



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

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

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 4 May 2010

Mardi 4 mai 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 May 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 mai 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXCELLENT CARE FOR ALL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'EXCELLENCE
DES SOINS POUR TOUS

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations / Projet de loi 46, Loi relative aux soins fournis par les organismes de soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'll be sharing my time this morning with the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is with great pride that I rise on behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to speak to the second reading of our government's proposed Excellent Care for All legislation. I do so in the hope that all members of this House will agree with me when I say that this is the right piece of legislation at the right time for health care in Ontario. It is a piece of legislation that will, if passed, improve the quality and the value of the health care that Ontarians receive. Quality and value: two characteristics that no health care system should be without. If you're not getting both, you're not getting either.

This bill, if passed, would lay the groundwork for a fundamental culture shift that we want to see take place in health care in Ontario, a fundamental culture shift that we believe must take place. We believe that Ontario health care providers and executives should be accountable for improving patient care. We believe that money should follow the patient, meaning that funding should be clearly linked to the services that are provided in our system. We believe that there should be an independent expert advisory body to provide recommendations on clinical practices guidelines. Basically, we believe that future investments in health care should get results and improve patient health, period. And we believe that the Excellent Care for All bill is an absolutely necessary first step to achieving all of these things.

We are at a very important juncture in the development of the Ontario health care system. The last six years have seen tremendous developments, from the establishment of LHINs to the creation of family health teams to the launch of wait time systems. We have, in the process, here and there begun to look at tying increases in spending to improvements in quality, but it's time to stop looking and time to start doing, because we are running out of time. The demands being placed on our health care system are virtually infinite; government resources are not. Twenty years ago, 32 cents of every dollar spent on government programs were spent on health care; today, we're spending 46 cents of every dollar; 50 cents, half of our budget, is right around the corner. If we continue the way we're going, it will be 70 cents. We can't continue the way we're going. Ontario health expenditures this year are projected to be \$43.5 billion, and they're expected to grow by 4.4% and 4.9% over the next two years. If we continue the way we're going, by 2020, which is not that far off, the gap between the demand for health care services and what we would need to spend would be roughly \$26 billion. We can't continue the way we're going.

Thus, the government has introduced this bill because we looked at the health care system, of which we're all very proud, of which we know Ontarians are very proud, but it is a system that is threatening to become so expensive that it will crowd out all the other priorities, the other public services which we and Ontarians are so proud of: investing in our schools, helping our vulnerable, protecting the environment and building our infrastructure. How do we continue to fund health care without allowing this to happen? The answer, which is why we introduced the bill we're discussing today, is that we need to do a better job of getting value for money in our health care system. Quality and value: If you're not getting both, you're not getting either. That's what I'm referring to when I said we must tie the increases in spending to improvements in quality. Right now, we know that's not happening, and there is ample evidence that improvements are there to be found—ample evidence.

Some 40,000 patients were admitted to the hospital last year with conditions that could have been better managed in the community at a lower cost; 140,000 patients last year had unplanned readmissions to hospital within 30 days of their original discharge—140,000 unplanned readmissions. This is very costly and inefficient.

Another example: the use of typical unnecessary pre-operative tests, such as X-rays and electrocardiograms before cataract surgery. Evidence shows that these tests

seldom yield any clinical benefit, yet more than 50,000 X-rays and 49,000 cardiograms were performed on patients about to undergo cataract surgery last year. You ask yourself, why?

0910

Yet while we have patients receiving tests they don't need on one hand, on the other hand, research shows that many Ontarians with diabetes and other chronic diseases are still not receiving all the care recommended by clinical guidelines. Why not? The answer, we need to be clear, has nothing to do with a lack of effort or a lack of caring. The health care providers in this province are as committed, compassionate and hard-working as anyone anywhere. But we have a health care culture where quality and value for money are not absolutely integral, as they should be.

Situations like the one I just cited arise because there is a lack of accountability for quality within the governance structures of our health care organizations. That is something we are determined to change. If there is a central message that I want to get across to my colleagues today, it is simply this: If we want a health care system that delivers the best possible care to patients today and is able to do so in the future, we have to act now. The action we have to take is to pass the Excellent Care for All bill that is in front of us.

In drafting this proposed legislation, we were informed and driven by four basic principles: Care must be organized around the patient to support his or her health; continuous quality improvement is a critical goal; payment, policy and planning must support both quality and the efficient use of our resources; and quality care must be supported by the very best evidence and standards of care. I defy a single member of this House or a single health care provider in this province to find fault with any one of these basic principles. If you can't find fault with any of those principles, I don't believe you can find fault with any of the changes that this legislation, if passed, would bring about in our health care system.

Health care organizations, beginning with hospitals, would have interprofessional quality committees that would report to the board of directors on quality-related issues. Every organization would have quality improvement plans publicly posted, and executive compensation would be linked to the achievements of outcomes identified in those plans. That would bring about a top-down focus on quality that would permeate the organization and drive better patient care in the future.

This legislation implements a patient relations process to address complaints and concerns. There would be regular patient-client-caregiver surveys, with publicly posted results. The results of those surveys would be used to inform the annual quality improvement plans.

We would also expand the mandate of the Ontario Health Quality Council to enable that body to provide recommendations on clinical practice guidelines for services delivered by health care providers, as well as recommendations on possible changes to the way health care is provided and paid for in our province. This would

help to ensure that future investments in health care get results and improve patient health, because that, as everyone in this room knows, is what it is all about: getting results and improving patient health. Quality and value: If you're not getting both, you're not getting either.

On the subject of changing the way health care is covered and paid for, there is one significant policy shift that our government is planning, and I want to speak about that here today. The plan is to gradually reform how hospitals are funded to better align funding with efficient delivery of high-quality patient care—to ensure, in other words, that money follows the patient. This is a necessary step. At present, the global funding system does not support quality improvement, and it does not reward efficient provisions of care. The fact is that, at present, financial incentives actually work against hospitals improving their quality and efficiency. Money does not follow the patient. A patient's choice of provider is not reflected in the funding that hospitals receive.

If we look around the world, we see that a great many jurisdictions have implemented patient-based payment approaches that allow for the incorporation of incentives for quality and productivity. In fact, nearly all developed nations use more advanced patient care funding approaches than we do here in Ontario. These approaches have proven successful in improving access and reducing wait times, and they've also increased hospital cost efficiency and transparency in terms of quality and quantity of services delivered.

Surely it's time we adopt these successful approaches here in Ontario. Surely it is time that we have transparency in terms of how much care should cost and why, based on good clinical evidence. Surely it is appropriate for us to have clear expectations about the quality and volume of services that hospitals are delivering, and that we receive value for our tax dollars. And surely it is appropriate for us to deliver more funding to hospitals that are delivering more services and higher-quality care to more patients.

I believe that something we share in this House is a commitment to better, more sustainable health care for Ontarians, pure and simple. It is something we all want. We might, sometimes, have different views about the best ways to get there, but other times, isn't it obvious? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to eliminate inefficiency in our system? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to eliminate waste? Isn't it obviously the right thing to do to instill in our health care organizations an absolute focus on quality and value for money? Of course it is. Of course it is the right thing to do to reward high-quality care, create a better patient experience and ensure the sustainability of a system we all cherish here in Ontario.

I said at the outset that this is the right piece of legislation at the right time for health care in Ontario. It deserves to be passed, and I would encourage everyone to support this piece of legislation.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise to provide some comments to the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. I listened to his comments about quality and value, and also about accountability in this Excellent Care for All bill.

On Friday, I met with one of my constituents, Arnold Kilby from Lansdowne, who I think has emailed every member of this Legislature hundreds and hundreds of times with a concern about the system. His daughter, Terra Dawn Kilby, passed away in 2006, 12 hours after her release from a Toronto-area hospital. He has many unresolved issues with respect to the care she received in that hospital. I know that he's written to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and also to the Minister of Community Safety, expressing his concerns that the system let her down; that there wasn't an accountable system; that he can't seem to get answers on the fact that there should be things put in place at the hospital and in the health care system that make the government accountable for what happens at these facilities; and the fact that, in his case, with his daughter Terra Dawn, he still, three years after her death, cannot get answers from this government or from the hospital involved. You know, it's not an issue of taking the government to court. All he wants is a bill that puts some accountability back in the system and puts measures in place in hospitals that would ensure that what happened to him and his family never happens again.

I've looked at this bill, Bill 46. I looked at Hansard from yesterday, at what the minister said, and I don't see that this bill has that accountability for Arnold Kilby, that it has that accountability with a hospital so that it adequately addresses his concerns. I would like someone to address that at some point in the future.

0920

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I certainly was happy to listen to the comments from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health this morning.

I want, first of all, to say that when I speak on a bill, I like to have read the whole bill. My technical briefing was at 3:30 yesterday. I was given part A and part B of the bill, which, with the bill itself, amounts to hundreds of pages of things to read. On Mondays I get up at 4 o'clock so that I can be here in time for question period, which means that last night at 10 o'clock, my eyes were crossed; I couldn't read anymore. So I was not able to read the whole bill. I don't understand why, when we're talking about accountability, when we're talking about doing things right, we have a bill that is introduced on Monday afternoon and we are debating it on Tuesday morning. A day to read all of those papers would certainly have been appreciated on my part.

From what I have read so far, I have lots and lots of questions. A lot of things have been put out without being defined. The first one that rings all sorts of alarm bells is that the money follows the patient. I've been in health care long enough to know that not every patient is

created equal. There are patients who are easy to handle and there are patients who take a little bit more care, knowledge and skill in order to be successful in their treatment. All I've read so far is that the money will follow the patient. This is very worrisome to me, and it should be worrisome to anybody who has a developmental delay, anybody who has a mental illness, anybody who needs a little extra care.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened carefully to my colleague the member from Scarborough–Rouge River as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, and I want to congratulate him on his speech, because his speech outlines the vision of our government and the Ministry of Health for the future of health care in the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, all the people who are listening to us and all my colleagues from both sides of the House, everybody knows of our commitment to publicly funded, accessible health care in this province of Ontario. Also, the people of Ontario know exactly what we mean by that. We want every person who is facing some kind of health issue to be able to go to the hospital and see a doctor anytime, anywhere in the province of Ontario.

In the past, 20 years ago, we used to spend almost 32 cents of every dollar on health care. In this budget, 47% of our total budget goes to health care. If we grow in the same way, I guess in 12 years' time we're going to spend almost 70% of our budget on health care. Therefore, there won't be enough money for education, for roads, for recreation facilities, for our social agenda and for many different issues around the province of Ontario. I believe strongly that our government is trying to find a way to manage our spending on health care and, in the meantime, maintain the quality of health care in the province of Ontario.

That's why I believe that the Minister of Health and our government introduced such a bill, in order to see how we can manage health care in the province of Ontario and how we can maintain our ability to serve the great people of Ontario. We're facing challenges; there's no doubt about it. That's why we want to go to a creative way to make the doctors and hospitals more accessible and lower wait times in the hospitals. All of these elements are important for all the people in the province of Ontario. That's why I want to support the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for his excellent outlining of the vision of the government.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen intently to the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, and I commend him for the goals, the laudable objective of the bill, for sure.

But the evidence on the ground is much different. What I'm hearing in my community, in the emergency rooms, from professional health care providers is quite the opposite. In fact, I can't explain this seemingly all-out war on front-line health care personnel. For instance, the

nurses who have been attacked in the Peterborough and Northumberland Hills Hospital recently are but two examples. But then last week in Bill 16 we had the pharmacists. Professional, young pharmacists from small communities within my riding were outraged at these assaults on that profession. It just doesn't add up with the objectives here.

This weekend, I was in a long-term-care facility and I noticed—because I'm there fairly regularly—a diminishment of the standards there. I think that even their bill on the retirement home provision is a way of slipping in another provider on the health care. There are people waiting for doctors. The evidence now is that they're forming these new types of family health networks or family health teams where they're rostering patients under a doctor so that they have a doctor, but now they're waiting longer to get to see the doctor. So the evidence on the ground is quite contrary to these goals.

The explanatory notes in the bill are worth looking at. There's a requirement for the Ontario health council, established under the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004, and these quality councils are going to be tied to the remuneration of the CEOs. Paying for results, I agree with. I think that's a laudable objective. But let's be honest about it: The patient, at the end of the day, is receiving less and paying more.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Scarborough–Rouge River has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to thank my good friends from Leeds–Grenville, Nickel Belt, London–Fanshawe and Durham for their comments.

Let me just say to the member from Leeds–Grenville, this bill clearly introduces a standard patient relations process in all hospitals across the province. This is definitely a change, and it's a change for the good, I would say, to make a difference in our system. We clearly accept his comment that patients having difficulty in hospitals have found barriers in trying to get the answers they've been looking for, and certainly we believe this change will make a difference.

We all accept that we have a great system in Ontario. But if you remember, our government has spent a lot of money in the last couple of years improving the system that was lacking resources. Now that we've got our resources up to par, we're looking to see if we can build a system that is efficient and responsive to public demands and public needs, and we want to make sure that that system is transparent and accountable. This is why, in this bill, we're actually dealing with the issues. Patient care, patient services and performance in our hospitals will be tied in to the salary and compensation given to executives of those hospitals.

It's a definite change in the right direction. I think my friends across the way should really look at this as a move in the right direction to get some efficiency and make our system responsive to those people that we represent here in the Legislature.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to outline the preliminary response of the Progressive Conservative caucus to Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations, known by its short title as the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010. I do say "preliminary response," because this bill was only introduced in this Legislature yesterday afternoon, which was my first opportunity to see and to read it. Therefore, like the member from Nickel Belt, I did have a preliminary briefing with the ministry officials yesterday late in the afternoon, so I've not had the opportunity to speak with the many health care providers who will be affected by this legislation, nor have I had the time to review it in detail—all of which is more reason for having full hearings on this matter and consulting widely on the bill, not just to pay lip service to consultation, as this government so often does.

I also should add that I'm a little bit surprised that the Minister of Health herself hasn't chosen to speak on second reading of this bill. This is a little bit surprising, given the apparent importance of this bill.

Before I begin my comments with respect to the specifics of the bill, let me say that the PC caucus is fully aware of the current pressures on our health care system. We realize that right now, 46 cents of every tax dollar is spent on health care. This is scheduled to reach 50 cents within the next few years and will rise up to 70 cents on each tax dollar within the next 12 years if nothing is done. Clearly, this present system is not sustainable, and something has to be done, but what should that be?

0930

The fact of the matter is there are very few choices here. No one wants to pay higher taxes. We are already paying a separate tax for health; \$15 billion so far, in fact, has been paid. Whether or not we have a better health care system—I would certainly say, no—as a result of that is a question for another day. We also don't want to cut back on health care services and programs because we know that with the boomer tsunami coming within the next few years, we're going to have more and more baby boomers—myself included—needing more and more health care programs and services. So now is certainly not the time to be cutting back.

One solution I would suggest, and this is being reflected in the government's bill, is that we need to spend smarter and not necessarily more on health care. This bill purports to do this, but I would say that if the McGuinty Liberals are serious about finding these efficiencies in our health care system, then they need to take a look in the mirror with respect to their record in a number of other areas. They have a pretty sorry record when it comes to finding efficiencies.

Let's take a look at a few examples. Number one, the McGuinty government has been caught raiding hospital budgets to pay the half-million-dollar salary of the former deputy health minister. Number two, they've spent \$176 million at the local health integration networks with no improvement in front-line health care—nothing to show for it. And e-health: Need I say more? A billion

precious health care dollars wasted with no electronic health care records in sight and not even on the immediate horizon, while we're being surpassed by other Canadian provinces and many other countries around the world. The e-health records are absolutely essential for us to be able to move forward into the world of 21st-century medicine. They're necessary for better patient outcomes to prevent toxic drug interactions and patient deaths every year. They're needed in order to find true efficiencies in the system. We're clearly failing in this respect.

Transparency and accountability, clearly, are not hallmarks of this government. Before having the same expectations of our health care organizations, the McGuinty Liberals need to get their own house in order.

In any event, our review of this bill indicates there are three major objectives in the overall plan to strengthen the focus on quality, value and evidence-based health care in Ontario. They are as follows: first, a change in the funding model for hospitals; second, an increased emphasis on continuous quality improvement as a means of reducing costs and improving patient outcomes; third, a focus on evidence-based guidelines that health care providers should adopt.

In principle, the PC caucus agrees with these objectives, subject to a number of caveats that I will raise as I deal with each objective in turn.

First, essentially this bill will substantially change the hospital funding model, moving away from global block budgets and towards pay-for-performance and patient-based funding. As I've indicated, in theory, the Progressive Conservative caucus supports this move.

In April 2004, the Ontario Hospital Association released a report entitled *Advancing Accountability Through Hospital Funding Reform: A Policy Framework to Promote Greater Access, Efficiency and Quality of Care*. It's a pity that the McGuinty Liberals sat on this report for some six years before bringing this matter forward, but I suppose better late than never.

As in many other areas, Ontario lags behind many other developed countries of the world and, in fact, other Canadian provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, in bringing forward these reforms. In those international jurisdictions where variations of patient-based funding have been introduced, including the United States, England, all of western Europe and Australia, significant benefits have been realized. Using this system has led to improved access and decreased wait times, improved efficiency, improved quality of care and increased patient choice in where they receive care.

Three funding models will be used to drive these reforms: the health-based allocation model, the patient-focused funding model and the pay-for-performance model. The bill proposes, with the new payment system, to deliver transparency in how much care should cost, based on clinical evidence; clear expectations of the volume of services to be provided; and more volume and funding for hospitals that deliver high-quality care.

This last point raises serious concerns about how the Ministry of Health will deal with small rural and northern hospitals, which simply won't be able to achieve the volumes that might entitle them to receive additional funding. The minister has indicated that this new funding model will not apply to these hospitals, but the devil is in the details, and we are anxious to hear about what the cut-off will be and what the minister will offer as a fair and reasonable solution to these hospitals to allow them to continue to stay in business and be able to compete with their larger counterparts.

Secondly, the bill will attempt to move towards a continuous quality control plan and intends to tie executive compensation to achievement of the plan. Again, these are laudable goals, and the PC Party supports them in principle because we know that every year, thousands of Ontarians are readmitted to hospital for unforeseen complications within 30 days of their original discharge. I believe the parliamentary assistant mentioned that there were a total of 140,000 patients in this predicament last year alone. The evidence strongly supports a focus on quality as a means to lower health care spending by reducing readmissions and eliminating unnecessary tests and procedures. More importantly, patient outcomes and satisfaction also improve.

What does the bill contain that will purport to achieve these goals? Well, the bill requires each health care organization to establish a quality control committee that will set out annual performance improvement targets and the justification for those targets, and set out information with respect to the manner in and the extent to which health care executive compensation is linked to achievement of these targets. If requested by the relevant local health integration network, or LHIN, the health care organization shall provide the LHIN with a draft form of the annual quality improvement plan for review before the plan is released to the public. It is important to note that this plan will be available for public review and scrutiny.

The first question that I asked during the briefing that I had with the Ministry of Health yesterday afternoon was, "How are you going to tie executive compensation to the success of the quality improvement plan? That's a pretty tall order." I was advised that the Ministry of Health doesn't want to over-regulate, wants to leave it up to local governments, and will essentially leave this to the discretion of the local hospital board to determine. I'm a little concerned about this, because I'm not sure that all hospital boards will have all of the information necessary in order to be able to deal with this and may not wish to deal with this directly, but I certainly look forward to the committee hearings on this bill to clarify this and, certainly, a number of other issues related to this quality control issue.

I'm told that the new policy will be based on consultations and simulations with hospitals, LHINs and stakeholders. The simulations, I think, will be particularly important, where they will actually be put into practice in local hospitals. I do believe this is essential in order to be

able to ensure that we understand all of the parameters of this policy and that all of the local hospitals are going to be in a position to make sure that whatever they implement will actually achieve the quality control that they're trying to achieve. Again, this is an essential thing that I believe needs to be dealt with, both in committee and with the consultations and simulations with the stakeholders, because this is too important to get wrong.

