this government—certainly, the administrator in my local hospital, Toronto East General, Rob Devitt, whose name gets mentioned a lot in this House, told me too that he cannot do what he did before on the budget he's going to be receiving.

So they've made some very real decisions, and I talked about this before. They have made the decision to cut out the physiotherapy unit, they have made the decision to give 118 nurses their layoff notice and they have made the decision, sadly—and I asked a question in the House about this today—to tell all of those groups, like the diabetes association and the Arthritis Society, that they can no longer use the facilities of the hospital for local outreach and meetings without paying \$480 to use them. This is a very sad thing. The hospital administrator doesn't want to do it, the community doesn't want to have it happen, and yet what other choice do they have? I spoke about that; I don't want to dwell too much more on that.

I also spoke about poverty the last time. I spoke about the government and this Premier, who in the 2007 election said he was going to be the poverty Premier in the same way—

Mr. Paul Miller: Champion.

Mr. Michael Prue: —poverty champion in the same way that he said in the 2003 election that he was going to be the education Premier. He promised that we were going to see a revolution in how we deal with poor people, much as he had promised that we were going to have a revolution in how we dealt with students and the educational system.

If there was one thing that disappointed me—really disappointed me, a boy from Regent Park, the NDP's poverty critic—it was how this government dealt with that issue. Gone were the lofty goals of 2007. Gone were even the things they said in last year's throne speech. It is gone. The whole commitment to poverty is not there anymore, and one only has to look at this budget and only has to look at one of most mean-spirited things I have ever seen, the elimination of the special diet allowance.

The fear that is out there is palpable. If you go into the poorer communities, if you go to see people who are on ODSP, those who have physical and mental ailments, those who are unable to work—the government acknowledges they can't work—you'll see the fear that they have of having literally up to 25% of their entire budget cut from under their feet with no real opportunity to explain it and no real opportunity, probably, with the incoming legislation, to qualify, because the government has set out in its throne speech and again in its budget that the new program will only be for those who have the most severe cases. They have not defined "severe," but I will tell you that I doubt very much that the majority of people who are getting the special diet allowance today will get it come four or five months from now.

I did talk about what was said before the Human Rights Commission, what the government has laid out in its very affidavit. I said all that the last time. It's clear the government knows exactly what they're doing and how they're trying to undercut those who are amongst our poorest citizens.

But today I want to talk more about the jobs—I didn't have an opportunity to talk about that the last time—and why I think that this budget is absolutely deficient in creating jobs. I listen every day in this House; some government minister, the Premier, somebody, some backbencher in a speech will stand up and talk about the 600,000 jobs that are going to be created because of the HST. This is one of the most ridiculous statements I have ever heard. It doesn't have one iota of scientific or historical fact.

I will ask the members opposite, just simply look at the Maritimes. When the Maritimes brought in their own version of the HST, jobs actually declined. They declined. I don't know how many times I have to say this. Go and look it up. Don't listen to the spin doctors. They actually declined, and they did not increase in any real way for eight or 10 years after that. This is not some

magic bullet. It is not a magic bullet, and it is not going to create the jobs that you say it will.

But what happened in the Maritimes is surely worthy of study because they instituted their version of the HST, which, by the way, was less than the combined totals of the GST and PST; they actually reduced it 2%, 3% or 4%, depending on the province. They did that, and even then it didn't work. What did happen was a birth of the underground economy; that was amazing beyond belief—absolutely amazing.

Home contractors, if you wanted a roof repaired, would come—we've all had this experience here in Ontario—and say, "It's going to cost \$2,000 to repair your roof. However, if you want to give me cash, I can do it for \$1,500." This is what, in fact, happened in the Maritimes, to the point that legitimate contractors, companies that tried to play the real game, to pay real wages, to pay real taxes, to give real benefits, to have real things for people like proper workers' compensation, started to slowly go out of business. They continued to go out of business to the point that even today in the Maritimes, even after all these years, there are still not as many people operating contracting services above board as there were when the HST came into those provinces. I don't know whether the government knows about that or cares about that, but that is the reality of what is going to happen here. We have been warned by the construction industry to expect that.

We have also been warned by other groups. I got a very good video—I think most of the members here got it; I don't know how many people watched it—from Molly Maid. I was not aware of what happened to Molly Maid. They had huge operations, particularly in Quebec, and said they had some in the Maritimes. When the HST was brought into those provinces, they found that their work went almost to nothing. In Ontario, where did it not happen, where they were only subject to the GST, they found that the number of people who hired their services declined by about one third, so they're only today two thirds as big as they once were. But in Quebec, they were completely obliterated, and in the Maritimes, they were completely obliterated because of the same factor: under the table.

If you're going to hire someone to clean your house, you go out and find someone who will do it for less, someone who will not have the protection of a union, someone who will not have the protection of workers' compensation if something happens to them. You will hire somebody who will do it without paying any taxes back to government. That's the reality of what happened, and they showed the direct correlation. They said quite bluntly and carefully and without being dramatic that when the HST comes to Ontario, they are almost assured to go out of business.

Does the government ever talk about this? Does the government ever say anything about this? No. They talk about these magical 600,000 jobs which are ethereal. They pull the number out of air because some economist who they paid big bucks to give them that information

said it was going to happen. Well, it is not going to happen.

1720

The reality is as well that this magic bullet, this HST, is going to cost this government some \$4.5 billion. I've said it over and over again, and I was pleased that my friend from Mississauga talked about that today: It's going to take \$4.5 billion out of government coffers. It's not something that we hear is a tax grab. Quite the contrary; it's the opposite. It's going to cost this government \$4.5 billion in revenues that they desperately need and are not going to have.

At the same time, this government talks in its budget about the trickle-down effect, how manufacturers are going to take this \$4.5 billion, this largesse that they're going to get from government, and pass it on in the form of savings to ordinary people. It is not going to happen. It is simply not going to happen. It hasn't happened anywhere else in the world and it's not going to happen here in Ontario.

The reality is that companies that need the money will take that for their bottom line. It will help some of them to survive, which is a good thing, but it will also pad the profits of those successful companies so that they can actually make more. They're not going to pass it down if they don't have to. The only time they will ever pass down savings is if there is real competition, and all too often, because of this economy, many of the competitors are no longer there.

The reality is that the HST is going to do an awful lot of hurtful things that nobody on the other side seems to want to talk about. When you go out and get a lawyer, you're going to have to pay HST. So if you find yourself in trouble with the law or you're buying a house, if you find that you're in need of a lawyer, you're now going to have to pay HST, which you didn't have to pay for before. If you buy a house and you need a real estate agent, a surveyor or any of the people who might be involved in that—a land processor—then you're going to find out you have to pay HST there. You're going to have to pay HST on the gas, on your oil, on your energy, and on your electricity.

A new one came to me just today. I hadn't really thought about this. All of the businesses that try to reach out to their consumers in the form of advertising have been HST-exempt, but they're not going to be HST-exempt on July 1. I hadn't really thought about this, except that as a member of this Legislature, and I'm sure all members of the Legislature do similarly—in the local newspaper that comes out every two weeks in the Beach, Beach Metro News, we have a little tiny card ad. It's about this big, and we pay—I don't know what we pay for it; \$100 or something we pay for this ad. They billed us every year for 12 or 24 issues. We paid the money. It was an ad defining where our office was, what the hours were, and that walk-ins were welcome on constituency days. A lot of people would read that ad, come up and seek help from us. It was, I think, money well spent.

When we went to pay, they wouldn't take the money from us for this year. They took the first half of the year

and they said that they would bill us for the portion from July 1 to the end of the year. I was wondering why they did that. They told me that's because we have to pay 8% extra for the ad. I'm not crying foul; my constituency budget, I guess, can afford the 8%, but I'm thinking about all those small businesses out there that advertise. They're going to have to pay 8% more to advertise, come July 1, than they did before.

It's no wonder that small business people across this province are opposed to the HST. They are absolutely opposed. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business came to see me this morning about some of their proposals, and they say that their members are 85% opposed to the HST.

Is there any wonder that this government never talks about that? You talk about the chambers of commerce, the great big giant organizations, the banks and others, who all think you're wonderful, but I'll tell you, the backbone of our economy, those small business people, are opposed because they know that costs will be inordinate.

I want to talk, too, about some of the energy increases because I've been listening in the last few days while this government twists in the wind as they're asked questions by the opposition. They're asked questions about the increases in everything from the Green Energy Act and how that's going to increase, to the Ontario Energy Board and how that's going to increase, and the HST and how that's going to increase the costs. I'll tell you, there are people out there who are very nervous about this. Notwithstanding what the Minister of Revenue stands up and says about cutting taxes for some Ontarians, people are very nervous about what this is going to cost them in the long run. People are very nervous, particularly the elderly, particularly those who are on fixed incomes, particularly those who have minimum-wage jobs, about their ability to hold on to their homes and their property and to make ends meet, because they realize that an 8% increase is particularly onerous.