Finally, the bill proposes to expand the functions of the Ontario Health Quality Council to include promoting evidence-based health care and clinical best practices. Again, how can you argue against that? The Progressive Conservative caucus supports this proposal in principle as long as it is truly used by the Ministry of Health to share and promote best practices, leading to excellent patient care, and not simply as a means to cut costs that has everything to do with funding quick and easy financial efficiencies and nothing to do with enhancing patient care and improving outcomes.

0940

We've seen this government do this before. The truth is that there are no quick and easy solutions in health care anymore. Efficiencies have already been obtained and anything that we do in order to change anything in our health care system is going to need to be based absolutely on best practices and recognizing that you can't take money out of a system, as we've recently seen with the pharmacists, where the government has attempted to take \$750 million out of our health care system by eliminating the front-line care that our pharmacists provide, pretending that there aren't going to be any ramifications of that. Clearly, we know that there will be, that the \$100 million that the government is offering in return isn't going to go nearly far enough to allow the pharmacists to be able to continue to deliver the wonderful care that they do to patients across the province of Ontario.

We've also seen it, as the member from Durham has pointed out, with the cutting of nurses in hospitals and health care organizations across the province of Ontario. This is a sign of a system that's deeply under strain. We need to make sure that we do this right.

We do have a lot of significant concerns. We do support the goals, in principle, that the government is putting forward. We probably will have some further questions and concerns with respect to the implementation of these goals and how this is going to be put into practice.

I urge the government to allow full and complete consultation on these and other issues to make sure that we understand the full parameters of this as a Legislature and that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to fully comment on this as we go forward.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to at least raise a few preliminary points.

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

M^{me} France G  linas: I will start by echoing what the member has just said, that to have an introduction of a supposedly very important bill on Monday afternoon and

second reading on Tuesday morning presents some challenges. The bill is considerable. It touches on a number of different legislations and could be interpreted in many different ways if you don't have time to do the full reading and fully understand what it is that they're trying to do. This is a little bit problematic.

I would like to pick up on the accountability that the member has been talking about. We all agree that we want more accountability. The sunshine list has shown us that we now have a \$700,000 club in Ontario. Some of the hospital CEOs who were present when the minister made her announcement publicly yesterday are people who are paid \$800,000 a year to be a CEO of a hospital. I have a hard time with this when we talk about a bill that is talking about accountability in the health care system and you have a Minister of Health who is silent on this.

Can I remind the people of Ontario that Premier McGuinty makes \$208,000 a year? That's his salary plus benefits, and he manages a budget of close to \$100 billion. Yet we have people, paid by our taxes, who make four times the salary of our Premier and manage 1% or 2% of the budget that he manages. Why, when we talk about accountability, doesn't the Minister of Health say clearly that this is not acceptable and that things have to change? We're now tying salaries with—

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

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm happy to provide a few comments to the member from Whitby-Oshawa on this particular bill.

Let me make it very clear: The minister spoke yesterday and clearly indicated that our funding model was not working. I know she's expressed some concern about funds following the patient and she's worried that the current system is based on a global budget.

Let me just repeat what the minister said yesterday. She said, "Our current funding model penalizes hospitals when their volumes increase. Global budgets deliver a set amount of money for a year, and any increase in the number of patients coming into the hospital is a cost or financial liability. The result is that hospitals may delay or deny care in order to balance their budgets." That's not an efficient system; that's not a system that responds to public needs. Therefore, this bill is introducing a different model of funding that will respond to public needs, and I hope I can convince the member on the other side that this is the right thing to do.

On top of that, the bill is based on four very positive, strong pillars: clinical practice guidelines, evidence-based health care, a patient relations process that is standard across the province—and I would have to say the minister commented yesterday that we do have a concern about small and rural hospitals, but certainly, if you look at the four pillars, those rural and small hospitals can also benefit from those small efficiency changes.

Hopefully, everything will work well in the future. I certainly believe it can.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide some comments in regard to the address made by my colleague the

member for Whitby–Oshawa. I want to echo her comments about the fact that this bill was just presented yesterday. Certainly, from our caucus' perspective, we've barely had a chance to talk about it in this Legislature, let alone as a caucus. I appreciate some of the comments that my colleague has brought forward to the Legislature today.

My first day in the Legislature, I talked about the concern in my community in regard to the Brockville General Hospital with the front-line health care cuts that they have been forced to make because of this government: bed closures, nursing layoffs. As well, later on in my first day, I talked about the Brockville Mental Health Centre; the fact that, again, front-line mental health services are leaving our community to go to Ottawa, and all of that expertise that has been there for a century is lost.

The member for Scarborough–Rouge River talked about quality and value. You have to just pick up a newspaper or to listen to concerns in local communities about the health care sector. To my colleague from Peterborough, the Peterborough Examiner this morning talks about city council wanting the LHIN to report on the hospital bed closures and the job cuts. They want those jobs and health services protected in their communities. As well, you can look at the North Bay Nugget where their council is expressing concerns about psychiatric transfers from North Bay to Sudbury.

These local health integration networks can almost be called local health disintegration networks because of the concern that they're raising throughout communities without any accountability. We've talked over and over about their lack of accountability. Again, I want to challenge those on the other side to deal with that as well.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to first of all just state, both as a physician as well as a legislator, that I think we can quite reasonably say that the health of the body, like the health care system itself, is always a work in progress. I'm quite proud to be part of a government that not only invests but takes seriously the mandate that we've received from the people now twice, possibly a third time, with regard to the maintenance, strengthening and fortification of our health care system.

There are a number of different options. Given the expense, given the rising costs, the exponential annual increases, we could adopt, as some governments around the world have done, the privatization of it, the selling of health care as a profit centre, making it a source of income for for-profit corporations, but that's not really the mandate.

As we seek to strengthen public education, we seek, also, to strengthen public health care. That's, of course, why we're attempting to institute all these various changes, bringing to light and essentially inviting physicians and other health care practitioners to practise evidence-based medicine, as well as something called clinical practice guidelines. These are basically the best and brightest suggestions and protocols for a whole long list of diseases. The problem, of course, is that it's so

complex and there are such a number of them that we now have guidelines to the guidelines. There's something, for example, on the order of about 1,500 different clinical practice guidelines, as we speak, for every disease that you can name and then some.

0950

It's in order to engage our communities and, yes, to engage the LHINs, our hospital boards in, of course, the broader conversation with Ontarians that we need to move forward with this particular bill. I'm honoured and pleased to support our Minister of Health.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Scarborough–Rouge River, Leeds–Grenville and Etobicoke North for their comments.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke of accountability and the need to ensure that hospital executives also heed this and had some concerns with respect to their compensation. I think we need to bear that in mind, certainly, as we go forward. That is something that we want to make sure is held in check as appropriate.

The member from Scarborough–Rouge River talked about the funding model not working. I would certainly agree, but I still do have residual concerns with respect to the plight of small and rural hospitals. How will you define a small hospital? What will be the cut-off? What will be the solution for them? It's not just large hospitals we're speaking about here; we're speaking about hospitals across the board. They all need to be given a fair opportunity in order to be able to operate their organizations.

The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned his concerns about decisions that are being made by LHINs, particularly with respect to mental health decisions and closing organizations and programs that have been in operation for many, many years. I share those concerns.

Finally, the member from Etobicoke North spoke about a number of things, including the need to move to evidence-based medicine and clinical practice guidelines to achieve excellent patient care. I would certainly agree with that.

He also spoke of his party's commitment to strengthen public health care. I must reiterate, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we also agree that one of the most fundamental aspects of our health care system that differentiates us as Canadians and that we're all proud of is that we too believe in universal access to a publicly funded health care system that provides excellent health care to all Ontarians.

I thank all of the members for their comments and look forward to further debate and consultation on this matter.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Certainly New Democrats support a universal, high-quality public medicare system. We support a program where people's needs decide the care they get, not the size of their wallet. We support

excellence in quality of care and we welcome changes that would lead to better health care and health outcomes for all Ontarians.

There are some positive aspects of the bill. I'm not sure I will have time to talk about them today, but in my hour lead I certainly will cover some of the very positive aspects of the bill, some of them having to do with the expansion of the mandate of the Ontario Health Quality Council, the development of best practices and the development of clinical practice guidelines.

There are some good initiatives in there, but there are also very many opportunities lost. One of the big issues that I have been worried about and that we have brought forward a number of times is the exponential growth of hospital executive salaries under this government. I've talked about the sunshine list and the \$700,000 club, where this club is filled with hospital presidents and CEOs whose salaries have grown by 7% in 2009—the heart of the recession, the reason that motivated the government to put a two-year cap on the salary of everybody who is not unionized. Yet hospital CEOs are not unionized and in 2009 they got a 7% increase.

Name me any other group of workers in this province, first of all, who make over \$700,000. There are pretty few. Even if you look at the ordinary guy who makes \$30,000 to \$50,000 a year, no workers' group got a 7% increase in 2009, but the CEOs, the people at the top, did. Since the McGuinty government has been in power, their wages have increased by 40%. This is a lot of money, especially when you're already at the top, but there's nothing in this bill that would curb this.

To tie their salary to performance is not the same thing as sending a clear message by the Minister of Health that the \$700,000 club is not acceptable in this province. She should send the clear message that those wages have to be rolled back, and if the board of directors of the hospital is not willing to act upon this, then she should send a clear cap—that we are not willing to spend that amount of money on CEO executives while our health care system is short of money in so many areas.

So in Bill 46, the bill we're talking about, we do not see anything that will curb those excesses. The Minister of Health had assured Ontarians that she was concerned with the excess of executive salaries, and now she tells us that this bill is not making any progress in pressing the issue forward. I have quotes from the minister that say, "I would like to assure the member opposite"—she was talking to me at the time—"that I share her concern about hospital CEO compensation. I think Ontarians are concerned about that as well"—I'd say she is right—"especially when so many of them are struggling to make ends meet. That is why we will be introducing legislation that will make those health care executives more accountable for improving the quality of the services in their institutions." We all agreed that this is excessive, but we don't agree to do something about it.

I believe that the minister should take steps in this regard. New Democrats believe that you cannot assure quality care while allowing such a high percentage of precious health care dollars to flow to executives.

I also have serious concerns about the failure to implement transparency and accountability initiatives. In the bill, we see nothing that would put a hospital under the freedom of access to information request. I understand that there are some privacy concerns when it comes to your particular medical chart, but this is not what we're talking about; we're talking about being able to ask for a freedom-of-information request as to how much money was spent on consultants. Why isn't that information available to people? How come our hospitals, which account for—something around \$20 billion of taxpayer expenses are spent through our hospitals, yet they are under a cloud of secrecy. They are not covered by the freedom of access to information. We cannot know how our taxpayers' dollars are being spent. We know in general terms how much on salaries, how much on operations, how much on capital; that does not answer fundamental questions as to how our hospitals are governed and operated.

They've also put forward what they call a patient relations process. I think this is a fancy word to say a complaint mechanism—that is, if the patient is not happy about what's happening, every hospital in Ontario has a complaint mechanism that is a set of steps that you have to go through to get your complaint answered. I was told some hospitals do very good at it, some of them not as good, but they all have one.

If you have a complaint, you go to your hospital. If you are not happy with the way they've handled your complaint or with the results of that complaint mechanism, what do people in Ontario do? They phone the Ombudsman. They phone the Ombudsman, who is this neutral third party who has the knowledge and skills to investigate complaints. This is why we have an Ombudsman in Ontario, so that we have an independent third party who has the ability to investigate complaints. And he has done a fantastic job. He has brought forward to us systemic discrimination issues that we didn't know existed. Because of the good job that he has done, he has motivated change, and I would say that because of his work, the working of the Ontario government has improved.

1000

So what does the minister do? Right now, I want everybody to know that the Ombudsman is not allowed to investigate complaints in a hospital. People call him, and he will tell you that they log the complaints. They have hundreds—some 360 complaints last year alone from people who have called the Ombudsman because they had a complaint in the hospital. They had gone through the complaint-handling process of the hospital and were not satisfied. They called the Ombudsman, and what did the Ombudsman do? He said, "I'm sorry. The government does not allow me to investigate complaints in a hospital."

So I was all happy that we are putting forward a patient relations process. "Finally, the Ombudsman will have jurisdiction over a hospital, because this is what we want." But no; that won't be the case. We will have some

kind of an internal process which, in my view, already exists. It certainly exists in any of the hospitals that I have been in contact with—and I've been in contact with many. Now we are going to make it law that something that already exists should exist, but we're not going to change it and give the people of Ontario the access that they want, which is access to the Ombudsman, when the internal process has not been successful. I would say, why are we doing this, again? It's something that already exists. The people have already told you what they want, but you're not giving them what they want. It's not exactly what I had in mind when I was hoping for more oversight of our hospitals.

Ombudsman oversight is a fundamental tool that Ontarians need. This bill will give us a patient relations process that the vast majority of hospitals already have in place, but what happens when your complaint cannot be solved internally? The answer is, absolutely nothing. It will end there. Ontarians still won't have anywhere to turn to, and Bill 46 is not going to open the door for Ombudsman oversight of hospitals.

Another area of worry for me is, we are concerned about the interprofessional advisory committee that will look into the continuous quality improvement process. I must say that continuous quality improvement is not something new. I remember, about 20 years ago, I was on my hospital's continuous quality improvement committee. It was headed by a person named Marielle Hortness. I worked at Laurentian Hospital, which is now part of Sudbury Regional Hospital. I can tell you that I have left the hospital, but 20 years later, Mrs. Hortness is still there, and the continuous quality improvement committee is still there. They have done some good work. They have brought forward some innovative ideas, they have motivated change; they have done some good things. So here again: not exactly a new idea. Those committees have been in our hospitals for the last 20 years. We are bringing them forward as if all of a sudden we are making a 90% shift towards quality improvement. Quality improvement has been in our hospitals. It has been part of our health care system for a long time. It has made strides forward.

So when they talk about wanting a culture change, I'm all for change. I think that, yes, there is a need for improvement, but where is this fundamental spark that says, "Here is change. Here is something that we've never done before that will completely change the path of our health care system so that we will be driven by quality"? When we bring forward something like continuous quality improvement, which has been in place for 20 years, what am I missing here? Where is the spark? Where is the motivation to do things differently?

We've talked about clinical practice guidelines and best practices. I agree with my colleagues that best practices and clinical practice guidelines are the way to go. We now have a system in place that is driven by volume. In the hospital sector, we say the physician brings the water to the mill. The hospital, being the mill, has to process that water. Hospitals have very little control as to

how many patients come through their door, how many procedures the physicians order etc.

We presently have a system that is driven by volume, and some of the experiments of the past to try to decrease volume have not been successful at all. When we look at what happened in the 1990s when the Tories were in power, we looked at a decrease in the volumes that the hospitals were able to do. This continued through all of the McGuinty years. What happened out of this? We got waiting lists. We got procedures that were no longer available. We got people looking elsewhere at a private system to jump the queue and make things happen faster. None of this is good, and none of this leads to increased quality care.

I can tell you that the government often boasts about their family health teams. The health quality council in their last report had a focus on primary care. They said clearly that most of the cases in primary care have to do with chronic disease management, diseases such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure, diseases that people have and will have to manage for a long time. That accounts for close to 80% of the visits to a primary care provider. The health quality council also said the best way to deal with chronic disease management is through an interdisciplinary team approach, and they had some brilliant examples of what is happening right here right now in Ontario in our community health centre model that has an interdisciplinary team model. Then the government comes forward with their family health teams.

They give the name "teams," but don't be fooled. If you look at the physicians that work in family health teams, we'll put it at about 10,000 just to make the numbers easy, and look at every single other primary care provider that works in a family health team—we're talking about nurse practitioners, nurses, RNAs, dietitians, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, chiropractors—all of those professionals put together, you won't come up to 10,000. We don't even have a dyad here, never mind a team. A team approach would be a physician who works with a nurse practitioner, a nurse, a social worker, a dietitian, a health promoter, a physiotherapist. Let's say you do have 10,000 physicians; you should have about 60,000 of all of the rest of them put together. That would be a family health team, wouldn't it? You would have a physician working as part of a team. That is not what we have in family health teams at all. It doesn't even resemble a team.

What it is is an alternate payment plan. Let's call it what it is. I have no problem with putting an alternate payment plan out there for family physicians. More power to them; they seem to like it. A lot of family physicians are joining those teams.

But to say that a family health team is an interdisciplinary care model is not true. It is, at best, a stretch. Are there some exceptions out there? Yes, there are some exceptions. There are community-based family health teams out there that have put together a team where a

physician has the opportunity to work with a nutritionist, a chiropractor, a social worker and a nurse. There are some that are successful, but if you look at 175 or thereabout family health teams out there, a lot of them are not teams at all.

Here we have the health quality council. They have already done the work on primary care; they have already said what the best practice would be. The Minister of Health and the Ministry of Health bought it hook, line, and sinker and thought that teams are really the way to provide primary care in Ontario; this is the way we should do things. Then you look at the implementation and you see that they can talk about family health teams all they want and give them the name they want, but they are a far cry from being a team. I'm a little bit sheepish as to: What is going to be the difference now?

1010

The Ontario Health Quality Council will continue to do their excellent work, like they have done in the past. They will continue to tell the truth about what constitutes best practices in health and what doesn't, and they will be able to do this and demonstrate that clearly. They will put forward a tool box and ways of implementation. And then this won't apply to the little, wee part that is called primary care in Ontario anymore; it will apply to this great big mammoth health expenditure that we call hospitals.

If we look at the amount of success that this government has had in primary care, and we say, "Well, the same agencies did the recommendation. They followed the same pattern of focusing on best practices, and here's the result that we got," and here's the same recipe that is being followed to change the hospital system, allow me to be a bit skeptical that we're actually going to see any change here.

Two of the fundamental pillars of their reform are fundamentally good. Continuous quality improvement: Who would disagree with this? But this is not a leverage for change. Continuous quality improvement has been in our hospitals for a long time. The second one will be driven by clinical practice guidelines and best practices. A second pillar of what they see in this new bill is something that exists in other parts of the health care system, in a much more manageable part of the health care system, and yet the results are not there. The results are far from an implementation of a best practice that has been documented and scientifically backed.

Here they are following the same recipe book. If you do the same thing, what would lead you to believe that you will get a different result? I saw what happened in primary care and the results were not an interdisciplinary team-based approach to manage chronic disease, like the health quality council wanted. So here we have the same recipe being followed, but now in the hospital sector. What would lead me to believe that we will now have success with that? I hope it's in the pages of the bill that I haven't had time to read, because so far, in the parts that I have read, none of this is covered. None of this is there to give us a sense that we have success coming.

I see that I only have five minutes, and this stresses me to the utmost. I still have lots to say, but I don't have very much time. I'm wondering where I should go next.

Let's talk a little bit about the declaration of values. I agree that when you talk about governance, when you talk about fixing strategic objectives, the best way to motivate any organization is to have a good set of values that will basically ground the organization in the population they serve and help the entire collective of the organization. Whether they are the workers, the physicians, the midwives, the nurse practitioners, the volunteers or the patients themselves, a good set of values is something that ignites people, that motivates them, that moves them forward. It is something that our hospitals all have. If you go into any hospital in Ontario, whether you're in the elevator, in the bathrooms or in the hallway, you will see their set of values posted out there for everybody to read, for everybody to be motivated by and for everybody to join.

So here again, in section 7, it says that it would require that every health care organization develop a patient declaration of values and make it available to the public. Those are all things that exist. We are surrounded by hospitals where we are. Go down University Avenue, walk into any one of those mega-hospitals we have down here, go into any washroom or any elevator and you will see that they all have a set of values. They have a mission, they have a vision, and they share it with everybody. So what's so revolutionary in what we have now?