I laughed, too, when I saw the government's response to people who own properties and who rent them out. I'm not generally sympathetic to landlords, but I have to tell you, I found it kind of bizarre that the government—this much-vaunted HST that they say isn't going to hurt anyone, when it was pointed out how it's going to harm tenants, and I believe it will, took a long time—five months later it quietly said, “No, the landlords aren't going to be able to pass this money on.” But what do landlords do when they can't pass the money on? And I'm not, as I said many times, a great fan of them, but we'll see the same downward spiral that we've seen before. We'll see painting on walls that won't get done. We'll see repairs that are put off. We'll see buildings start to deteriorate and people living in fouler and fouler conditions. What is the government doing about all this? Next to nothing.

I just want to close with a couple of other things. We need to start thinking smarter. This government needs to start thinking smarter when they put forward an eco-

omic blueprint like the budget. You cannot cut off debate without hearing what you should have done. We need to target jobs. We need to target those industries and bring in new industries that are going to create work. We don't need to be giving money away to multinational corporations that hide the money away or send it offshore. That's what's happening here, that's what this government doesn't want to hear and that's why this government is inducing closure here today.

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

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'm delighted to be able to speak on this time allocation motion. Yesterday, we concluded the debate after seven hours and 41 minutes; the regulation states six and a half hours. So we did seven hours and 41 minutes to give a chance to the opposition to really tell the truth to the people of Ontario, and this is why we're having a debate. A debate is meant to properly inform the people of Ontario, and this is not exactly what we're doing. People right now—when I meet people at restaurants—are confused. They are stressed and really nervous after hearing them, and people keep telling me: “Jean-Marc, why don't you correct that in the paper?”

We have a bill in place, but we are not allowed to do any promotion of a bill until it has passed third reading and royal assent. This is why we could not tell the people. But let me tell you, I've had 18 info sessions in the last two weeks on the HST. It's unbelievable. In the places I go to, I get standing ovations, people are lining up to give me their hand because—they say, “Finally, we are getting the truth.”

The reason we had to come out with the HST is because we have to look after the economy of this beautiful province. In the province of Ontario, we have faced an economic crisis like the rest of the world. The recession has hit the world, not only Ontario, and they all know that on the other side. They should tell the people. Very often, I hear from the other side: “Oh, the government is not spending enough money on some of those programs,” and they turn around the same day and say, “Hey, you keep spending money.” We are creating jobs, and we said that, with the HST, we will create 600,000 jobs and also attract \$47 billion of investment.

I have to tell you what happened in my info sessions. First of all, I got a big poster: a family of four that makes \$40,000 a year—a single worker: \$40,000 a year. It represents \$20 an hour at 40 hours a week. This person, at the end of the first year, is ahead by \$1,298—\$1,298 more in his pocket. I did count the extra electricity. What they say on the other side is that it's going to cost an average of \$350 more a year. Do you know how much electricity you have to use to spend \$350 more a year on your electricity? You have to use an average of 3,000 kilowatt hours a month. At the present time, the average in Ontario is 800 kilowatt hours a month; I'm using 1,000. So the electricity, 1,000 kilowatts; the gasoline, 150 litres a month; and the heating, 300 cubic metres a month—it comes down to an extra cost, because of the 8%, of \$351. The \$1,649 more that he's making, it's

\$1,000 the first year, and then a family of four that makes \$40,000 a year will get \$440—it's \$110 per head—and then the average income tax deduction that he's going to have is \$209. That makes \$1,649.

1730

Also, there were business people, there were farmers in there, there were seniors, there were young families—unbelievable, what they heard from the other side. It's too bad that the media tend to report the criticism in the paper or on the radio. When you get the truth, it's completely different. Remember, on March 4, we had a by-election in Ottawa. One candidate, a Tory candidate, kept saying that from now on—like I hear from the other side—everybody is going to pay 13% more in their purchasing. It's not true at all; on 83% of whatever you buy today, you already pay the 8%.