I'm out of time. I can see you coming up.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time has come to recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to welcome to the gallery the sister of page Joshua Rossetti, Olivia Rossetti, who's here today from my riding in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Laila Alaichi, mother of page Jacob Alaichi, who's with us here this morning.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to introduce in the west gallery Steve Miazga. He's the Hamilton Conservation Authority CAO; Brad Clark isn't here with us; Rita Giulietti, press secretary for Friends of the Eramosa Karst; and Tom Zietsma, board member, Friends of the Eramosa Karst. Thanks for coming.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Given that today is World Asthma Day, I am especially delighted to introduce Christine Hampson, the president and CEO of the Asthma Society of Canada; Joanne Di Nardo from the Ontario Lung Association; and Carole Madeley from the Ontario Lung Association. Welcome to you all.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Legislature grade 5 students from the Edenrose Public School. They will be here shortly.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Canadian and Lithuanian soldiers are fighting today as partners against terrorism in Afghanistan. The members of the trade delegation from Lithuania in the east gallery are also looking for Canadian partners, but in the information and communications technology sector. Since the ICT sector is a major driver of both of our economies, we welcome these CEOs and presidents and wish them the best of luck. They are being led by Vilija Jatkonienė—

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Well, they're already clapping; that's great.

They are being led by Vilija Jatkonienė from the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania. Welcome, and we hope for the very best of luck to you.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to welcome Blake Frazer from Kawartha Dairy, in my riding. He will be serving ice cream this afternoon at the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors reception.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

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

Jacob Alaichi, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale; Emma Allen, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; Nirosha Balakumar, Scarborough–Guildwood; Vrajesh Dave, Mississauga–Streetsville; Rhett Figliuzzi, Guelph; Luke Goralczyk, Leeds–Grenville; Tristen Groves, Parkdale–High Park; Michelle Hendriks, Sarnia–Lambton; Sarah Klapman, Trinity–Spadina; Michelle Lutsch, Essex; Mary McPherson, Thunder Bay–Atikokan; Ana Méndez, Wellington–Halton Hills; Lars Moffatt, Algoma–Manitoulin; Nicole Pal, Eglinton–Lawrence; Caroline Robertson, Ottawa–Vanier; Joshua Rossetti, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Yidu Sun, Windsor West; Dylan Thompson, Burlington; Stig Tripp, Northumberland–Quinte West; and Katina Zheng, Mississauga East–Cooksville. Welcome to our new group of pages.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On March 25, 2010, shortly after the House had resumed meeting at 4 p.m., the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakubuski, rose on a point of order just after the Minister of Finance had moved the budget motion but before the pages had begun delivering the budget papers to members in the chamber. The member indicated that members of the official opposition who were in the budget lock-up had not been allowed to leave the lock-up in a timely manner and that they were still on their way to the legislative chamber. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, added that the reason for the delay was that the Ontario Provincial Police were waiting to

hear from the office of the Minister of Finance before releasing members from the lock-up. Members will recall that I delayed proceedings for a few moments so that more members could arrive, after which the budget papers were tabled and distributed to members and the Minister of Finance presented the budget.

On April 6, I received from the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Mr. Miller, a notice of intention to raise a point of privilege, and on April 12, the member raised a point of privilege on this matter in the House. In the notice and in his oral submissions, the member invited the Speaker to find that a prima facie case of privilege had been established on the basis that members of the official opposition were physically obstructed, impeded and interfered with when they tried to make their way to the chamber for the budget presentation. According to the member, this obstruction occurred against the members' wills and contrary to the lock-up protocol issued by the Ministry of Finance. The member for Welland, Mr. Kormos, the government House leader, Ms. Smith, and the member from Whitby–Oshawa, Mrs. Elliott, also spoke to the matter at the time. I also received written submissions from the government House leader, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member from Welland.

Having had the opportunity to review the notice, our Hansard, the written submissions and the relevant precedents and authorities, I will now rule on the matter.

First, dealing with the issue of timeliness raised by the government House leader, I will say that the procedural authorities, but not standing order 21(b), indicate that members should raise points of privilege in a timely manner. In the case at hand, the matter was initially raised in the House within minutes of the members being released from the lock-up. Admittedly, it was raised at the time on a point of order as opposed to a point of privilege, but it cannot be denied that the matter was brought to the attention of the House within minutes of the member's release from the lock-up. Given the time it can take to prepare a meaningful, comprehensive notice of a point of privilege and that the Easter long weekend and a constituency week intervened during this period, I cannot say that the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka failed to exercise due diligence in raising his point of privilege.

1040

The second consideration in this matter is the issue of whether the alleged interference prevented members from attending their parliamentary work. According to the procedural authorities and many previous Speakers' rulings, parliamentary privilege protects members in the execution of their strictly parliamentary duties, not the constituency or other duties that may be fairly said to be part of their job descriptions. On this point, the second edition of Maingot's Parliamentary Privilege in Canada states on pages 222 to 223, "The interference, however, must not only obstruct the member in his capacity as a member, it must obstruct or allege to obstruct the member in his parliamentary work." The demarcation between

members' parliamentary and non-parliamentary duties that Maingot addresses is important, because the members of the official opposition who were in the lock-up did not want to leave the lock-up in order to attend to their constituency or other non-parliamentary duties; they wanted to leave the lock-up in order to make their way to the precincts and, in particular, to attend and participate in the parliamentary proceedings. Those members who spoke to or made a written submission on the point of privilege raised by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka did not dispute this important point.

Let me say a few words about budget lock-ups. For many decades, the government of the day has allowed members and the media an opportunity to preview the budget papers and receive a briefing on the budget in secure facilities in the hours preceding the presentation of the budget in the House. Access to the lock-up is conditional on agreeing to the terms and conditions of the lock-up protocol. Members are generally amenable to these restrictions on their personal liberty because the preview and briefing facilitate their parliamentary duties and enable members of the Legislative Assembly to hold the government of the day to account.

In the case at hand, there is no issue taken with the protocol set out for the lock-up itself. Indeed, it seems clear that if the terms of the protocol had been followed and members released in time to make their way to this chamber for the start of proceedings, we might not be dealing with this point of privilege at all. Let me be clear: We are concerned here with an allegation that certain members were obstructed in their attempt to leave the lock-up at a time when they should reasonably have expected to be allowed to leave in order to attend the proceedings of the House.

This brings me to the nub of the point of privilege raised: that is, the right of members of this Legislative Assembly to attend to their parliamentary duties without interference or obstruction. I note that the House of Commons Procedure and Practice states the following: "In circumstances where members claim to be physically obstructed, impeded, interfered with or intimidated in the performance of their parliamentary functions, the Speaker is apt to find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred."

The case before me is one in which members are indeed claiming they were prevented from getting to the legislative chamber, thereby obstructing them in their performance of their parliamentary duties. Moreover, the government House leader acknowledges that members of the official opposition were detained in the lock-up longer than they should have been. Specifically, she says that members were delayed by OPP personnel. But the government House leader says that in mitigation, members were in the chamber when the budget was presented. This contention presumes that it is more important that members be in the chamber for the presentation of the budget than for moving the budget motion itself or for any other proceeding. I cannot agree with such a presumption, because it would require the Speaker to accede

to the questionable proposition that some parliamentary proceedings are more important than others and that members should not get worked up about missing the so-called less important parliamentary proceedings. It is not the responsibility of the Speaker to slice and dice proceedings in Parliament. To my mind, it is for individual members—not the Speaker, not the government, not security personnel—to decide whether they should be in the chamber for the moving of a budget motion, the tabling of the budget, the presentation of the budget or all of them.

In the case at hand, there appears to be no disputing that some members of the official opposition missed the moving of the budget motion, that they missed it because they were not released from the lock-up in a timely manner and that, had I not delayed proceedings for a few moments shortly after 4 p.m. on budget day, they might have missed part of the budget presentation itself.

For a prima facie case of privilege to be established, it is enough to ascertain that members wanted to attend the House and were, at least for a time and against their will, prevented from doing so. It is of no significance where such—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

It is of no significance where such an obstruction occurred or what parliamentary proceeding members were prevented from attending.

Further investigation may well reveal a plausible explanation or mitigating circumstances for what occurred in the budget lock-up on March 25, but I do believe that such a further investigation is warranted.

I find, therefore, that a prima facie case of privilege has been established, and, as there has been some confusion in the past, I want to clarify what this finding means.

Maingot states: "A prima facie case of privilege in the parliamentary sense is one where the evidence on its face as outlined by the member is sufficiently strong for the House to be asked to debate the matter and send it to a committee to investigate whether the privileges of the House have been breached or a contempt has occurred and report to the House.

"While the Speaker may find that a prima facie case of privilege exists and give the matter precedence in debate, it is the House alone that decides whether a breach of privilege or a contempt has occurred, for only the House has the power to commit or punish for contempt."

In short, a prima facie finding by the Speaker does not mean that the Speaker has found anyone guilty of such an allegation. Rather, "prima facie" means that the Speaker has determined that on the face of it, the information presented points toward the likelihood that a breach of privilege has occurred, and that it is in the interests of the House to give priority consideration to such a serious matter, and for a parliamentary committee to inquire into it.

When he raised this matter on April 12, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka indicated that he was prepared to move a motion to refer the matter to a legislative

committee. Having now found that there is a prima facie case to investigate, I will call on the member to move his motion. Pursuant to standing order 21(b), this debatable motion, upon being moved, has precedence and will displace the consideration of regular business until it is disposed of.

In closing, I want to thank the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member for Welland, the government House leader, and the member for Whitby–Oshawa for speaking to this matter. I also want to thank the government House leader, the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka and the member for Welland for their written submissions.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your thoughtful deliberations.

I move that the matter of the delayed release of certain members of this House from the March 25, 2010, budget lock-up be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for its consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Miller has moved that this matter be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for first of all ruling and allowing the committee to look further into this matter. I'll certainly be looking for—because we aren't usually successful with these matters—the table's assistance as to what happens next.

I think it important that the members of the Legislature be able to carry out their business in a free and open manner. On the day of the budget lock-up, we took on a new tactic for that day and that was we that had all of our caucus in for the budget lock-up so that they might be able to take more time to review the budget prior to the actual speech being given, and thereby able to be right up to speed on it and be able to analyze the budget more fully and provide a critical analysis of the budget.

On that particular day, taking this new strategy, which was to have pretty much our whole caucus—

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: My apologies to the speaker. Speaker, this is a very modest proposal, and that is to say, the motion. I'm wondering if a five-minute recess would not be appropriate so that House leaders could discuss an effective, meaningful disposition of this motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Kormos seeks the consent of the House to recess for five minutes to allow the House leaders the opportunity to discuss the issue. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1050 to 1057.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for your ruling and the opportunity to confer with my fellow House leaders, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member for Welland. We have come to the conclusion that it should move forthwith to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assem-

bly. We believe that the lessons learned will provide some guidance to all governments, and we appreciate the opportunity to have that heard in the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Miller moves that the matter of the delayed release of certain members of this House from the March 25, 2010, budget lock-up be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for its consideration. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is a question to the Premier. If the Premier's failure to mention seniors in the throne speech raised any questions about what Dalton McGuinty thinks of Ontario's seniors, his recent attacks on seniors' budgets make it clear. Premier, you're attacking the pocketbooks of Ontario's seniors on three fronts at once: the HST tax grab, hydro rate increases and now your smart meter tax grab—all at the same time.

Premier, do you think Ontario's seniors are living the high life, or just how out of touch have you become?

Interjection: How much more can they take?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's some energy there today, Speaker, which is always a good thing.

I want to thank my honourable colleague for the question and take this opportunity to thank the older generations for everything that they have done. After all, it was through their good efforts that we have the health care system that we have today, that we have the education system that we have today, that we have colleges, universities, roads and bridges and the like. So obviously, we sense a great deal of responsibility to ensure that seniors enjoy a good standard of living and a good quality of life throughout their lives—which makes me ask: Why is it that if seniors are so supportive of our determined efforts to reduce the cost of generic drugs in Ontario, we don't have the support of my honourable colleague opposite? Get on board with seniors and help us get the cost of generic drugs down.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's not a pat on the back Ontario seniors are feeling from their Premier; it's a hand in their pocket. You're attacking them through hydro bills, the HST tax grab, and now your so-called smart meters tax grab. In fact, Premier, the only time you mentioned the word "senior" in your budget speech was when you said that you'd reduce OPS senior executive pay, but then again, that promise lasted for less than 24 hours.

On May 1, you hit seniors with \$350 more per year on their hydro bills. You also hit them with a surprise attack through the HST on May 1. I'll ask you, Premier, how much is too much? How much more will seniors pay, thanks to your so-called smart meter tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is nothing if not creative, inventive when it comes to the particular numbers that he's just raised, and I think Ontario seniors recognize that.

I can say that in terms of some of the things we've been able to do for and with our seniors, we have, through our Ontario senior homeowners' property tax grant—that is a grant that was doubled to \$500 this year, as announced in our 2008 budget.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They voted against it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And that's a provision against which my honourable colleague voted.

I can also say that the government is providing \$1 billion over the next five years through that particular grant to more than 600,000 Ontario seniors who have low to middle incomes who own their homes. We think that's a positive step that demonstrates our continuing support for our seniors.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The only thing inventive here is your attempts to raid the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors any way you can. Your so-called smart meter tax grab is going to charge seniors higher rates to turn on their lights, to use the computer, to spend a day at their home. On July 1, you're going to hit the seniors with an HST tax grab on their hydro costs, their retirement funds, gas for their cars and their home heating costs. This Premier is even going to charge seniors for taking a vacation to visit the grandkids.

I ask you, Premier, how much do you think Ontario seniors are sitting on? When is enough enough? When will you tell your ministers to stop their attack on the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that in addition to the increase that we provided for benefits for our seniors through the property tax grant, and in addition to our determined effort to reduce the cost of generic drugs and why that's so important to seniors who are covered by our drug benefit plan in the province of Ontario—because the last time we attacked high drug costs, we were able to list 184 new drugs since 2006, including Lucentis, which treats macular degeneration, which is very important for our seniors.

What I want to say as well is that, as we continue to pursue our lowering of generic drug costs, with those savings we will cover still more new drugs for Ontario seniors, who are beneficiaries. We will also find ways to invest still further in our health care system. Over 60% of our lifetime-related health costs are accumulated after the age of 65. Seniors are very concerned about the quality of their health care. We'll keep working—

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty told Ontario families and seniors that his so-called smart meters will

pay for themselves: "It's all designed to ensure that you are in fact saving money over the long term."

Premier, you have a well-earned reputation for saying one thing and doing the complete opposite. Why did you say that your smart meter tax grab will save money when in fact it does the complete opposite?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd ask my honourable colleague to develop a better understanding of the smart meter and what we're going to do with it. With a smart meter, an Ontario senior, an Ontario family, will be able to, for the first time, pay differential rates depending on the time of the day when you use your electricity. We want to create the possibility for families to use an appliance at an off-peak period during which electricity will be at a lower rate, and we can't do that right now unless we have smart meters in place.

This is all about ensuring that Ontario families can conserve electricity and can reduce their electricity bill by taking advantage of new technology. Many other parts of the world are already there. We're working as hard as we can to catch up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: What this is all about is a Premier who continues to betray the trust of Ontario taxpayers, a Premier who continues to break his word to say one thing and do the opposite.

Now Premier McGuinty will charge seniors, when he promised 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in a previous election, up to 9.9 cents—more than doubling the cost of hydro for a senior to have the privilege, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, of turning on a computer, a radio or TV during the daytime.

Premier, you committed when you brought in these smart meters that they would be able to reduce their hydro costs, when in fact Toronto Hydro has said that some 72% of their customers are now paying more for their power thanks to your smart meter tax grab. Did you bungle this smart meter initiative? Did you bungle flexible pricing? Or did you—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the greatest concerns that weighed heavily on the minds of Ontario families and businesses as well, when we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as a government back in 2003, was whether or not we could keep the lights on. They were concerned about the vigour and vitality of our electricity system. They knew that under the previous government electricity rates had been frozen, which was just not sensible. They knew that there was no free lunch and that we needed to invest in the system, and we've done that dramatically.

Since 2003, we've built 8,000 megawatts of clean, reliable power; that's enough to power 1.9 million homes. Through our clean energy program, we've leveraged over \$16 billion in new investment. We're talking about some 36,000 jobs.

All families know that we needed to invest in our system. They know there's a cost connected with that,

and I believe they feel it's well worth making that kind of investment to ensure that we have electricity that's there for all of us when we need it.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I can't believe the Premier is talking about keeping the lights on. Sir, when you're increasing the hydro bills of Ontario seniors by \$350 per year in this year alone and then hitting them on top of that with your smart meter tax grab, Ontario seniors are going to be challenged to keep the lights on in their own homes because of this train wreck of an energy policy.

Premier, Ontario seniors are going to pay more to put on their computers, to do their baking, to do their laundry, to listen to the radio, and you dismiss them by telling them to do their laundry or the dishwashing at midnight. And they'll be even harder hit when the smart meter tax comes into play.

Have you engaged in a three-front multiple attack on the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors because of incompetence or because you're out of touch, or both?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague and his party what it is that they left to Ontarians in terms of their electricity system. The system was unreliable. We were experiencing electricity shortages—blackouts—and there was no plan to meet Ontario's growth. The energy sector was very hesitant when it came to investing in Ontario. Dirty, coal-fired generation increased 127% from 1995 to 2003. Prices were frozen, but with health and environmental costs included, coal was costing over \$4 billion per year in Ontario. We're talking about premature deaths, hospital admissions and visits to the emergency room.

We said we were not prepared to accept that. We said we had to make investments in our electricity system. We had to clean it up. We had to strengthen it. We had to bring in new technologies, like the smart meter, that will give more control to our families and businesses when it comes to their own particular bill.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. This past Saturday, much to the surprise of many Ontarians, Dalton McGuinty's HST started to kick in. We know that this government has estimated how much money their unfair new tax will take out of family budgets. Will the Premier finally reveal what he knows and tell Ontario families how much the harmonized sales tax is actually going to cost them?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It was something that was in the budget, it was something that was put on a website quite some time ago, and I can, if my honourable colleague asked us to do so, make reference to some of the information.

For a single parent on Ontario Works with two kids ages five and seven, they will benefit by \$585 overall. For a single senior with a pension income of \$20,000, the

net impact will be a positive \$105. For a single individual with a \$30,000 income, the net impact is \$255. For a couple with a \$70,000 income, with two kids ages five and 10, the net impact is a positive \$365. This information has been available for quite some time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Anybody can go to the government's website and get their spin, but the reality is that since the Premier is not going to fess up to the reality, I'm glad to provide Ontario families with some of the reality and clarity around the cost certainty of this particular tax.

New Democrats actually used Statistics Canada's well-respected social policy simulation database and model to calculate the full impact of the HST on Ontario families. I know that the Premier is actually a numbers guy, given the way he likes to spout off numbers in question period as he just did, so would he like to guess what the HST is going to cost Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand why Ontarians might be confused, because we put out some numbers through the Ministry of Finance and my honourable colleague has put out some numbers. I think Ontario families should be able to have confidence in independent, arm's-length, third party assessments of the consequences of our tax reforms.

I refer to two in particular. One is put out by the school of public policy at the University of Calgary by Professor Jack Mintz. He says that over the course of the next 10 years, we are going to experience a capital investment of \$47 billion, we're going to create up to 600,000 net new jobs and increase annual worker incomes by up to 8.8%. That's one. The other one my colleague refused to acknowledge even exists is put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The title says it all; the title of that paper is, Not a Tax Grab After All.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the Premier knows that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has actually indicated quite clearly that they do not support the HST, and I have the letter which indicates that. If he would like to have it, I can certainly send it across the way.