I walked into a restaurant, and a gentleman was really mad. He said, "Now I'll be paying, for my wife and I, every morning when I come for breakfast, 13% more." I went and sat down with him. I said, "Jerry, give me your invoice that you paid for your breakfast." I looked at it: 5% and 8%. I said, "Jerry, five plus eight makes 13." "Well," he said, "You're going to add another 13% on top of that." He got that from the other side. We have to tell the truth to the people so the people will live properly and not go to bed with—des inquiétudes we say in French; they are worried.

We have a plan for the future. When we say that we have a plan, we didn't forget about health care, because this year alone we added \$2.3 billion to health care. We have a budget now of \$45.3 billion for health care. When they're saying that we are cutting health care, it's not true at all; we increased it by \$2.3 billion this year.

When I look at the agricultural sector and rural affairs, we have increased the budget by 53% since we came to power. So I think the people have to be informed properly. This is why we're having a debate, and this is why today we're saying that we have to come up with a time allocation motion: so we can pass the bill and go ahead with other bills that we are debating.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: My colleague there wrapped up a little sooner than I was expecting. He almost caught me flat-footed there. He did a great job, and I'm happy to follow in his footsteps. I have about 10 minutes to make some remarks today on what is before us, and I'm very happy to have the opportunity to do so.

What I wanted to begin talking a little bit about, as he did as well, was the HST, the implementation of which hits us on July 1 of this year; I believe that's the date it takes effect. I've had an opportunity, as we discussed the budget, to listen to the opposition members spend a fair bit of their time, when they're discussing the budget and related details, on the HST, even though of course the legislation bringing this into force happened quite some time ago, as did the federal legislation that enables us to go forward with the HST get passed quite some time ago as well—that, of course, being brought forward by the

federal Conservative government, and now provincial legislation. So they have spent a fair bit of time on the HST. I will address some of my opening remarks in that regard and then some more specific budget pieces later on.

I must say, I've been a little bit envious of the opposition when it comes to their opportunities associated with the HST. You can almost see them smiling and having a great deal of fun with it. I think it's even fair to say that the HST has put a bit of wind in their sails. They're spending a great deal of time talking about it. What they're not, however, spending a great deal of time talking about when it comes to the HST is the other half of the story. I do think that at some point—and I think it's already beginning—the other shoe will drop, and their constituents, the people they've been talking to about the HST, are going to begin to ask them why they haven't been told the other half of the story. I truly believe that has begun to happen, and I truly believe that it will happen in a much greater fashion as we get closer to the implementation date.

I know that on our side of the House, we're spending more time talking about it. The message is clearly beginning to get out to people that when it comes to matters of the HST, there is another, significant part of the story that needs to be told.

I would say, by way of example, that as the HST implementation date gets closer, one of the things we're not seeing is a hue and cry from any large organized groups in the province of Ontario. The front lawn of Queen's Park is not constantly occupied by people who are opposing, in any great numbers, the pending implementation date of the HST on July 1. They are not here. Poverty groups, low-income earners, middle-income earners, who you would think, if you listened to the opposition members, are the ones who are going to be most adversely affected by the implementation of the HST, are not on the front lawns of Queen's Park protesting it. In fact, they're supporting it.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I know my friend from Beaches—East York knows this as well. Many significantly organized large poverty groups in the province of Ontario have very publicly articulated their support for the HST because they've heard the other half of the story.

I think there is some blame to be laid on us, perhaps, as individual members for not having done a good enough job up to this point of articulating the benefits of the HST to those in Ontario. But as I've said, that's going to begin to happen in short order.

I did my 20 minutes the other day and had an opportunity to use this example. I think it merits a repeat here today, and I'll use it before I go on to the particular budget highlights. A 1% reduction on the first \$37,000 of your payable income tax in the province of Ontario: Everybody who earns \$37,000 is eligible for that 1% reduction. That 1%, of course, gives you \$370 more. You bring that into income, and by the time they're taxed on that, some people, depending on their rate of taxation, are going to end up with \$250 or \$300 more in their pocket.

Then we take the northern Ontario energy tax credit. I'm very proud of that. The northern caucus worked hard on that, and we brought it in: up to \$130 for singles and up to \$200 for families, in addition to the 1% personal income tax reduction.

Those are only two of the tax pieces that we've brought in that will help people, but I'll use those two only to illustrate my example. If you are eligible for the full \$200 tax credit—I'll use that because the math is easier—and if you got \$300 on the 1% reduction on the first \$37,000, those two pieces alone—and as I've said, they're not the total tax package of reform that will help people—would give people \$500 more in their pocket at the end of the day.

One hundred dollars of tax relief requires the people who are going to be affected by the HST to spend approximately \$1,250 on previously PST-exempt items—\$100. So that \$500 number that I've just quoted—do the math—times \$1,200 is over \$6,000 that you will be required to spend on previously PST-exempt items. So once the single sales tax comes into effect on July 1, remembering, of course, that some of these tax reductions—and I have to remind the constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and everybody in Ontario, file your taxes so you get these credits, because they came into effect, fully six months before the harmonized sales tax starts. Those people will now have to spend over \$6,000 on previously PST-exempt items.

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I began my speech by saying why the front lawn of Queen's Park is not occupied by people who are concerned with the imposition of the HST beginning July 1, and that's why: because they know the other half of the story. As I said at the beginning, the opposition members are having great fun with this. I find interesting, I must say, the position that the Conservatives have taken on this. They've—how would I phrase it?—perhaps planted their ideological flag on this issue and will carry it forward as something they hope will be a ballot question in 2011. I think it's going to be extremely interesting to watch how that plays for them politically, because historically, certainly on this side of House—and the chambers of commerce, Len Crispino and small business owners know that this is a great thing for us to do. I find it a bit passing strange, I must say, that provincially the Conservatives, who we all know in their heart of hearts support this initiative, have decided to take the position that they have. I think they're going to find very soon that this is going to boomerang on them, and they're going to have a very difficult time defending this as we go forward in 2011, especially given the relief that we received from their federal cousins, the federal Conservatives, who are very much in favour of it. I find that very interesting.

So I'm going to repeat for the final time: That's only two of the tax relief measures, \$500. You need to spend over \$6,000 on previously PST-exempt items before you will use up just those two credits. So that's part of the other half of the story.

Contained within the budget were significant pieces, which I'm very proud of, for northern Ontario only. The first, of course, others have spoken to: the energy assistance available to our large industrials. This is very significant: a \$150-million-per-year, three-year program, which will be there for the next three years, which will provide energy reduction up to 25% for our large industrials in northern Ontario. That's very significant. I know that in my community in Thunder Bay, where Abitibi-Bowater is currently in CCAA in the United States, we're hoping they're going to come out of this in a very positive way. We're hoping they're going to maintain their operations in Thunder Bay and provide further employment. I know that large corporations like that—which, we must remind our NDP friends, do provide employment. We don't all love those corporations. We all have our challenges with them. But we have to remember that they do provide employment. AbitibiBowater is a large employer in my particular riding, and I would suspect that, while they're in CCAA in the United States, they are watching the tax structure in Ontario very carefully.

The second item, I've already mentioned, is the northern Ontario tax credit. Our northern caucus is very proud of that piece: up to \$130 for singles and up to \$200 for families; income-tested. The \$130 one kicks in around \$35,000 and phases out at \$48,000, give or take. The \$200 for families phases out around \$65,000. That's a very significant piece.

The third and final one that I'll mention as well, which bears repeating, is the northern Ontario heritage fund. It was \$60 million when we came to government. We've committed to increasing it up to \$100 million. It went up to \$70 million in 2008, up to \$80 million in 2009 and up to \$90 million in the 2010 budget; \$30 million more than we were spending in 2007, \$60 million more cumulatively, plus the \$60 million a year. That's a very significant commitment. It would have been easy, I must say, given the economic times that we find ourselves in, for us to not maintain that commitment, remembering of course that the NDP, when they were in a recession in the early 1990s, took the entire \$60 million out of the northern Ontario heritage fund. We've taken a different approach. This is creating significant private sector employment in northern Ontario.

I can remember that one of the first jobs I had as the PA to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines in 2004 was to tour the province and reconnect this program back to its original mandate when it was brought in by David Peterson in the late 1980s, which was private sector job creation. We've done that. We have made several announcements with significant success in creating private sector jobs. We're very proud of the northern Ontario heritage fund, and we're very proud of the commitment that we've kept, ramping it up to \$90 million.

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to stand in this House today and make a few comments about the

time allocation motion that has been introduced by the Liberal government.

Regrettably, the debate on the budget is coming to an end, and we have now a very draconian time allocation motion in front of us which is going to mean that the 100-plus pages in the budget are going to only allow for one day of hearings. The public is only going to have the opportunity to come in on one day.