Let me tell you this: The average family will pay more, a lot more—\$792 more each and every year. That's the average; half of Ontario's families, in fact, will be paying more than that. When was the Premier planning on telling families that they'll be paying nearly \$800 more a year in new taxes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I cannot accept the calculations put forward by the NDP and I would encourage Ontario families to bring the same sense of healthy skepticism when it comes to the NDP calculations.

I would recommend to them once again two independent, arm's-length, third party reports. One says that this is the way to create 600,000 new jobs over the course of the next 10 years. It will result in \$47 billion worth of new capital investment to help us strengthen our econ-

omy. The other is put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It's entitled Not a Tax Grab After All. It says that for low-income families, they're going to come out ahead; for middle-income families, it's a wash; and for our wealthiest families, they're going to end up paying more.

Again, I'll leave it to families. They can look to the NDP for numbers or they can look to independent reports.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier, but I do want to quote from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I quote from a letter: "Accordingly, it is not correct to state that the CCPA supports the HST, or indeed that the authors of the paper in question do so, and I would request that your campaign issue a statement correcting the error." That's from your member from Toronto Centre's campaign quoting the CCPA improperly.

The question is this: We know the Premier likes to talk up his tax cuts and his credits, so we included them in our model. We actually put his numbers into our model. After paying \$800 more in HST, the average Ontario family will get back \$322 in the cuts and credits that the government likes to brag about. Can the Premier tell us how paying \$800 more and getting \$300 back actually makes families further ahead?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just have a healthy skepticism when it comes to NDP math. I would recommend to Ontarians that they bring the same approach.

What I can say is that I know that families can be confused by all of the numbers, and I'd recommend to them two independent reports which I think introduce a little bit more light and a little less heat into this important debate.

I also want to reaffirm something that I've said several times over: We know that what we're asking of Ontario families is not an easy thing to do, but we think it's something that is the right thing to do. We think that we need to do it. We've just gone through this terrible recession and we've lost 250,000 jobs. Growing stronger in Ontario is no longer an option; it's a must. This is the single most important thing that we can do to create jobs, not just for us today but for our kids tomorrow, and I believe that parents and families are prepared to make that commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to claim that businesses are going to lower prices because of all the money that they're going to be saving with the harmonization. Even if businesses put every single penny they save into cutting their prices, the average Ontario family will still pay \$638 more in taxes.

Does this Premier agree that Ontario families deserve to have this information before the tax finally kicks in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I know that what we're asking of families is not easy. This will, in fact, affect the cost of 17% of their consumer purchases, but

we've worked as hard we can to make it manageable for our families.

Some 93% of Ontarians are getting a personal income tax cut, and that happened on January 1 of this year; and 2.9 million families and individuals are going to get our new annual tax credit of \$260 per person. Then there are our transition payments: There's \$1,000 for a family earning less than \$160,000 and \$300 for an individual earning less than \$80,000.

We've done everything that we possibly can to make this manageable and acceptable to families. I will be the first to say, at the end of the day, that we are in fact asking families to do more, but we think they're prepared to make that commitment to strengthen our economy.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Make no mistake, and I'll be fair to the Premier in this regard, there are some who will benefit because of the HST. Banks will increase their profits and accountants will see a lot more business, but the average Ontario family will absolutely lose, and they'll lose big time.

Will this Premier finally admit that his unfair HST will do one thing and one thing only: It will cost Ontario families more each and every single day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't accept that, of course, and I might say, in passing, that I think banks are taking the biggest hit as a result of our going ahead with the HST.

What I do want to return to—I think what is the essence of this—is why we are doing this. We believe that we have to strengthen our economy. We believe that in an era of profound globalization, where our businesses here in Ontario do so much by way of exporting—they're exporting their products into a highly competitive, globalized economy, and they're competing against people in other places where they have this value-added tax—we have to have the HST, together with our other package of tax reforms, to ensure that we grow stronger.

I think parents are motivated by the same ideal—every generation. We're prepared to do whatever it takes to build a stronger economy for our kids to secure a bright future. Fundamentally, that's what this policy is all about.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is to the Minister of Revenue. There are just 58 days until Dalton McGuinty starts adding the greedy HST to his hydro rate hikes, to charges for smart meters, to the \$53-million backdoor energy tax, to the \$437-million Samsung subsidy—and the list of energy taxes goes on and on.

Mr. Jim Willis of Barrie doubts that hydro companies will pass along the value of input credits to customers, but he can say with certainty that you'll make seniors pay 8% more on their condo fees.

The member for Barrie didn't ask Mr. Willis's question, so I will: Minister, what makes you think you'll get away with attacking the budgets and the pocketbooks of Ontario seniors?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I agree with the member from Barrie that what her riding needs, what your riding needs and what my riding needs are more jobs, and that's exactly why we're reforming our tax system.

I remind the member and the good people in his constituency that their member voted against reducing the personal income tax rate to the lowest of any province in this country on the first \$37,000. I want to remind the people in his riding, when they get the HST rebate, that their member voted against that new rebate, that he voted against increasing the senior property tax credit by an additional \$250. He voted against that as well, much, I think, to the surprise of his constituents.

I remember when that member believed that what we should do is reform taxes. That's what his former Premier said, that's what his leader said. Today they've changed their positions conveniently, but they—

1120

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm sure Mr. Willis in Barrie is going to be really excited about that answer.

Seniors are on to the McGuinty Liberals. Mr. Willis knows you're handing out severance packages to the HST tax collectors who won't miss one day of work.

Members of CARP wrote to say, "The tax 'rebate' to us is a transparent trick," and the money you're handing out is from the pockets of taxpayers.

Mr. John Hinman of Cobourg puts it more bluntly when he says, "The HST is a monumental tax grab."

The member from Northumberland won't ask, so I will: Minister, what made you think you could pull the wool over Ontario seniors' eyes and fool them about your greedy HST tax grab?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Another thing that the member voted against is the transition payments that are provided by people like Jim Flaherty, Helena Guergis and Patrick Brown, who also thought that the best thing that we could do to build a stronger Canada is to have Ontario reform its tax system so that we're competitive in the 21st century.

I want everyone in Ontario to understand that that party opposite said, "No, you should not receive the transition benefit," and when that \$333 cheque shows up in your family's home in June, or that \$100 cheque shows up if you're an individual, that there was a party in this place that voted against that. They decided that Jim Flaherty and Stephen Harper were wrong. They decided the best thing we should do is not make sure that consumers have that money. It is important for consumers to have that money so that it gives us time to get our permanent tax cuts, the ones that you voted against, right into our economy—

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

Interjections.

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

New question?

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Minister of Community Safety: Why won't this minister ensure that vulnerable, mentally ill inmates are in appropriate hospital settings instead of hellholes like the Don jail?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: My ministry continues to ensure that adequate resources are provided so that within our correctional facilities, there are both the human resources and the physical resources to ensure that those with mental illness are treated and have the necessary services available to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, 32-year-old Jeff Munro, suffering from severe mental illness, including schizophrenia, was battered and stomped to death while in the Don jail. Now the government is being sued.

Why won't the government admit it was wrong, apologize, settle and really do something to ensure that this never happens again?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: As the member knows, I'm not going to comment on any specific case, especially a case that's before the courts. The member knows that. But the McGuinty government is committed to the fair and compassionate treatment of people—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stand and withdraw the comment.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me repeat, because it's worth repeating and it's important that we repeat it: The McGuinty government is committed to the fair and compassionate treatment of people with signs of or a diagnosis of a mental illness. The people in our correctional services facilities take that very, very seriously, and we provide those services.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think you're doing a swell job. I just wanted to sneak that in.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The people of Hamilton understand better than most how important a comprehensive, efficient transit system in a community is. A good transit system not only takes cars off our streets and reduces gridlock and emissions, but is good news for the environment. It also provides people who don't have a car with an easy and accessible way to get around town.

Minister, can you explain what your government is doing to improve transit in my beloved city of Hamilton?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to thank the gracious member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for his question. We know how vital transit

systems are to communities across the province. The gas tax is a prime example of the support that we are providing to municipalities. This year, we're investing \$316 million in 93 municipal transit systems in 119 municipalities—that's almost \$11 million for Hamilton.

Furthermore, Metrolinx has completed a benefits case analysis study earlier this year to look at different rapid transit options for Hamilton. The benefits case analysis shows that there are a number of options, all of which would work for Hamilton. This is a really good opportunity for the people of Hamilton to talk about which option will work best for Hamilton, and that community discussion is ongoing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Thank you, Minister. My constituents certainly value the service improvements made in Hamilton and the government's investments there. Expanded services for newer buses have certainly encouraged people to get out of their cars and to choose public transit.

Minister, with our proximity to Toronto, many people in my riding regularly make the commute to downtown Toronto for work, for appointments and to meet friends. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing to improve GO service and make it faster and more efficient for Hamiltonians to visit Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The question is a really good one, because what we are trying to do is to get people across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area to make a greener choice, to take public transit across the region, and to create a regional transit network. That's exactly why we created Metrolinx. It's about building that comprehensive regional network.

GO has made a number of changes that will improve service for Hamilton. Last year GO added a fourth daily train trip out of the Hamilton GO centre in the morning. In 2008, GO introduced more 12-car trains on the Lakeshore West line, which adds 20% more capacity than the 10-car trains. As was announced today, we're investing in the revitalization of Union Station. That's a revitalization that will benefit all GO riders because those GO riders from Hamilton come into Union Station. It will be—

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

PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: The question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, last week the committee on finance and economic affairs reviewed your government's pharmacy cutbacks contained in Bill 16. Committee members heard from pharmacists who described the impact of your legislation on their customers. The presenters included pharmacist Peter Meraw, a former Durham riding resident who is co-owner of the Minden Pharmasave with his partner, Richard Smith. He said your government will take away services and impact on seniors. This means fewer services for patients, loss of jobs and the possible closure of many small community pharmacies.

Minister, what will it take to convince your government to delay these cutbacks until there are fair consultations with consumers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to talk about our proposed drug reforms. This is all about getting fair and substantially lower drug prices for all Ontarians. We are paying far too much for drugs now. We can save people hundreds of dollars per year through these changes, and we're going to do that.

This is also about being able to cover more drugs for more people, and it's about cleaning up a system of these so-called professional allowances that even pharmacists now are admitting it's time to get rid of.

1130

We are concerned about maintaining access in rural communities. We are concerned about making sure that people have access to pharmacies and pharmacy services. Our plans include special support for—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, whether it is a topic of sex education, the harmonized sales tax or industrial wind farms, your government has refused to listen. In fact, the people of Ontario are sick and tired of Premier Dad's attitude.

At the Bill 16 hearings last week, your government clearly cut about a billion dollars from Ontario pharmacists. These cutbacks have profound implications for front-line health care in Ontario.

Minister, why won't your government learn from past mistakes and have genuine consultations with pharmacy professionals, patients and stakeholders before making these reckless decisions—a detrimental impact on health care in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very, very anxious to talk to pharmacists. In fact, we've had not one but two meetings cancelled by the pharmacists' association, and we are anxious to have a new one.

The member opposite has been talking about seniors. Let me quote from Susan Eng, in advocacy at the Canadian Association of Retired Persons: "Lowering the cost of all prescription drugs is a major priority for our members, regardless of whether they are covered by the Ontario government, private drug plans or paid out of their own pockets. They and all Ontarians will benefit from the direct savings in drug costs and redirection of the public savings from these measures towards more patient services and support of pharmacies in rural and under-served regions. We welcome the improvement to affordability and the potential for more access to new drugs and encourage"—

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

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. This was to have been Community Living Day at Queen's Park. For more than a decade, Community

Living Ontario has brought together MPPs and families to celebrate in Ontario where everyone has a right to participate in their community. Regrettably, they have cancelled this year's celebration. They had to because your government, the McGuinty government, has broken its promise and reneged on its 2007 four-year funding commitment. The developmental services sector's agencies and staff already struggle to provide services for their clients.

Why did the McGuinty government fail to keep its commitment to Community Living Ontario and cancel its promise of a full four-year funding arrangement?

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very sorry that Community Living cancelled their day at Queen's Park because it would have been a great opportunity to come and tell all of you the good work that they are doing. So I'm very disappointed about that.

However, I can say that we have done a lot for the developmental sector in Ontario. We have passed new developmental services legislation that will make the system fairer, simpler and sustainable. We have invested nearly half a billion dollars to strengthen and expand services. Almost half of this investment, \$245 million, has been committed to agency-based increases and wage enhancements for front line-workers in this sector. I want to—

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Listening to the minister, I want to put this into the frankest terms I can. This government has earmarked about \$20 million for so-called undefined transformation costs. At the same time it has cancelled its 2010 funding commitment to Community Living. Community Living needs the \$22 million it was promised. This unfunded \$20 million would fulfill most of that urgent need.

Will this government reverse its disastrous decision to break its 2007 funding promise or, at the very least, reallocate the so-called transformation funds to address the urgent needs facing thousands of Ontarians and their families, those with special needs?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, this government has invested a lot in developmental disabilities in Ontario since we came into power. For example, in 2008-09, there were 27,385 families who received special services at home. This is a 35% increase in people served. Again in 2008-09, there were more than 27,000 families who received other much-needed services for their families.

In this difficult economic time, we are increasing funding by \$36 million to provide critical support and services for people in—

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

ASTHMA TREATMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Asthma affects approx-

imately 13% of our children who are under 12 years old and 8.4% of all Ontarians over the age of 12. It's a leading cause of hospitalization among children and one of the largest causes of school and work absenteeism. When I first started teaching, the average number of puffers in a school was three to four per school. When I left, it was about three or four per class.

There are constituents in my riding whose children are directly affected by asthma. They are concerned about the adverse health effects that are associated with asthma. Many years ago, I lost my father to asthma.

I ask the minister: In light of World Asthma Day and for all of us who have gone through the pain of asthma, could you please tell us what our government is doing to better serve Ontarians who live with asthma?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the outstanding member for Brant. When it comes to asthma, one of the most important things we can do is phase out the use of coal-fired power generation.

Today, it's the lowest it has been in 45 years—down 70% since 2003. This is good news for our health. The air pollution caused by coal-fired generation has been linked to 670 premature deaths a year, 1,100 emergency room visits a year and over 300,000 other illnesses, including headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms. By closing these plants, we're bringing down the number of respiratory-related illnesses in the province, including asthma.

We're also bringing down the cost of generic drugs for all Ontarians, including people with asthma—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I thank the government for its work in improving the causes for people with asthma. I'm very proud of the work that the government has done, especially for the kids. However, my constituents would be interested to know where the results are in regard to the asthma action plan. The plan itself in investment is good, but results are better.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Levac: Unlike the heckling that's going on from those who don't understand about asthma, I would ask you to give us specific examples of how the implementation of the plan and the investments are working so that our communities can better deal with asthma.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very encouraged by some of the results that we are seeing in our asthma plan of action. Last year, we invested \$4 million, and we're starting to see the results. Let me share those with you.

We have a primary care asthma pilot project involving 1,400 children and adults with asthma in eight sites across the province. Here's what they found: a 50% reduction in emergency room visits for asthma and significant improvements in asthma control, including a 46% reduction in nighttime symptoms of asthma. The patients are very satisfied with the care they're getting, as are the staff.

These reductions are a significant result. It really is encouraging that we know we can do more when it comes to looking after people with asthma.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Linda and David Russell have been working with Brampton Caledon Community Living to find a residential home for their daughter Joanne, who is developmentally disabled. This family has provided daily support for Joanne for 29 years. As parents, they've accepted this great responsibility but are now finding themselves mentally and physically exhausted.

Six hundred people are currently on a wait-list for residential services through Brampton Caledon Community Living. Joanne is just one. Minister, when can families like the Russells expect action from your government to decrease these waiting lists?

1140

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say how sensitive I am to all these families who have an individual, a son or a daughter, with developmental disabilities. I know much about what they are going through because I have some in my own family. I will say that this government has been investing, since 2003, a lot of money in developmental disabilities. We have a new piece of legislation, and, again, we know that we need to do more. We have invested a lot of money to reduce these waiting lists, we have invested money to develop the new Passport program, and we will continue to work to help these individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, legislation is words. Linda Russell and her daughter Joanne need action. You know that there are over 12,000 people on wait-lists waiting right now for residential care; 80% of these parents are over 70 years of age.

As you know, Community Living Day was supposed to be held today to celebrate, but they're not celebrating because they feel betrayed by your government. Minister, what should I be telling families like the Russells, who have been sitting on waiting lists for years?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I think that what you should say to these parents is tell them to work very closely with our ministry out in your area; that we have closed institutions and have opened new opportunities out there in the community; and that we are continuing to work with our partners like Community Living to make sure that individuals like the family that you just talked to us about have the services that they need.

If there is no place—I know that we need to invest more. Every year we invest more, and this year we have a budget to help those who have an urgent need of coming into service. We will continue to work with these families, and let's hope that your constituents—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. On April 14, the Toronto city manager asked the McGuinty government to clarify when, if ever, the \$4-

billion cut from Transit City funding would finally flow. The McGuinty government has refused to answer the question. If, as the Premier insists and as they're all chirping over there, his government is simply delaying rather than cutting Transit City funding, why won't he say exactly when the \$4 billion will actually flow?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. I know that my honourable colleague would not want to contribute to the mythology that plays well in some parts, and that she understands that what we're talking about is taking the investments that we're going to put in place over the course of eight years and now extending that over a period of 10 years. The investments remain the same nonetheless.

We're looking forward to the advice from Metrolinx with respect to some of the specifics in terms of when we would start and how it would work. Our commitment to public transit in Toronto and other parts of Ontario remains as strong and as firm as it has ever been.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Until this Premier provides a timeline for flowing the \$4 billion, it's actually a cut, a cut that will mean decades more of long commutes, gridlocked streets and worsening air pollution.

We're told that a new Metrolinx plan will delay the start of the Eglinton line by at least two years and the Finch West line by at least three years until after the next provincial election, curiously.

So I have to ask this question: Is this the new McGuinty re-election strategy? Break your promises today and then run on them in the next election?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: She cuts me to the quick. I don't know what to say.

Just so that my honourable colleague gets a better understanding of our specific commitment on this score, there was a letter sent to Mr. Joseph Pennachetti, the city manager at city hall, and it comes from the Deputy Minister of Transportation. It says, among other things, "Initial work by Metrolinx suggests that the four Transit City projects can reasonably be completed in 10 years, while achieving the required savings of \$4 billion in the first five years. The province looks forward to receiving the recommendation of Metrolinx in this regard."

Let me say one thing further, something that has been asserted several times over by my Minister of Transportation. The city of Toronto folks have a tremendous amount of expertise when it comes to public transit. We need to find a way to come together and to work together to deliver on these projects as soon as we possibly can. Working together, there is nothing that will stop us from moving ahead with these projects in the interest of the people of Toronto.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The food and beverage processing industry is a major economic driver in our province, employing over 110,000

people and purchasing 70% of Ontario's farm production.

As you know, continual investments are necessary to help our agri-food sector remain strong in today's economy and to help it to grow and expand. For example, the demand for gluten-free products is increasing every year. In order to take advantage of this new product, Wallaceburg's International Food Products, Inc. in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex needed to modernize their operations so that they could increase productivity and develop new product lines. Because of the provincial support that company received through the rural economic development program, they are enhancing their position.

Could the minister please provide the House with an update on the role that the province is playing—

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

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for the question. The food and beverage processing industry is now the second-largest manufacturing sector, and the greater Toronto area is the second-largest food processing cluster in North America. Agri-food exports for 2009 totalled \$8.9 billion. For each dollar spent on the ministry's export program, more than \$20 is generated in new export sales. Our Open Ontario plan is about opening the province to new opportunities, new jobs and new growth.

I recently met with Minister Dutil, Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and together we are committed to working in support of the food export companies. We will be jointly championing the SIAL Canada trade show, a prominent international food export trade show—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Our economy has faced some significant challenges because of the global recession, and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is certainly no exception. My constituents are determined to move forward. They are looking for new opportunities as they reinvent themselves in this new economy.