As you know, this was a very contentious budget; it was a very unusual budget. We had a deficit and a debt higher than any that we had ever seen before. Certainly, if you go through the budget item by item, you will see that there are many issues, whether it's the HST, pharmacy changes, postponement of the LHIN review—and the list goes on and on—issues that I know the public would like to make some comment about, as well as the debt and the deficit, and they're only going to have one day of hearings.

It's quite obvious that the government is not interested in hearing input from the public regarding this budget. They probably recognize better than anyone else that this budget is somewhat of an embarrassment in that it shows that the government still has a major, major spending problem, which has led us to a staggering provincial debt. In fact, every year that Dalton McGuinty has been in office, he has added to the debt, and he's been digging the hole deeper and deeper for everyone. Unfortunately, it's going to be our children and our grandchildren who are going to have to deal with the consequences of the debt, as each year we have to pay more and more in the way of servicing costs. And if the interest rate goes up, as they indicate that it will, it will only increase the problem for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren.

We have a deficit now that stands at \$21.3 billion. This is, as we know, the largest deficit ever in the province of Ontario. There is no plan whatsoever to deal with the deficit. We've simply been alerted to the fact that it will probably be at least eight years before they can balance the budget, and there are some economists that will tell you that before eight years are out, maybe we're going to have another recession, so this deficit might never see a balanced budget.

They are now still borrowing at least \$2 million an hour more than they're taking in, every hour of every day. This government talks a good talk about, "Yes, we've got to cut back; we've got to restrain," but government funding of lots of expenditures continues to go up.

The one thing I would say to you, Madam Chair, is that the ability of the taxpayers to pay for all of this drunken-sailor spending is decreasing because the electorate in the province of Ontario has now been alerted to the fact that probably, in the next year, they're going to have to pay, on average, an additional \$350 for their electricity. Again, that's going to be a hardship for many people—and that's a minimum. They also know that the HST is going to be introduced on July 1, and it's going to have a wide-ranging impact on many of the purchases that individuals make, whether it's haircuts, whether it's

heating, whether it's that membership at the gym, whether it's registering your children for gymnastics, hockey or skating—again, there are going to be extra costs incurred by people—or whether it's paying for your funeral.

It's estimated that the average family of four is going to have to pay, each year, about \$2,500 extra. So there's almost an additional \$3,000 that the public is going to have to pay that this government has introduced. You tack that on to the HST, to the health tax that the government introduced right after they were elected in 2003—we know some people are paying up to \$1,000 there, in health taxes—and you can see on a daily, monthly, yearly basis that people in this province, as a result of the spending, the outrageous, drunken-sailor type of spending by this government, have less and less in way of discretionary money to spend on the necessities.

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So not only do we have this huge deficit of \$21.3 billion, we also have a debt that is set to double by 2013. These are the Liberal projections. The debt has actually doubled under Mr. McGuinty's term in comparison to the debt that was accumulated over all the years by all the other Premiers.

This government, then, has also now decided, "Why cut back on spending this year? We want to win the next election, so let's try to pay our way and let's try to bribe the voters," so people are going to get some money back this July as a result of the HST. Again, they're putting off the tough decisions, even though they know they've got a problem. They're going to supposedly, they tell us, make the tough decisions after October 2011.

What I found pretty disappointing in this budget is the fact that there is no jobs plan. In my community, we have seen the loss of a lot of jobs; we have throughout the province of Ontario. In fact, this province has done more poorly basically than any other province in Canada. In fact, we've also now become a have-not province, which is pretty embarrassing. We, who used to be the economic engine in Canada, have now become a have-not welfare province, thanks to the policy of the McGuinty government.

They still haven't recognized that if we're going to see job growth, if we're going to see people paying taxes that are going to support the spending that's necessary for health, education etc., you've got to create an economic environment that would encourage the private sector to create new jobs, expand their businesses and encourage people to move into the province. Instead, when we've talked about job growth in this province, the job growth primarily has been in the public sector.

Today, we stand here—we have no further opportunity to debate the budget. The public has only one day to come forward and make representation. There are going to be hundreds and hundreds of individuals and groups who are going to be disappointed because there will not be an opportunity. The government doesn't want to hear them. We're going to have one day of clause-by-clause and then the bill will come back here for one day.

Mr. Norm Miller: One hour.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: One hour, and we're done—

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

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I've just received a deferral slip from the chief opposition whip to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the time allocation motion listed on today's

order paper as government notice of motion number 4 be deferred."

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? It's deferred.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

I therefore declare that the House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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

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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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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
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
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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
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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