Just last month, I was pleased to announce a rural economic development grant for Hollandia Bakeries. This provincial investment will go a long way in improving productivity and efficiency, increasing the company's ability to effectively compete in new markets while maintaining many needed jobs in the Mount Brydges area. Also, by the way, we are going to have our speculaas cookies.

Could the minister please provide more information on what actions our government has taken and will be taking in the future to work with our partners in the processing industry?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I wanted to emphasize that next year in Toronto, in May, we will be holding the SIAL Canada trade show. This is a first for Ontario. This is so important for our food processors, and they are looking forward to demonstrating to the world the products that are available in Ontario and Quebec.

There are more than 3,000 food processing businesses in the province, of which 700 are located in rural communities. In 2009-10, the ministry committed approximately \$22 million to 33 food and beverage processing companies through the rural economic development program and the rural economic development initiative. Through the RED program, our government is helping companies to create and retain jobs, improve industry competitiveness and enter new markets, open new markets for local farmers—

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

CONSERVATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp. Minister, as you know, the Eramosa karst is a rare geological feature formed by water dissolving the limestone over 13,000 years on the Niagara escarpment. Its caves, valleys and sinking streams cannot be found anywhere else in our entire province, which is why previous governments have all worked to preserve the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area.

Minister, it is now time to take the next step. The 92 acres of feeder lands which support the karst and the wildlife that live within it are now under threat. You've given direction to the Ontario Realty Corp. to sell off that land for development to support Dalton McGuinty's runaway spending. I ask you, Minister, will you do the right thing, put a stop to the sale and make it part of the conservation area?

1150

Hon. Brad Duguid: Indeed, I've welcomed and listened carefully to some of my colleagues on this particular matter—the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale—who have spoken to me about this very matter.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. This particular part of the province is going through some environmental assessments. No decisions will be made with regard to the dispensation of this land until those environmental assessments are completed.

What I can say is, through the leadership of these members, the leadership of our Premier and our government, we've donated almost 200 acres of land to the Eramosa Karst Conservation Area, something your government did not do, and something we thought was a very, very important initiative. We are very, very proud to have gotten it done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is encouraging to hear the minister say that no decisions have been made. Minister, I'm asking you to make the right decision today and preserve the feeder lands in the Eramosa karst for generations to come. I think the minister knows that Hamilton city council, the Hamilton Conservation Authority and local conservation clubs were joined by the friends of the Eramosa karst here today, all standing—

Interjection.

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

Sorry. Leader, please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to say that my colleague and neighbour the MPP for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Paul Miller, and I are co-sponsoring a private member's bill to preserve this for generations to come.

So, Minister, I ask you to do the right thing. Paul Miller and I are working together; three will make it happen. Will you do the right thing and preserve this for generations to come?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What a scary coming together of those two parties on the issue of the environment.

I appreciate the member's comments, and I appreciate his new-found interest in the environment. But I have to ask, if you're concerned about the environment, why did you oppose the greenbelt?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful at all, member from Peterborough.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Please continue.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We appreciate the member's new-found interest in the environment, but I have to ask him: If you're so concerned about the environment, why did you oppose the greenbelt? I have to ask you, why are you opposing the Clean Water Act? I have to ask you, why did you oppose the ban on pesticides? I have to ask you, why did you oppose our toxic reduction laws? I have to ask you, why did you oppose our internationally recognized growth plan? Why would you support dirty coal over things like clean wind energy and green energy—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order on both sides. If the member from Simcoe North and the Minister of Agriculture want to have a discussion, take it outside.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a rumbly in my tumbly, but I can wait.

New question?

CONSERVATION

Mr. Paul Miller: To the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp.: The Eramosa karst feeder lands must be preserved. The Hamilton Conservation Authority has always understood the necessity of taking these lands into their portfolio to ensure the protection of the Eramosa karst. The Hamilton Conservation Authority, the Friends of the Eramosa Karst, the city of Hamilton and several others are calling for a bumped-up environmental assessment. Will the Minister of the Environment and the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp.

act today to bump up the feeder lands environmental assessment and help the people of Hamilton?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm going to refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all say that this is an important piece of land in the province of Ontario; there's no question about it. That's why we donated over 200 acres of it to the conservation authority.

Let me also say that, as I indicated in a letter that I sent to the Leader of the Opposition some time ago, the project is being planned under the MEI class environmental assessment process. That period ended, I believe, at the end of March. The ministry is currently looking at that to see whether or not it should be bumped up, and a recommendation will be coming in the near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The public interest must triumph over private gain or misguided short-term increase in government coffers. This afternoon, my colleague the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook and I are introducing a bill to protect the Eramosa karst feeder lands. These unique and important ecological lands must be fully and permanently protected. To ensure that these fragile essential feeder lands containing the natural stream in the area are never destroyed, the government must turn them over to the Hamilton Conservation Authority today. Is this government finally going to protect the Eramosa karst by ensuring that the feeder lands are never developed, but are turned over to the Hamilton Conservation Authority for generations to come?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, there is a process in place. It's called an environmental assessment review. That's exactly what we're doing in this case. A class environmental assessment has been done. The matter is before the ministry. We will take a look at it and a decision will be made in due course.

I admire the member opposite, but I must admit that I'm somewhat surprised that he would go and co-sign a bill with a member who has been fighting the greenbelt right from day one in each and every respect. I know that this is not, technically speaking, part of the greenbelt, but it's fairly close to that. So I would just say to the member, be careful with the partners that you choose in co-sponsoring bills.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. As a province we can no longer rely on a low dollar, and our current tax system is a huge disadvantage, as it taxes investment, affecting every business in Ontario. Groups like the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have said that moving to the HST eliminates this hidden but real tax, saving money and making business more competitive. The HST has the support of groups ranging from leaders in business such as Telus and Bell Canada, and is also supported by poverty advocates such as the Daily Bread Food Bank, because it will benefit low-income earners and create jobs. This is a serious issue

that we're dealing with—and certainly dealing with economic development in Ontario. How important is it that Ontario implements the HST now?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. I want to thank him particularly for the hospitality extended to me when I visited his riding.

He'll recall that, in all of my remarks, I asked the good people in his riding, "Do you think the economy is going to go back to the way it was, or do you think it's going to be different?" Overwhelmingly, people said that the economy is going to be different. Then I asked people, "Do you think the response of your government should be to do nothing, or do you think we should recognize that change and ensure that there are jobs for our children and our grandchildren?" People said the status quo is the wrong answer to the great question facing this Legislature.

The right thing to do is to reform our tax system: drag it out of the 20th century and get it into the 21st century so we can compete for 21st-century jobs. We need those jobs today, particularly for our children and our grandchildren. That's why it's so important that our government has decided that we're going to do something that all leading economists tell us—

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

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to thank you, too, for coming to the riding. Certainly, you had some very productive meetings with business, and I can say that the visit to the seniors informing them of the HST was very productive.

In the province of Ontario, we export 80% of everything that is produced here. Making Ontario more competitive, the HST will allow businesses to compete and sustain jobs. A report by the Toronto-Dominion Bank estimates that the HST will reduce the cost of doing business in Ontario by \$5.3 billion, and the HST will save businesses more than \$500 million per year in paperwork costs. Former Conservative Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker stated, "Moving to a harmonized sales tax is very good for the economy and it's certainly going to help with our business competitiveness." Minister, what will this increased business competitiveness mean for job creation in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I say to the member, the question here is that we're in a competition every day for jobs. For example, the United States, which is beside your border on the other side of the river, is our great ally, our great friend, our great market and our great competitor for jobs. On July 1, the rate of taxation on new investment in this province will be half of what it is across the river in the state of New York. I said to the people in your riding, and I've said to other people, "Where should we have the jobs—in the state of New York, in the state of Michigan or right here in Ontario?" We decided to take action to make sure that that new job growth in North America is sited right here in the province that we love. That's what we owe our children. That's why we refuse the advice of those who purport to

believe that the status quo is the right thing to do and move forward to reform our tax system.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank all members, in particular the House leaders, for dealing with the privilege matter so effectively and in the best interests of the House.

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

The House recessed from 1201 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Joining us in the east public gallery, we have Brian Murphy, Daryl Murphy, Doug Chafe, Lloyd Chafe, Gajen Paramaligham, Andrew Nesbeth, Karin Epp and Larry Palmer, all representatives from Community Living York South.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I take this opportunity to welcome a constituent of mine who's in Toronto today for a job interview, and I wish him well. Adam Payler is sitting in the east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DOUGLAS CRAIG BLAKE

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's with great sadness that I report Canada's latest death in Afghanistan is Petty Officer Douglas Craig Blake of Simcoe.

Yesterday afternoon, 37-year-old Petty Officer Blake was killed by an improvised explosive device 25 kilometres southwest of Kandahar. The husband and father of two was returning to camp after disposing of another IED, described in Christie Blatchford's book as "this faceless enemy, this unseen force, that attacks you and kills you and your peers and there's nothing that you can do about it."

Petty Officer Blake was a Canadian navy diver and a member of the Joint Task Force Afghanistan explosive ordnance disposal team. As described by Brigadier General Menard, commander of the Canadian troops in Afghanistan, "incredibly fit, with a backbone of steel, Craig put 100% into everything he did.

"A navy clearance diver, Craig was most comfortable working under water, yet he effortlessly adapted to the rigours of land operations."

This latest death brings to 143 the total number of Canadian soldiers who have died as part of the Afghan mission. Today is a day of mourning across Canada, especially in Haldimand-Norfolk where Petty Officer Blake will be remembered as a local hockey coach and triathlete.

On behalf of the province of Ontario, we all extend our sympathy to his family.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask our members and guests to join me as we observe a moment of silence in memory of Petty Officer Blake.

The House observed a moment's silence.

DUTCH LIBERATION ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Reza Moridi: On April 19, it was my honour to become a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 375 of Richmond Hill. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 375 is a very active Legion, and a number of members of this branch fought for the liberation of Holland.

I have had the privilege of participating in various Legion events and hearing first-hand accounts from the veterans about their active duty during the Second World War. They are truly heroes, and I thank them for their sacrifice and for the freedom that we all enjoy in this wonderful country of ours, Canada.

It is my honour to rise today in this House to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland. Holland was liberated largely by Canadian troops, with the assistance of other Allied forces.

On May 4, millions of Dutch people commemorate the Remembrance of the Dead for those who fought and died in World War II. Two minutes of silence were observed today throughout Holland at 8 p.m. More than 7,600 Canadians died in the nine months that it took to liberate Holland and they are buried in the Canadian war cemeteries at Groesbeek, Holten and Bergen op Zoom.

We must never forget the sacrifices that our veterans have made in the name of freedom.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to recognize Children's Mental Health Week in my riding of Thornhill. I do so to recognize the commitment and hard work of all those who deliver mental health services to the children of York region, despite the serious disregard shown to them by the McGuinty government.

These dedicated people do so despite the fact that York region only receives \$127 per child in mental health support while the rest of the GTA receives \$221 per child. The end result is that their current funding only allows them to accommodate 16% of the children identified in need—16%. That means that 84 of every 100 children in York region needing mental health services are going without.

It all comes down to this government setting priorities, which it does not. In January, my colleagues and I on the finance committee travelled around Ontario to ask people what this government's spending priorities should be. We heard from the people who deliver mental health services for children and the parents of the children who need those services. They were unequivocal that children's mental health services should take priority over full-day kindergarten. As we all know, this government did not listen.

NORTHUMBERLAND–QUINTE WEST DAY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm honoured to have this opportunity to remind all my colleagues that on Wednesday—that's tomorrow—I will again be welcoming to Queen's Park a vast array of businesses from my riding. We'll be proudly hosting the second annual Northumberland–Quinte West Day.

This will be a great opportunity for you to see first-hand a sample of the remarkable treasures we have to offer in my riding. To the mayors and councillors who will be joining us from these municipalities, we welcome you to Queen's Park.

To all my colleagues and staff here at Queen's Park, I encourage you to join us in committee rooms 228 and 230 tomorrow from 10 till 1. Prepare to have your day enriched. This is our opportunity to showcase the wonderful things we have to offer in Northumberland–Quinte West. You will find old-fashioned handmade candy; whole-hog sausages; cereal made from 100% Ontario wheat; one of the first recipients of the Premier's award of excellence for agri-food innovation; the National Air Force Museum of Canada and many more.

Take a few minutes to view the displays put on by our local tourism and economic development folks from Northumberland–Quinte West. I'm sure you'll find yourselves excited about the next trip you'll be making to explore the great riding just a few miles east of the GTA to enjoy our rich culture and deepen your appreciation for small-town businesses in Ontario.

I encourage everyone to come and learn more about Northumberland–Quinte West, the gateway to eastern Ontario, to experience and enjoy some of what we proudly call home.

1510

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I wish I was rising today to introduce the staff and clients from my local Community Living organization, but they're not here. As they said in a recent letter written to the minister, "Our day at the Legislature is intended as an opportunity to celebrate with members of Parliament the achievements that we have made together. Given the deep sense of betrayal by your government that our members are feeling as a result of the recently announced budget decisions, we feel that it is impossible to proceed in the spirit of celebration which the day is intended for."

They went on to say, "For this year, we have asked our members to set aside May 4, the day that we were to hold our annual celebration, as a day of mourning in which we reflect on the desperate needs of those individuals and families who have been betrayed by your government's actions."

Today in Ontario there are more than 12,000 people waiting for residential supports and 7,000 waiting for other supports. There are 1,500 parents providing primary care to their children who have an intellectual

disability on a wait-list for residential services, and 80% of these parents are over the age of 70. Yet the McGuinty government chose to break their promise to our Community Living organizations. Despite the huge demand for their services, Community Living may be forced to cut staff to make up for the McGuinty government's failure to meet their commitments. Is it any wonder that they felt that there was nothing to celebrate here in the Legislature today?

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We had, in this House last Thursday, a debate in regard to Bill 36, a bill that would have allowed us in Ontario to add value to those natural resources that are extracted here in the province of Ontario. The government unfortunately voted to turn down this resolution, which was put forward on behalf of the New Democratic caucus by myself. I just want to say that it's a regrettable act, because I think we are all starting to recognize that as we move to the world of multinationals, which are more and more becoming a very big part in the natural resources sector here in Ontario, both in forestry and mining, we are going to see more and more of those natural resources exit the province of Ontario without having value added to them here within the province of Ontario.

I just want to say to the government across the way: You think you might have won the battle, but I don't think, at the end of the day, you're going to win the war. I think that people, no matter if they live in southwestern Ontario, as they look at agricultural products, that are not being added value to here in Ontario and are being processed outside of this province; if you live in northeast or northwestern Ontario and you look at mineral or forestry products that are extracted from our forests or from the ground that are not being added value—I think people are slowly starting to understand that times have changed, and with that comes a need to change the policy. I say to the government: This is an issue that's not going to go away. We are going to see, in the not-too-distant future, a move on this end in order to make sure that we do add value to those natural resources we're so happy to have in the province of Ontario.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. David Oraziotti: We recently had the opportunity to participate in an event in our community. It was a groundbreaking event in partnership with the education community and students and parents. It marked the beginning of a new elementary school, a state-of-the-art infrastructure project that will help our young people reach their full potential. It has been decades since the provincial government has provided funding to improve the infrastructure of our schools. This construction project, which will create new jobs and further strengthen our local economy, is something the entire community is very proud of. We're investing \$15.5 million to build the

new Francis H. Clergue Elementary School. It's part of our government's \$4.8-billion initiative called Good Places to Learn that is addressing school infrastructure issues.

Since 2003, we've increased funding for students at the Algoma District School Board and the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board by more than 50% per pupil. In our local schools as well, elementary schools that now have fewer than 23 students are over 90%.

In fact, Mario Turco, the director of education at the Algoma District School Board, said, "This is an exciting development for the future of French immersion in our city as it is the first time the entire French immersion program will be housed under one roof in our community."

Wanda McQueen, the chair of the board, said, "This new school will combine the greatest ideas from around the province, including the latest technological and architectural advancements that will continue to improve student learning and raise the level of French immersion in our community."

LINDA JOHNSON

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate and pay tribute to nurse Linda Johnson, who was recognized recently for her care and dedication to the nursing profession. Nurse Johnson was awarded the Human Touch Award through Cancer Care Ontario.

Linda Johnson has been working at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry since 1983. She has also worked in the satellite chemotherapy unit since it opened in 1993. Her accomplishments include serving as a role model, leading the move to a brand new unit during hospital redevelopment, working as a cancer care facilitator, serving as nurse navigator and spearheading the Winchester District Memorial Hospital breast assessment team.

As well, Nurse Johnson continues to lead many educational opportunities for staff, speaks at community events and fundraises with the Winchester Hospital Healers, one of the top fundraising teams for the Weekend To End Women's Cancers in Ottawa.

I would like to congratulate nurse Linda Johnson on receiving the Human Touch Award. She has certainly shown her good work at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital and for Cancer Care Ontario, and she certainly has shown herself to be a true health care champion for my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Congratulations, Linda Johnson.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Pat Hoy: It is my pleasure to offer a very warm welcome today to representatives of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors. The alliance represents the interests of the Ontario food and beverage processing industry, manufacturers of products we enjoy every day.

The food and beverage processing industry is a major contributor to jobs and the economy of Ontario. In total, the industry generates \$33 billion in shipments annually, directly employs over 110,000 people and is the major customer of Ontario's farmers, transforming over 70% of what is produced at the farm level into safe, quality foods for consumers.

This is the second year in which the alliance has held a Queen's Park Day. Representatives of food and beverage manufacturers will be meeting today with MPPs and government officials to talk about some of the major issues affecting their industry. They will be discussing the various opportunities that the industry can provide to support the government's key priorities of skilled jobs, health, environment and building the economy.

I encourage all members to attend the alliance's reception in the legislative dining room from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Alliance members have travelled from all across the province to let us know that they are important assets to our communities. Please join them in the legislative dining room from 5 to 7.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the east members' gallery, I'd like to introduce Jowi Taylor, who conceived the idea to create a guitar made from 63 items of real Canadian history that represent different cultures and communities. Ontario contributed more pieces than any other province in the creation of this guitar. Most notably, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's canoe paddle and Don Cherry's pants worn in 1979 make up part of this instrument. MPPs and staff are invited to pose for a photo with the guitar today in committee room 2. Jowi, welcome to Queen's Park.

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 May 4, 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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that leave be given for the introduction of a bill entitled the Eramosa karst feeder lands protection act and that it now be read for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just as we're correcting this, we'll come back.

1520

PHYSICAL FITNESS DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE L'APTITUDE PHYSIQUE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 49, An Act proclaiming Physical Fitness Day /
Projet de loi 49, Loi proclamant la Journée de l'aptitude physique.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Just exactly how long is my time, Mr. Speaker?

First of all, medical studies have consistently shown that a moderate amount of physical activity is one of the keys to a long, healthy and productive life. My bill will proclaim the first Friday in September of each year as Physical Fitness Day in line with the first week, normally, when schools return to full-day learning.

I can only say this, that the government of Ontario recognizes and respects the contribution made by coaches, volunteers, educators, parents and medical professionals in the promotion of physical fitness. These community leaders serve as role models in encouraging everyone to include a moderate amount of physical activity every day in their lives. The government joins in that encouragement so that everyone may benefit, not only as individuals, but also as members of a healthy society.

I'm sure the province of Ontario will support this bill when I have the opportunity to bring it to the House. I seek unanimous consent to do that now, if necessary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a no.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care and it reads:

"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 support this petition and will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

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

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and ...

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

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I have signed the petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas multiple industrial wind farm projects are being considered by the government of Ontario in the absence of independent, scientific studies on the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario to put a moratorium on any renewable energy approvals for the construction of industrial wind farms in the province of Ontario until such time as it can be demonstrated that all reasonable concerns regarding the long-term effects on the health of residents living near industrial wind farms have been fully studied and addressed.”

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas professional allowance revenues for generic drugs are not being used to directly benefit patient care and there being evidence of abuse in the system;

“Whereas Ontarians pay far too much for generic drugs because of these professional allowances;

“Whereas the opposition parties who are against these reforms are in the pockets of the big drug companies;

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

“To continue to pursue legislation that will put an end to this flawed system of professional—”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask the honourable member, has that petition been approved by the table?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes, it has, Speaker. It’s stamped.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a problem with that, because I saw that petition last week and I don’t think that’s parliamentary language; accusing somebody of being in somebody else’s pocket is not parliamentary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw, Speaker. But it is stamped.

On a point of order, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that the derogatory comments that are made, the unparliamentary comments—you have withdrawn them. I’ll allow you to finish reading your petition.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I withdraw that part, Speaker. Thank you. Just to continue,

“To continue to pursue legislation that will put an end to this flawed system of professional allowances for generic drugs in order to reinvest the savings to the benefit of Ontarians.”

I support this, and I will sign it and send it to the table with Jacob.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“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.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

“Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

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

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I will be signing this petition.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “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 this petition and I’m signing it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from St. Matthew’s high school: Samantha Watters, Lauren Gauthier and Tiffany Dunbar.

1530

“Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring ‘abrupt and

irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;’ and

“Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

“Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

“Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

“Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208,”—it’s now Bill 6—“An Act to increase awareness of climate change.”

I will sign this petition and send it up with Yidu.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures....

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

“Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now.”

This is signed by many of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and I’m pleased to support it on their behalf.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Bill Mauro: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that 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.”

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that comes to me from Paisley, a small town in rural Ontario, and it’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“Ontario families have already paid Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which has been wasted on the

\$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care in our communities and putting independent rural pharmacies in Bruce and Grey at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

—reduce local pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

—increase out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

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

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

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

I’ve signed this and will give it to Ana.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

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

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

“Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

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

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I support this petition and send it to the table by page Lars.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

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

“Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now.”

As I am in agreement, I’ve signed my name and give it to page Sarah.

TAXATION

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

“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 tax system; 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 HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers.”

I will sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the good folks in Brockville. It reads as follows:

“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 certainly agree with the petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table.

CHANGEMENT DE CLIMAT

M. Phil McNeely: J’ai une pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de l’école Gisèle-Lalonde. Anne

Emond, Dominic Muzar et Miguel Laurin l'ont signée, avec beaucoup d'autres personnes.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que dans son rapport de 2007, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernemental sur l'évolution du climat des Nations Unies a conclu que, sans des réductions dramatiques au niveau des émissions de dioxyde de carbone imputables à des activités humaines, les changements climatiques pourraient avoir des "effets soudains et irréversibles sur les océans, les glaciers, les terres, les littoraux et les espèces"; et

« Attendu qu'aucun groupe, pays ou continent n'assume la responsabilité des changements climatiques mais que tous les êtres humains sont collectivement responsables d'y apporter une solution; et

« Attendu que la production de gaz à effet de serre a augmenté de 27 % au-dessus des niveaux de 1990 au Canada; et

« Attendu que nos chefs élus ont la responsabilité de rendre compte aux membres du public de leurs gestes pour enrayer la problématique des changements climatiques par égard pour la redevabilité; et

« Attendu que les jeunes en particulier, héritiers éventuels de cette Terre, notre seul demeure, démontrent un intérêt spécial pour cette question;

« Nous, les soussignés, adressons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative pour demander que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adopte rapidement le projet de loi 208 »—là, c'est le projet de loi 6—« la Loi sur la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques. »

J'envoie ça avec Emma.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On the subject of petitions and what is and is not appropriate in petitions, there has been some discussion during the petition period today of the phrase "in the pockets of big pharmacy." It's obviously your ruling that this may not be appropriate language.

I submitted this stack of petitions to the table today, not for verbal use, but they're petitions that have been read literally hundreds if not thousands of times over the course of the past eight months in this assembly. They were rejected and handed back to me because it was felt by the table, apparently, that the term "Dalton sales tax," or "DST," is inappropriate and somehow disrespectful. We've used that as nothing more than a moniker for a number of months, and I don't believe that, in any way, it's pejorative. I would appreciate a ruling from you on this before I take these petitions back and look at them as null and void. They're duly signed by my constituents.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect, I don't think you have any authority to do that. The standing order specifically gives the authority to the table. That's what the standing orders provide. I didn't draft them and, as I recall, I didn't vote for them, but that's a different story.

The standing orders give the authority to the Clerk, the table, to certify petitions. It's my submission that the Speaker has no authority whatsoever to overrule the table or to direct the table. The standing orders drafted by—I think I recall the member. The standing orders give that authority to the Clerk.

Quite frankly, it's a system that has worked reasonably well, but it's also an uncomfortable scenario to be confronting the table—we've talked about this before—when the table can't speak. They're officers of the assembly. Even to do that indirectly seems to be a difficult thing. It's a problem, but at the same time, anybody can simply table petitions without reading them in.

1540

Mr. Peter Shurman: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: With respect to what my friend from Welland has said, I don't take issue with his knowledge of the standing orders. My issue is with the fact that the table has apparently made an arbitrary decision sometime in the past week or two. These petitions with this wording have been read by myself and all of my colleagues and submitted to the table for months and months and months, and this is news to us.

I'd like a ruling on this, because it changes things in midstream.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the members from Thornhill and Welland for their interjections. I'll come back specifically to the member from Thornhill in a moment.

First and foremost, I put my trust in the table to approve the petitions that are presented. That's extremely important.

I have a problem, though, with seeing the table being challenged on numerous occasions by members on all sides of this House, as petitions seem to be being used more and more for political debate rather than what they have been intended for: bringing to the attention of this House concerns of constituents. We're seeing it on both sides of the House in the petitions that are being presented to this chamber. I am becoming increasingly concerned. I'm frustrated by it. It is putting the table in a difficult position because even amongst the table, one member of the table could interpret something one way, and one may very well interpret it differently. I don't want the table to be put into that position on behalf of us in the House collectively.

We have one item already going to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly as of today. I intend to send a letter to the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. I intend to provide examples of petitions that have been approved, and I'm going to be sending copies of petitions that have not been approved. I ask that all members work in a collective way on what is best for the House and not work at the committee level in a partisan manner, because I'm sure that the frustration I have must be shared by other members in the House.

I trust that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will take a good hard look at petitions as to what they were intended to do in the first place and how

we seem to have deviated from what that original intention is—of using that to bring an important and pressing issue to the attention of the House—to turning into battling petitions of one side of the floor or the other. I can name a couple of issues—we've heard those very petitions—where the opposition reads one petition today opposed to it and the government reads another petition today in favour of it. I do intend to write to the committee and ask that.

Specifically to the issue that the member from Thornhill raised, I cannot stand here today and say that, yes, that petition that you presented to the table that was rejected by the table has been presented on a previous occasion. I will—and this is not questioning the table and the work that the table does, because it is incumbent on us all to stand by them—ascertain whether that petition that you chose to present today has been read into the record or not. I will get back to the member.

I trust that all members on the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly will take a hard, genuine look at the whole issue of petitions.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Last week, I presented for approval to the table a petition which named two members in the content of the petition, and the table advised me that it was not admissible to direct criticism of members, so I have not presented it. That petition had been given to me and signed by constituents. I wrote them and told them of the decision of the table, that it was not allowed; I wasn't clear on what circumstances. I sent them the copy that is online of the standard "To the province of Ontario.... Whereas.... Whereas," and forwarded that along with it, asking if they wanted to try some other mechanism.

It's my view that there has to be consistency. I'm only making this point in respect to the good order that you've made referring this to a committee, that there be a format. There is a format. If there are conditions around such things as name-specific, often they are about certain outcomes, whether it's the marsh that Mr. Hudak wants to protect or those organizations that wish to protect certain things. It has to be in a way that we can represent the wishes of our constituents without being personal or derogatory to the government or to the opposition side.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the House where this all started. We're working off recollection here, but you'll recall when John Tory was the Leader of the Opposition here and the leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and he identified two individuals. Shortly after that, two individuals who had the same name were presented to this House in the public gallery. John Tory had identified those individuals in some wrongdoing, as I recall. Those two other individuals who had the same names who felt that they were harmed by the words of Mr. Tory came forward in this House. We then saw, subsequent to that, petitions presented to this House from members on the government side that amounted to nothing more than ad hominem attacks on the integrity of John Tory. It was at that time that the Speaker ruled that those petitions were inadmissible.

It has since gone from that, unfortunately, to: Every time there is a reference to something that may be political at all—if people drew up a petition that identified the Premier by name—I question whether that's unparliamentary. But I think maybe that the issue got taken so far on that single event. I know that there are members in the House who presented those petitions. They know what it was all about. That's what started this whole downward slide with respect to how petitions could be presented in this House. I'm sure, Speaker, if you check the record, you'll recall what the circumstances were surrounding that. That's when this whole business began. I think that if we get back to presenting petitions without having ad hominem attacks on a member of this House, it will make it better for all of us.

1550

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I am amazed that I'm here when this rather lengthy point of order is taking place. Speaker, we need your firm hand dealing with this issue. I appreciate that you want to refer the matter to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

Take a look at standing order 39(d), especially (ii): A petition shall "contain a clear, proper and respectful request...." It seems to me that that's what the Speaker is speaking to: "respectful."

You can also take a look—not you, but people in general; I'm not trying to tell the Speaker what standing orders to read—at 39(e): "Every member presenting a petition shall ensure that the petition conforms with the standing orders."

Speaker, I put to you that you've got the authority, pursuant to the standing orders, to control the tone as well as the content of petitions. The sort of zingers that we're talking about, the cheap political shots, are certainly not respectful and certainly aren't consistent with the goal of petitions.

This is a slippery slope. As I recall, it was Mr. Baird, my good friend Mr. Baird, who accepted responsibility for these particular standing orders—the amendments to the standing orders. Although I like him a great deal, I've never forgiven him for some of these.

With respect, the Legislative Assembly committee can look at this, but it seems to me that the standing order is already here and the Speaker has the authority. The slippery slope is because this standing order puts the table in an interesting position, a novel position. It's no different from any other officer of the assembly, be it the Environmental Commissioner or the Ombudsman, for instance—Mr. Marin, as it is at the moment. These are officers of the assembly; they should not be subjected to attacks. The Environmental Commissioner shouldn't be subjected to attacks; Mr. Marin shouldn't be subjected to attacks by the government or any other party, for instance; nor should the table.

They can't speak. The Speaker has been very clear about attacking people who aren't here to defend themselves. The table is here but they can't speak. I'm sug-

gesting to you, Speaker, that you've got to be firm about rejecting those types of—those are bad arguments to begin with and they should be rejected for that reason alone, but it's not in keeping with the important role of officers of the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the honourable members for their comments. I hear very clearly—and, yes, if you want to blame somebody for a petition, don't blame the table; you can blame me.

The standing orders—39(a)—are very clear on the contents of petitions etc. Perhaps something that would be helpful is for all members to reread what is in the standing orders. Notwithstanding that, I would like the standing committee to take a look at the petitions to see if there are changes that anyone might recommend that should be made to the standing orders. I will commit to take a look at the one petition.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's on the same one. We do have petitions here that are in limbo. What would you suggest? The committee is not going to look at it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm suggesting that you deliver the petitions as we have done in the past to the table. If the table says no to the petition, that is the Speaker saying no to the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOWERING ENERGY COSTS FOR NORTHERN ONTARIANS ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE POUR LES ONTARIENS DU NORD

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 3, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit / Projet de loi 44, Loi mettant en oeuvre le crédit pour les coûts d'énergie dans le Nord de l'Ontario.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying yesterday, this particular measure that the government brings forward in the budget, I want to say upfront, is not a bad thing. It is a step in the right direction, but certainly what I was trying to say to the House yesterday was, don't look at this as the thing you're going to hang your hat on that resolves the problems of energy prices in the province of Ontario and specifically for northern Ontario. We need to look at what this is.

Number one, the government is moving forward on an initiative that will give a 25% decrease by way of a credit to those who are able to qualify in the industrial sector in northern Ontario—everybody north of Parry Sound—and a 25% decrease or a credit in electricity prices for residents in northern Ontario—north of Parry Sound again—who are 18 years of age and older and under a certain income level.

To say this is a bad thing—absolutely not. You can't say that. It is a step in the right direction, but I just want to say to the government very clearly that this does not resolve our problem. So let's go through where we're at.

The government about four years ago, I would say, recognized that the energy policies, which had first been put in place by the Conservatives and then followed by the Liberals and accelerated, were hurting northern Ontario and Ontario manufacturers. The government recognized that for those industrial users of electricity, such as pulp and paper mills, this was a huge problem because anywhere from 25% to 30% of a pulp and paper mill's overall costs are electricity costs. In other plants around Ontario, electricity charges are not anywhere near that percentage of the overall cost, but in the case of a foundry, a smelter, a refinery or the pulp and paper industry, certainly electricity is a huge cost. In the case of pulp and paper, depending on the mill, 25% to 30% is the cost of electricity as the overall cost of doing business.

The government recognized three, four years ago, I believe, that something had to be done and the government of the day moved forward, the McGuinty government in the previous term, with what I call the pulp and paper energy credit program. There's another name for it, DR1, DR4, whatever you want to call it technically. It was DR1, DR2 and DR3, and then I think we were talking about DR4 at one point. But the point was that the government recognized that it needed to do something to try to address electricity prices.

What they essentially did was to offer up what amounted to an 18% credit on an industrial user's hydro bill if you operated a pulp and paper mill in Ontario and qualified for the program. The issue is that this 18% credit was coming due this fall, I believe it was, so the government was in a position that it had to do something. Certainly those people in the industry and those people in the energy industry were lobbying that the government had to extend this program. It was crucial, in the case of those mills that are fortunate enough to be left open, such as Tembec in Kap and others in different places; that if that program was not renewed, they'd be in deep trouble.

So the government had to renew something, and I think the government was quite clever. They recognized that this 18% program in itself didn't respond to all of the needs of northern Ontario users on the industrial side, so they needed to expand it. That's something that I say to the government was a good thing to do. You should expand that program so it affects other people. They moved it from 18% to 25%. So now the government says if you're an industrial user in northern Ontario, north of Parry Sound, and you meet certain criteria, you can apply for and get a 25% credit on your electricity bill once this bill is proclaimed into law.

I just want to say to the government, a step in the right direction, but does that fix the problem? I think the answer is, resoundingly, no. We still have a huge problem when it comes to electricity prices in this province when it comes to industrial users. I know the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry will know

that well because he's dealing with these people on a daily basis, the Xstratas of this world, the pulp and paper industries of this world and others who are saying, "We have a huge problem."

Electricity prices are scheduled to go up in the not-too-distant future. There is an application for a 10% increase on electricity prices in the province of Ontario, and the HST is coming into vogue come July 1, and that means it's going to affect those people who've got to pay electricity in this province by at least 18% on the top end. So the 25% that people are getting is really not 25%. That's the point that I'm trying to make, because it's offset by the additional charges you're going to get on your hydro bill as a result of the increase and the HST.

1600

The other issue is that of the global adjustment, and I want to speak to this very specifically. The government, rightfully so, has said, "We want to invest in green energy in the province of Ontario." I don't think there's a member in this House who thinks the investments in green energy are a bad thing. The question is, how do you pay for them? Part of the problem that we have in the way that the green energy projects and other projects by OPG are being put into line, such as the refurbishment of our nuclear plants, additional generation on the Niagara River, hydroelectric plants in northern Ontario and green energy, are all being put on the hydro bill. We're signing contracts that are pretty lucrative for some. We're talking about contracts that say, "You're going to get a rate higher than what the industrial hydro rate is for generating electricity, and if we buy it or not, we're going to pay it to you anyway." They're doing that as a way to be able to allow those individuals who are getting in the business of building these hydroelectric, green energy or whatever plants a way to finance themselves, because they've got to show that they can get a return on investment.

The entire cost of this is being put into the global adjustment rate. The global adjustment rate is something that's put in everybody's individual hydro bill and every industrial user's. Up until about a year ago, the global adjustment was never contemplated to put a heck of a lot of cost on a person's hydro bill or an industrial user's. It was always seen as being minor in effect. But what we're looking at right now is, as of this winter, the global adjustment going through the roof. Even though the rate of electricity is going down—and the rate of electricity has gone down—the global adjustment has picked up whatever savings you got on the rate decrease. As a result, we're paying more for electricity now than we were paying before the rates started to go down, so much so that industrial users across this province are having to pay a heck of a lot more for electricity on a per-month basis than they did in the past. As I stated in this House before, in the case of Tembec in Kapuskasing, you're looking at \$1.8 million per month that they're paying in additional electricity charges that they weren't paying a year ago because of the global adjustment.

So I'm not arguing that we shouldn't be doing green energy. I'm not arguing that we should not be doing

refurbishment. That is not my argument. My argument is, how do we pay for it, and should we socialize some of the costs of this? I think it's a fair debate to have, because if you throw it on top of the hydro rate, what you're going to do is you're going to discourage industrial hydro users from conserving. You need to understand, if the global adjustment goes through the roof, there's no incentive for the industrial user to save energy by reducing the demand that they have for electricity on a day-by-day, a minute-by-minute basis because that's what companies do in the province.

Most members don't understand this. If my global adjustment goes up, and my rate of electricity goes down, there is nothing in it for me as an industrial user to try to reduce the amount of electricity. From an economic standpoint it makes no sense. You know what? From an environmental standpoint, it makes absolutely no sense, because we all know that reduction in demand is really one of the ways that we can have a huge effect on lessening our footprint when it comes to whatever energy projects are out there as they affect their environment.

I'm saying to the government across the way that we will vote in favour of this particular bill as New Democrats, because we do think it's a step in the right direction. But I want to be very clear: It is a very, very small step. It is so small, Tiny Tim would have to make tippytoe marks in order to see how far this brings us down the state of being able to resolve this issue.

I say to the government across the way, you still have a huge problem when it comes to your energy policies in this province, and I think this government, quite frankly, has rushed to try to get somewhere, that being whatever their policy might be around new generation, and they've basically thrown the baby out with the bath water.

Again, I want to say, there's not a member in this House who doesn't agree that there needs to be refurbishment of our current electrical stock when it comes to generation. We all know that has to go on on an ongoing basis, whether it be hydroelectric, NUGs, nuclear plants, green energy or whatever it might be. Nobody argues that we shouldn't be doing these things. The question is, how much of it can we do and how affordable can it be if we throw it on top of the actual rate that industrial users have to use? I say to you now in this House today that if we don't get this issue under control, you're going to see more plants that are large electrical consumers in this province close, because it will drive the price up and close the plants down.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the member from Timmins—James Bay for his comments. I've got in my hand the bill we're debating today, Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit. I'm having a bit of a tough time following the conversation from the member. I think there was a bit of a mixed message there in terms of what he was discussing. This bill is solely about the northern Ontario energy credit and the relief this will bring to people in northern Ontario.

What I want to say, though, is that what the member did talk about was the 25% reduction in the large industrial rate that we brought in in our budget this year, an enhancement of the previous program, so I will speak about that a bit as well. He was right: It was 18 cents, which is extremely significant—\$18 per megawatt hour. We've enriched it to \$20 per megawatt hour for three years—a 25% reduction—a program that has value-added about \$150 million per year for those large industrials.

The member says, "Is this going to fix it?", and he says no. Of course it's not going to fix it; that's what I've been saying for six years. The member makes our argument for us. Why isn't it going to fix it by itself? Because 200 mills in Canada have closed over the last six or seven years in areas with very low energy costs. We've been saying this for six years. Of course this isn't the only problem that these large industrials face. AbitibiBowater has a \$6.2-billion debt, \$1.2 billion of that attributed to a pension shortfall. Newsprint demand globally has gone down 50% in the last five years. The appreciation in the value of the Canadian dollar adds about \$100 million to the mill in my riding—one mill—on an annual basis.

Is the energy pricing piece going to fix all of that? Of course not. But we did what we could. We're controlling the parts that we can, as well as uploading the cost of roads, taking care of stumpage—providing some relief there—and significant relief on energy pricing as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to credit the member from Timmins–James Bay as standing up for his constituents and also addressing the bill. He's right, because the bill does not address one single thing that the previous member spoke of. This is the residential rate, and it's a credit based on income, with threshold tests.

It's actually an insult to the north when in fact the industry, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines knows, is all about the inappropriateness of the current energy policies.

I commend the member—that this bill should have been a section in Bill 16, the budget bill. That's where it belonged. This is strictly politics, and it's an unnecessary waste of the time of this House, because we support—the poor policy on energy for all of Ontario. This policy is literally crippling seniors, persons with illnesses who are affected by having reliable, affordable energy. I am so disappointed with the underhanded way that Premier McGuinty and his puppet Minister of Energy are dealing with a very important part of our economy.

I look at this bill, a very small bill. We caucused it today, and there was generally very broad support for the plight of northern Ontarians and also the plight of many other Ontarians. This bill is nothing but politics, Mr. Mauro. I can tell you that we would only—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just remind you to address the Chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: —the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, a good member, I might say as well,

speaking for the energy that has been lost in northern Ontario.

But the member from Timmins–James Bay has done a great service to his community all along. On this, on the Attawapiskat mine and the mining bill he had last week—all of this is predicated on having a lousy energy policy for all of Ontario. This is nothing but cheap politics, and it's a good example of how Premier McGuinty is wasting the time of this House with bills like this that should have been in the budget bill.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Timmins–James Bay, of course, is a lifelong northerner. It's not just a matter of living up there; he has worked up there and he has travelled the north as extensively as anybody could. He knows northern issues. He knows the north, all the way from the James Bay–Hudson Bay coastline down to the gold mines—and now the diamond mines. I say to you that he, along with Howard Hampton from Kenora–Rainy River—it's interesting, because you've got all of northern Ontario sort of sliced down the middle. You've got Gilles Bisson, Timmins–James Bay, on the right towards the east on the Quebec border, and then you've got Howard Hampton and Kenora–Rainy River to the west on the Manitoba–Minnesota border, so I listen carefully when Mr. Bisson talks about northern issues.

1610

I've had the occasion, and I encourage those who Mr. Bisson may give the opportunity to, to travel to some of the north with Mr. Bisson. Mr. Bisson—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to go flying with him.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, Mr. Bisson is a pilot. I flew with him once.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And never again.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I flew with him once and he's a very competent, skilled pilot, but it was a very small plane. Mr. Bisson and I—I was fatter then—we were both very big people in a very small plane. We flew to where we went to and I hitched a ride back; he flew the plane back in the morning.

I'm looking forward to the chance to speak to this in my own right in a few minutes' time.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I can't resist having an opportunity to comment as well. I don't want to focus on the comments from the member for Durham, but I find it just extraordinary to listen to him rant on. After having spent eight years myself in opposition when his party was in government as they devastated northern Ontario with health care cuts, education cuts, cuts to the public service and to the Ministry of Natural Resources, it's unbelievable to listen to him rant on. I'd rather focus, if I may, in the short time I have, and comment on the remarks that were made by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay, who does indeed understand the issues extremely well.

First of all, I'm very grateful. I think what the member is saying is that indeed he supports the industrial energy

rate that our government announced in the March 25 budget, and we appreciate that. I'm going to work on the premise as well that, although you didn't spend much time addressing the northern Ontario energy credit, you would support that as well. Certainly, the legislation we're debating today is very much reflective of the McGuinty government's very clear understanding that energy costs are higher in northern Ontario, that we have different circumstances that bring that about, and this assistance, which will be for low- and middle-income earners, will make a real difference in terms of northerners. I know that my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan was in Thunder Bay yesterday with Minister Duncan. They were unveiling it yesterday and, of course, we're debating it today.

The other thing that needs to be said: We just had a budget that was as northern-Ontario focused as I've certainly seen in my 15 years here as a member of the Legislature: record highway spending, \$773 million, up 20% from last year—extraordinary; \$45 million for skills development for the Ring of Fire, an economic opportunity that's happening up there, part of our Open Ontario plan—many reasons why northerners understand that the McGuinty government truly understands the needs of northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all those members who commented on my presentation. I just want to say to members, I'm not giving this bill and this initiative a thumbs-up, this is wonderful, this is great, high five—no, no. I want the minister to clearly understand: I'm saying this is a step in the right direction, but there's still a long ways to go.

The electricity prices are an issue, and contrary to what my honoured colleague from Thunder Bay has to say, which is that it's everything else that's the problem—it's the Canadian dollar, it's the market—yes, those are part of it, but a large part of it is electricity prices. I just went through six months or four months or whatever it is since last December, the announcement of the Xstrata foundry, refinery and smelter in Timmins, and they were quite categoric. They sat in the Premier's office first with him individually—because the Premier has conveyed this to me—and they sat there collectively with the mayor of the city of Timmins in the room, the Premier in the room, the head of CAW—well, no, the head of the coalition in the room—and said that electricity prices are a large part of the problem. Absolutely. So for companies like Xstrata—I think we could have done something in order to keep them here—the 25% didn't do it. That's the point that I'm making: If 25% was the answer, Xstrata would have turned their decision around and would have said, "We're not shutting down the smelter-refinery in the city of Timmins."

So I want to say to the government: a step forward, absolutely. I'm not going to stand in this House and say that this is terrible; that would be the wrong thing to do. But I don't want you getting the impression that New

Democrats and myself individually as the member for Timmins–James Bay are giving this a thumbs-up and saying, "Problem solved," because the problem is not solved. We still have a long way to go. I think there are going to be other Xstratas of this world knocking on our door doing exactly what Xstrata did, and one of the reasons will be electricity prices.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon for 10 minutes. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Nipissing; I'm assuming she's going to be back by then.

I'm very pleased, I must say, to offer my comments on Bill 44, the northern Ontario energy credit. This is the legislation that—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't think you're able to mention that a member is not in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I think that's fine.

Continue.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I'm very pleased to have my 10 minutes only—I wish it was more—on this particular piece, the northern Ontario energy credit. It is the bill we're discussing today. Others have spent very little time addressing it, unfortunately. I just want to say how very proud I am of our entire northern caucus, who worked very hard on this particular issue, and of our government for bringing it forward and adopting it in our budget that was just delivered in the House on March 25 this year.

Let's talk about the numbers briefly for a second so I can put a fine point on them. I know that others want to ignore this, especially the NDP. I've read the Hansard of what the member from Kenora–Rainy River had to say yesterday when he was supposed to be addressing this issue. He spent almost no time talking about what this will do in terms of relief for people in northern Ontario.

To remind people, this is only for northerners. What we're bringing forward is a credit: up to \$130 for individuals; up to \$200 for families. That is relief brought forward only for people in northern Ontario. But more to the point, the NDP—mostly, and I give some credit to the Conservatives; at least they're not just doing that—want to look into the camera and they want to portray this credit, when they rarely talk about it, as if it's the only credit or grant or tax reform or mitigating measure coming forward from our government in our budget in 2009 and in this year's budget. They want people in northern Ontario to think that this is the only piece, and it's not. It is not the only piece. But it is the only piece that is specific only to northern Ontario.

So, single people up to \$130; families up to \$200. The way I like to characterize this for people to try and remember—because I think it's a little number that we can all keep attached and give some sort of context to what the relief will do. For every \$100 of relief that we bring in, through either this credit, another grant,

personal income tax reduction or whatever form our tax mitigation measures may take, you as an individual have to spend \$1,250 on something that was previously PST-exempt.

Let's use the northern Ontario tax credit as an example. Up to \$200—and the threshold, I should say; this is income-tested, both of those, and the thresholds are quite high, and we're very proud of that. It's a very progressive piece. For somebody earning or getting the full \$200, they're going to have to spend \$2,500 on items that were previously tax-exempt once the HST comes into effect on July 1.

For others to stand in their place and attempt to minimize this I suggest is unfortunate. I understand that there's a role for the opposition to play, but I think at some point the people not only in northern Ontario but in the entire province of Ontario are going to begin, as we go forward with this over the next 18 months, asking the opposition members, why is it that they didn't tell us the other half of the story? Why is it that they're only telling us about the part that the combined single sales tax is going to apply to, those 17% of the items that previously did not have PST that will now be taxable under the HST. Why are they only telling us about the increases? Why are the opposition members not talking to us or sharing the fuller story with us?

1620

These are facts. They're easily found out and easily verifiable. That's why, as I've said before, we're not seeing a whole lot of people—especially the low end, the people living in poverty, lower- and middle-income earners in the province of Ontario—railing against the implementation of the HST, because they understand. They know what's going on. Those people are fierce advocates for the people they represent, and they understand. They've taken the time to investigate the issue, and they know exactly what it's bringing forward. I think it's important for people to know that.

The energy file is a very interesting one. I have to provide a bit of context and some history. Yes, energy prices are going up, but energy prices have gone up under every government since 1990. That's my basis. I'll use 1990 to go forward, because since 1990 in the province of Ontario all three parties have had the opportunity and the responsibility to govern in Ontario. Under the NDP, from 1990 to 1995, energy prices went up 35% to 40%. That's the number I have. I'm not sure if it's accurate or right on. Maybe it was 30%; maybe it was 45%. I've got a 35% to 40% increase in this cost of energy under the NDP from 1990 to 1995—in five years.

The NDP, by the way, especially for people in northern Ontario—they're very interested in this one. In the late 1980s, the then-Liberal government had signed a deal with the government of Manitoba for a project called Conawapa that would have brought 1,200 megawatts of clean, green, extremely affordable energy into the province of Ontario through northwestern Ontario, which would have created an economic boom in northwestern Ontario with the transmission that was required to be

constructed. The deal was signed between the Liberal government in Ontario and the government of Manitoba in the late 1980s. After the election in 1990, the NDP came in and they cancelled that contract with the government of Manitoba. As memory serves me, they paid about \$40 million to the government of Manitoba—I could be wrong on the number—to get out of that particular contract.

The point is that everybody who has had the opportunity to govern in the province has a history on the energy file. The Conservatives, we know as well, will say that they didn't raise energy prices too much while they were in power. They went up under them as well. The numbers I'm given are anywhere from 20% to 40%; I don't know what the number is. But we also know that when they froze rates, that didn't mean that there weren't costs accruing to the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. It went off the rate base and it went onto the debt retirement charge. When they froze it, that's where it went. They hid it. They didn't want to deal with it.

We know that when we came in in 2003 we had just suffered a severe blackout in the province of Ontario. We know that there had been no investment in new generation. We know that there had been no investment in transmission upgrades. We know that we had very little, if any, green energy going on in the province of Ontario. So we've had to take a very aggressive approach on this particular file.

I want to re-emphasize the point I made at the beginning of my remarks about this northern Ontario energy tax credit, available only for northerners. But it's important, again, that I restate that this is not the only tax mitigation measure that we have brought in, including both budgets in 2009 and this budget in 2010. When the opposition members talk about this as being small or falling short of the mark or being insignificant—going out of their way to minimize the impact of this—it's important that I remind people, especially in northern Ontario, where this credit will only accrue, that it is not the only measure.

For example, the 1% reduction in the personal income tax rate on your first \$37,000; for anybody who makes \$37,000, that means \$370 in your pocket. I'm not sure if you're going to get the full \$370 or if you'll have to take it into income and it gets taxed and maybe you end up with \$300, depending on your tax rate, but for argument's sake, I'll take the more conservative number and say that it's \$300. That \$300 equates to you having to spend \$3,750 on previously PST-exempt items to use up that one tax reduction measure.

I described the northern Ontario credit for you a minute ago. For a person who gets the full \$100 credit, that's \$1,250; if you get the full \$200 credit, that's \$2,500. I just described another \$3,500 over here.

You can see how you have to expend a lot of money on what were previously PST-exempt items before you're going to use up the full width and breadth of the measures that we have brought in.

I want to say once again, as I conclude and hand off to the member from Nipissing, that I'm very proud of the

northern caucus and I'm very proud that our government has brought this forward for only northern Ontario. We have, by anyone's definition, gone through the greatest recession since the Great Depression. Given the context that we all find ourselves in right now, I'm especially proud that we were able to find the capacity to do this item for northern Ontario, as well as the large industrial rate that we brought in specifically for northern Ontario, expanding it to other industry; and also the increase to the northern Ontario heritage fund.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nipissing.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit. This is a very important act for the people in my riding of Nipissing and for all the people of northern Ontario.

I was very pleased to be at a meeting of the Parry Sound municipalities association last Friday morning with my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, where he spoke very positively of the new energy tax credit.

Mr. Norm Miller: You were so enthusiastic.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I am very enthusiastic, as you know, Mr. Miller, and I was thrilled to hear you speaking enthusiastically about the fact that the good people of Parry Sound will be entitled.

We're proposing a new permanent northern Ontario energy credit that would help eligible low- and middle-income northern residents with their energy costs. This is a key piece of our 2010 budget.

What I think is really impressive about this new credit is the fact that 250,000 families and single people—more than half of the people living in northern Ontario—are going to benefit from this credit. We're providing \$35 million in assistance in the first year of its implementation.

This credit is for northern residents aged 18 and older who rent or own property, or pay property tax for their principal residence. They'll be eligible for this annual credit.

A single person, as my colleagues have already described, will be eligible for a credit of up to \$130, while a family would be eligible for up to \$200, including single parents. I think that's a very important inclusion, that single parents will qualify under the family provisions. People living on northern reserves who incur residential energy costs would also be eligible for the credit.

This credit is there for those who need it most, and that's why it's income-tested. It would be reduced for a single person with an adjusted net income over \$35,000 and will be eliminated when his or her income exceeds \$48,000. In the case of families, it will be reduced starting at \$45,000 and eliminated at \$65,000.

Again, we can't lose sight of the fact that we are assisting 250,000 families and single people in northern Ontario. My colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan noted a couple of times in his address, and I want to

emphasize as well, that this is simply for the folks in northern Ontario.

My northern colleagues and I—the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, the Minister of Community Safety, the member for Sault Ste. Marie, the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the member for Algoma–Manitoulin—gather together regularly as the northern caucus to discuss issues of northern concern. This was very much a concern for us, which we raised with the Minister of Finance. We're delighted to see it contained in this year's budget.

Other initiatives in the 2010 budget that were incredibly important to us include the three-year northern industrial electricity rate program, which is averaging about \$150 million a year, that will provide electricity price rebates, reducing the price of electricity for our large industrial clients by up to 25%. This is incredibly important for the north as well, and something which I heard a great deal about from my chamber of commerce, from my local businesses, from people who were concerned about large industry in the north and the impact that our hydro costs were having on those industries.

Another issue which is of great interest, and which my mayor recently highlighted on his website, is the new Ring of Fire. In our 2010 budget, we announced the creation of a Ring of Fire coordinator to lead the collective effort to advance the economic promise of this area. The Ring of Fire is truly resonating as an initiative that's going to benefit all of the north. It's an exciting initiative that I think will have a great impact on the north for years to come.

As part of our emphasis and focus on that, the province has also announced \$45 million over three years for new project-based skills training programs to help aboriginal people and northern Ontarians participate and benefit from emerging economic development opportunities, such as the Ring of Fire.

We want to make sure that our aboriginal communities in the north are engaged, have the required skills to really become focused and engaged in these new economic development initiatives that are developing in the north.

1630

We are seeing unseen investments in our post-secondary education. Through this initiative and through others, we are seeing our colleges and universities in the north truly thrive. I wanted to highlight a couple of announcements that we've done just simply since the new year began in 2010.

The government is investing \$556,000 to support aboriginal learners at Canadore College and \$468,000 to support aboriginal learners at Nipissing University. This is a bursary program that will help students with financial need to attend the college and the university and to assist them in their studies. That was announced in January 2010.

In May, just this week, actually, we announced that we are supporting improvements to the aboriginal centres at Nipissing and Canadore. We are very privileged to have wonderful aboriginal centres at both Nipissing University

and Canadore College that really support a range of activities and initiatives that are focused on making the college or university experience a good one for our aboriginal communities.

As you know, a lot of our students from the aboriginal communities are coming from very isolated aboriginal communities in the Far North, and to come to North Bay or any centre in the province, it's a huge adjustment for them and their families. Our aboriginal centres provide an incredible amount of support, and they provide initiatives that make sure that those students feel welcome, feel part of the community and do not feel isolated in their new homes.

Just this week, we announced that we're investing \$75,000 more at Nipissing and \$25,000 more at Canadore to improve the aboriginal student space by providing minor renovations, new furniture and new computers, and to ensure that the space is as comfortable and inviting as it can possibly be for these students as they adjust.

As well, coming out of the spring budget, we saw Canadore and Nipissing receive additional funding as part of our five-year Open Ontario plan to create new opportunities for job and economic growth. To that end, Canadore received \$815,000 and Nipissing University received \$2.3 million to assist them in creating a great learning environment for students from across the province.

As you know, I've spoken on a number of occasions in the House about how proud I am of my two institutions and how well they work together as they're co-located on the same campus and as they focus to work with our employers across the region to assist them in developing the workforce that they need to create the economic development that we need across the north.

We were also incredibly happy to see that the provincial government will be continuing to increase the funds in the northern Ontario heritage fund. This year, that fund is being increased by another \$10 million, which is hugely important for the north. Those funds go towards helping new young entrepreneurs—and I've got a list as long as my arm this week of new young entrepreneurs across my region who are going to see about \$25,000 in assistance to help them set up their new businesses. These are young people who are either moving back home or who haven't left the city, and we want to make sure that they feel like they are supported in their new initiatives. Small business is the backbone of our smaller communities, and these new entrepreneurs are taking on some great new ideas in our communities, and we're particularly proud of them.

We've also expanded our entrepreneur program under the northern Ontario heritage fund. I know my colleagues agree with me that that expansion has been incredibly important for the northern Ontario heritage fund. I'm seeing a number of new initiatives being invested in in my riding that include some new green energy initiatives that are incredibly important.

I have one entrepreneur in my community who's affiliated with the college who's doing a great deal of

work in solar and really promoting solar power for homes and businesses across the region. Through some help from the northern Ontario heritage fund, he'll be able to continue the growth of his business.

All of these things are helping northerners through these difficult economic times. As my friend from Thunder Bay—Atikokan outlined, there are a number of initiatives in our budget, in our whole tax package, that are helping people through these difficult economic times and move towards the future.

But I have to say that as we've been talking about our full tax package over the last year, the one thing I heard loud and clear from my constituents over and over again was around energy costs and the concern they had around energy costs, because we in the north pay more for energy for our homes. Our winters are colder and our winters are longer, and it takes a lot to heat our homes in the north. A lot of people do not have access to other forms of energy and, in fact, only have hydro as their energy source. So this initiative that we've introduced, by lowering the energy costs for northern Ontarians, is really appropriate and really what our folks are asking for back home.

I am delighted to stand here in support of this bill. I'm delighted to hear that my colleagues on the other side, although somewhat lukewarm at times, have been stating their support for the bill, and that my friend from Parry Sound—Muskoka was pleased that it's going to apply to his residents of Parry Sound.

It is an important initiative for all of the residents of the north. This is really something that they've called for, that they've asked for and that we are delighted to be delivering. It will help, as I've said, 250,000 families and individuals, about half the population of northern Ontario. I know that my friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, when he's finished his musical interlude, will be delighted to speak to the benefits of this credit for our northern residents and the importance that it has especially for our low- and mid-income families across the north.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I would say to the member, I wouldn't be encouraging the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to do any musical interludes here in the Legislature because he'll probably take the member up on it.

Both the member from Sault Ste. Marie and the member from Nipissing certainly talked about lots of things in the budget. They didn't spend all that much time talking about Bill 44.

I will say to the member from Nipissing that yes, at the Parry Sound municipal association meeting I did talk about energy, mainly from the point of view that this legislation is necessary because the prices that people are going to be paying in this province are going up so dramatically.

I know the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke pointed out yesterday, when he spoke to this

bill, that energy cost have gone up 74% to this point, and that's before we saw this most recent Ontario Energy Board 10% increase; that's before the \$57-million sort of backdoor charge that's going to be going on everybody's bill, and more importantly, that's before July 1 and the 8% HST on electricity for residents not only of northern Ontario but everywhere.

I'd point out that residents in the north tend to drive a lot more as well, so they'll be paying that HST on their gas. Many people tend to have trucks in the north, tend to burn a little bit more gas, so they'll be paying more on that as well. So they're going to need this tax credit.

It is a pretty darn small amount. If you make \$47,000 a year and you're a single person, you'll get four cheques for \$10 a year. It's going to cost the government more to send those \$10 cheques out than the value. If you make \$63,000 in your family you'll get that \$10 cheque four times a year. So they're going to pay a lot more on those charges that I just talked about.

I do ask about the issue of fairness. What about Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke? What about Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock? Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has the lowest family income in the province, and if you look at the temperature it's not that much different than a lot of places in the north.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and, of course, the comments by the honourable government House leader, who's up in North Bay and area. Mind you, I've got to say that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan mentioned the NDP more often than he mentioned Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals. If people want to do a Hansard search, go to Hansard, type in "Mauro" and "NDP" on today's date, May 4, and you'll see how many times he said "NDP." It may be some sort of obsession. Maybe there's a reason for that. I didn't mind, because brand identification is an important part of marketing; that was fine by me.

I've spent a fair amount of time in my life up in Thunder Bay, I've spent a fair amount of time in the equally beautiful area of North Bay and I'm looking forward to the summer months when I'll be able to drive up there. It's only what, four hours from Toronto? Do you really call that the north? It's only four hours from Toronto. I just find it strange because it's nothing to drive up there from Toronto and at the roadside stands pick up a six-quart basket of wild blueberries. I just don't see it as the north. I'm going to have a chance to speak to this in a little while, but I just wonder how the people feel who live one kilometre south of the border and don't get the cheque? They're going to be royally ticked off, aren't they?

1640

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

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Speaker: I just want to correct the record. I meant the member from

Thunder Bay–Atikokan, not the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

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

The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I had the opportunity to hear the remarks from my colleagues from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Nipissing. The north has been under tremendous pressure in the last number of years. One area, of course, where the exchange rate differential was so important was both the mineral industry and the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario. They traditionally use the difference in the exchange rate to compensate for the distance travelled for their finished product to be delivered and also for the growing seasons. The growing season in northern Ontario is not quite as long as other jurisdictions throughout the world that are in similar industries.

We've also witnessed a decline in the forestry industry in British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and other provinces in Canada that were involved there. So this is not just an Ontario-only situation. And the fact that we've seen tremendous changes in the newspaper industry—one of the products that has been manufactured in Ontario for many, many years is broadsheet newsprint, principally shipped south of the border, and we've seen the decline of major newspapers as people more and more seek their news electronically.

The other area that was hit hard was the finished lumber industry because of the slump in the United States housing market. So the perfect storm came into play in northern Ontario, and as a government we've brought forward a number of programs, championed by the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Nipissing and Algoma–Manitoulin, to address some of those structural problems that are indeed occurring right now in northern Ontario.

To recognize the distances travelled, we've put forward Bill 44, which is the northern energy tax credit, an income-tested program, to help those citizens in northern Ontario who need this assistance at this particular time.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to comment on the comments: the speech by the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan and also the government House leader, who also spoke. I was actually paying more attention when the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan was speaking because I was actually teaching my friend Peter Kormos a new country song during some of the member for Nipissing's dissertation.

I did want to talk about some of the things that the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan said. He talked about how he was upset that Howard Hampton yesterday wasn't saying wonderful things about the government. I really didn't know that it was Howard Hampton's job to speak in favour of the government.

The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan did talk about the government reducing the income tax rate by 1%, and

this meant roughly \$300. I guess that's his job—but that guy who's getting the \$300 credit is paying \$350 more, just in hydro. That's got nothing to do with the 8% that's going on his gasoline, the 8% that's going on his heating fuel—that's got nothing to do with it. This is just their energy costs for electricity, \$350 this year because of the policies of this government. So for that member to stand in his place and try to portray this government as doing something positive for people when it comes to energy costs is absolutely shameful.

I say to the member from Nipissing as well, because she knows—we actually share the district of Nipissing. I have a very, very small, very sparsely populated portion, but as my friend from Welland says, on one side of that border between Nipissing and Renfrew county, that house gets a credit, and on the other side of that dividing line, no credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister will respond.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: To the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke: If it was in my power to take the word “Nipissing” out of your riding name, I certainly would.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: But it's not, unfortunately.

We are very proud in Nipissing to be part of the north, and I know that the folks of Nipissing are very pleased with the initiatives that they found in this year's budget that our government put out.

I want to thank my colleagues from northern Ontario who worked so diligently to ensure that these initiatives were in this budget: the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Thunder Bay–Superior North, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury. Together we have worked diligently on behalf of the folks of northern Ontario to ensure that their voices are heard here at Queen's Park and that their concerns are addressed. I think that this bill in particular highlights—

Interjections.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Of course, the people from Nipissing and Cochrane and the people from Parry Sound to Muskoka are also going to benefit from this as well—and Nickel Belt. I'm speaking of their representatives, who worked very hard on behalf of their constituents to ensure that this provision is in—

Mr. John Yakabuski: David Ramsay does.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Of course. Thank you for correcting my omission of my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the House today Ferdinand Gill, who's here with the consul general of Barbados. As well, Dr. Leroy McClean, who is the consul general of Barbados. They're both here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In my capacity as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs I had the privilege of welcoming them here today. I was truly delighted that they were able to join us for part of my address and learn

a little bit about northern Ontario. So I'm glad you were here to join us today, and I appreciate that.

I want to thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's a pleasure to stand in my place today and add my voice to the debate on Bill 44, An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit, 2010—rather interesting to me for a variety of reasons, not least of which is: I don't have very much to do with the north. I represent a southern riding, Thornhill, but a riding nonetheless full of people who are on fixed incomes and who have an interest in all things financial, all things fiscal in province of Ontario, and notably the idea that there's a differentiation between north and south.

Originally, I can tell you that I sat at home last night with my reading file and took a look at the bill itself and then took a look at a summary of the bill. My original gut feel was: I don't want to vote for this bill. Then I put the gut feel away and thought with my heart and said, “Yes, you have to vote for this bill.”

Mr. Bruce Crozier: You have a heart?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It may be I do have a heart, in response to my friend from the other side.

My constituents are being hit just as hard as anyone else in the province in terms of the cost of energy and the cost of everything else as well. They have something to say about this, which is why I want to participate in the debate. Aside from that, I asked myself: Why would you want to index—and I'll get to this in greater detail—what you're going to refund to people, given the fact that the very income tax system indexes everybody? In other words, we're going to take after-tax money from people who have already paid graduated tax and we're going to graduate the scale again in terms of what we give back to them. That strikes me as more than just a little strange.

In fact, the bill itself is somewhat strange in a number of senses. The amounts that are envisioned for refund are strange: up to \$130 in the case of a single person, while a family, including single parents, would be eligible for up to \$200—a wide range of interpretation. Then there's a really interesting aspect to this bill, and that is the fact that it is not controlled by regulation. This is uncharacteristic of this government, which seems to like to pass legislation, all of which we really find out about later on in the piece when the regulations come out. I cite, for example, something like the pesticide bill, whereas here we're fixing the refunds in time. So if you're dealing with a single for up to \$130 or if you're dealing with a family for up to \$200, you're talking about fixing that in time so that, absent any amendment to this legislation in the fullness of whatever time we're discussing, or absent a repeal of this bill and its substitution by another bill, those are the amounts we're going to see there this year and next year and the year after and five years out, regardless of what happens to the money supply and inflation that may affect it.

1650

We're dealing with that strange circumstance. We're dealing with the fact that these amounts are a pittance in the first place when you consider a variety of factors that affect energy. I cite by way of example a number of things: a 12% increase just announced by the provincial energy authority; a \$53-million tax grab to pay for the Green Energy Act; the HST. If you start to add that up and you take a look at a family's energy bill up north or anywhere else—let's take a really small energy bill. Let's take \$100 a month and add approximately 20%—it's actually more than that. You're now paying \$120 a month. If you take that \$20 and you extrapolate over a year, you've got a \$240 increase. And you're going to do what? Depending on income, you might refund up to \$200 of that. So no matter how you slice it, no matter where you live and regardless of this bill, families and single people—everybody in this province who pays for energy, and that, let's face it, is everybody in this province—is going to pay more. That's the cold, hard fact. So it's Dalton giveth and Dalton taketh away from the standpoint of anybody who is on the giving or the receiving end.

The fact that we have all of those things makes it rather strange. The fact that it applies only to the north is strange as well. You could say, "Well, this is a disadvantaged area in the sense that it's colder at certain times of the year." Tell that to my people in Thornhill. Tell that to people anywhere in the province. I don't notice that much of a disparity in temperature as to be able to say that energy costs in Thornhill are appreciably cheaper than energy costs up in Timmins, for example.

The red tape that comes into this bill is equally frustrating and equally strange. When you get into the application, which is required to have your rebate, your refund come to you, you're going to get it by way of four cheques over the course of the first year, if and when you make application. After that, it becomes part of your income tax. Just the administration of that has got to cost more than the individual refunds themselves amount to. So when we're told that the total amount being expended on a per annum basis for this program will be about \$35 million, I wonder whether that \$35 million includes the administrative costs. I rather have to doubt that.

This is a bill, then, that, on the basis of what it purports to do in terms of addressing what we as individuals and as families pay, adds insult to injury. "I'm going to tax you four times over over a very short period of time, new taxes ranging from the new energy tax to the \$53-million imposition for green energy to the HST, and then I'm going to give you back a very small fraction of that and tell you what a good guy I am, and I'm the government of Ontario": That's what we're being told to believe.

The bottom line on this and what makes it really strange is that it's a bill out there, hanging all by itself, and not part of any perceptible energy policy on the part of the government of the day. I don't see an energy policy; people in general don't see an energy policy.

What exactly is this? It's not about atomic energy, it's not about wind, it's not about biomass, it's not about hydro, it's not about coal and it's not about Energizer batteries. What this bill is about is entirely throwing a bone to the north, saying to the north, which has been injured repeatedly on the mining front and in the forestry sector, "We care about you. We, the government of Ontario, care about you, and look what we're going to do for you: We're going to recognize you as an area that's different from the rest of the province and we're going to give you this little bone to appease you." That's the bottom line. That's the way we interpret the bill.

Having said that, as I began, I have to reiterate that I and my caucus will be voting for the bill, because far be it for us to take away this bone that's being thrown to people in the north. I hope those of you watching and those of you who read reports on this debate in the north understand that we—and I think I can say all of us—care about the north, care about all parts of the province, but don't see this as anything more than a sop to keep you off the backs of the government and not recognizing you as an individual and special sector. And it's not; it's just plain not.

The annual credit would be available to northern residents age 18 or older who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence. A single person is eligible for up to \$130—I say again: up to \$130; a family up to \$200. How is that done? The credit would be reduced for a single person with adjusted net income over \$35,000 and eliminated when income exceeds \$48,000. It would be reduced for families with adjusted family net income over \$45,000 and eliminated when income exceeds \$65,000. Really, this comes down to the ability to pay. I ask the question again, did the income tax that these families and these individuals pay not already address that? I say to you that indeed it has.

It is curious to me where the impetus behind the bill came from and who it was really designed to benefit. The income cut-off levels, as I've suggested, appear rather arbitrary. No one has bothered to explain why those are the particular levels that have been selected. All those on fixed incomes across the province will be hit particularly hard by the coming HST. Indeed, as we found out very recently, they're already being hit by it and the increases in hydro rates.

Think about it. I don't care how hard-hearted you are, you've got to understand that persons on a fixed income, and very particularly seniors, have to absorb the following: a 12% increase from the provincial energy authority that kicked in this very week—12%. I've already done some math for you. There's \$53 million in a tax grab that's designed to pay for the Green Energy Act. There's that. There is the issue of smart meters—and I'll address those in a minute—which are coming to my riding with an increase in rates by as much as 52%. And there's the HST.

It is literally, from an energy perspective, coming at people from all sides. It doesn't matter where they look, there's somebody piling on, and the somebody always

seems to be connected in layers to this government. The numbers are unfathomable and they're unabsorbable. It doesn't matter whether you come from the north, the south, the east or the west. This is Ontario; it's applying everywhere to ordinary people.

I heard from a resident in my riding last week in an email dated April 26. I'll leave his name out of it, but he could be anybody. He is anybody. "I had written to the Premier," he writes, "last July expressing my concern about the various increases coming together for the cost of electricity. As yet I don't have a smart meter but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-70s and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes- and dishwashers with delayed start-up timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months." Let me say that again: \$194 to \$378 for a couple on fixed incomes above 70 years old for the next six months. "Upon calling I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase. I suppose part of this is helping fund the Premier's green agenda. I still don't understand how he will keep the Ohio/Pennsylvania power plant emissions at the border once his new plants are in place. Anyway, just thought you'd like to know I did send him a second letter on this issue but don't expect a response. Retired seniors are not important." That's his conclusion.

1700

And do you know what? He's right. Retired seniors are not important. They can't be important or you wouldn't be piling on. I just enumerated four different levels of taxation or charge or fee or levy, call it what you will, but at the end of the day underneath all of this is the Ontario government, and these are all coming into play within a period I could say of months but really it's weeks, over the course of 12 weeks from now until July 1, four different levels, and people just like that constituent who wrote to me are saying, "Hey, when is enough enough?" I say to you, I have a sneaking suspicion it may be somewhere around October 2011.

To continue, the gentleman's monthly instalment, as we have seen, is almost doubling. This is almost a 100% increase, and that's now—that's now. More to come. This is not an estimate that came from him. This is an estimate that came from his local utility, the folks he has no choice but to buy power from unless he somehow builds his own. Far, far, far away for somebody to be able to do that in a two-story home in Thornhill. That estimate is only for the next six months, as I said. The question then becomes, who knows what happens? Is the sky the limit? This government has decided that its energy policy, if you can even discern a coherent energy policy, rests, for example, largely in Korea. We don't know what the effect of that is going to be. We don't know what the effect of renewable energy, as it integrates

under a feed-in tariff system with this province's grid, is going to mean ultimately.

I sat in this Legislature along with my colleagues from all sides of this House during the introduction and the debate of the Green Energy Act and remember very well the almost infinitesimal amount that the then energy and infrastructure minister said would be the ultimate result of his Green Energy Act, and we have far—and we're talking orders of magnitude here—surpassed that at this point in time. So is it believable that we can see a point where we can stop time and ascertain what our energy bills are going to be? Can we tell our seniors that there's going to be a point where they can stop absorbing increases that they can't really afford? The answer obviously at this point is, no, it's not.

The tax package that the government likes to talk about when talking about how the HST will be revenue-neutral is not going to offset, even if you believed that it were revenue-neutral, the 100% increase being absorbed in this man's energy costs, let alone the 8% increase he and other seniors will pay on hundreds of other items starting July 1. The concept that the HST is going to be revenue-neutral is laughable. I was assigned by my party to cover Premier McGuinty's media availability this morning, and I thought we would be hearing questions about, oh, perhaps the raids that were conducted overnight on crime. The questions were almost exclusively—and this is coming from the media, and what is the media if not market-driven?—about the HST. People are beginning to feel the effects as they buy in advance, pay in advance for things that will be delivered after July. So they're noticing, and as we move closer to July 1 they're going to notice more.

In the energy bill that was cited in the email that I just read, the HST was coming into play. I predict for the members on the other side that if you think you've escaped the wrath of the people of Ontario for what you're imposing on them by way of the HST, and if you think you really can sell the concept of revenue-neutrality, you've got another think coming; and if you think that it's getting bad now, the heat in the kitchen is going to become intense as we near July 1, as we get to July 1, and it's not going to go away any time soon. I can promise every single one of you that we will take it to the doors at election time, that we will continue to push this very hard, very hard, and we'll marry it, as we have today, courtesy of you, to every single other one of these impositions that you're putting on us.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I guess we've got them going now, Speaker. In any event, it's interesting that the rebate amount is actually set in this legislation, I've said before, and would have to be repealed or amended in a world where you can impose a new tax or levy literally every single week—and you have; you have for the past four weeks approximately. This is extremely odd for a government that loves to regulate. It means that the rebate amount cannot be adjusted even to the cost of living without new legislation. So I'd love to hear from one of

the members who's going to comment whether the anticipation is that we're going to get—what is it called?—An Act to implement the Northern Ontario energy credit, 2011, next year. Perhaps we will.

It demonstrates that this government is not serious about providing tax relief to anyone. So you can stand the revenue minister up here every single day in question period, and he can go on and on about what a revelation it is and what a new day it is in an open Ontario for a quid pro quo type of arrangement, where we have a tax rebate that will more than adequately cover the out-of-pocket costs of the HST. But the fact of the matter is, our party doesn't believe it, the people of Ontario don't believe it, and it's going to become reality on July 1. People who may have their doubts, including the folks on the other side, are going to find out, if you're not already through the emails and the letters and the very people stopping you in the street to ask you and comment about it as you go about your ridings.

This bill would not be coming forward if the combination of the HST and the soaring hydro rates weren't already going to hammer northerners and all Ontarians like a wrecking ball on a building. And while I will vote for this bill because any relief is some relief, it is way too little and it is way too late.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was a pleasure to listen to the member from Thornhill, who elicited some response from the government backbenches.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He woke them up.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski says they woke up; others might say they came to. In any event, they were incredibly responsive. At one point, Mr. Yakabuski, listening to the howls of pain, hollered out, "Nurse, bring some novocaine. I think we're hitting a nerve."

Mr. Shurman's analysis is a particularly interesting one. Increasingly, as I read the bill and hear the comments on it, this isn't a bit of public policy. This is an election campaign.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely. It's pure politics.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You say "pure politics," Mr. Yakabuski. If it were pure politics, I could live with it. It's cynical politics. This is vote-buying politics. This is pork-barrel politics, updated to 2010—no, more importantly, 2011.

When I reflect on the fact that northerners have a tough row to hoe, I also understand that everybody in Ontario has a tough row to hoe, and while I don't begrudge northerners one penny of additional support for their devastated lifestyles, I've got to say that I've got folks down where I come from who are going to say, "Hey, hey, what about me?" I've got folks down where I come from who can't afford the electricity bills that they're suffering now. If we face another cold winter, their bills are going to compound and double and Lord knows how much further, even possibly triple.

This government is engaged in the most cynical of ploys. I don't think folks in the north are going to buy it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to respond, if I can, to the remarks by the member from Thornhill. Indeed, I am very pleased that he has publicly said that he will be supporting this legislation. Certainly I can tell him that this is legislation that is indeed very welcome in northern Ontario. As I mentioned earlier yesterday, Minister Duncan was actually in Thunder Bay speaking to people about this issue and was very warmly received.

I think it's also important to point out that this is one very small part, but a very significant part, of a budget that focused very, very strongly on northern Ontario needs and economic needs. We're looking at a budget that brought forward support for an industrial energy rate, which again was extremely well received in northern Ontario; highway construction dollars for northern highways are at a record level—\$773 million, up from \$648 million last year—again, a reflection of the need for infrastructure improvements in northern Ontario; \$45 million for a skills development program related to the Ring of Fire.

1710

There are many other aspects, but one that's really important to everybody in northern Ontario—and that isn't just speaking on behalf of our northern Ontario government caucus members, but all northern Ontario caucus members—is the northern Ontario heritage fund, a fund that was \$60 million three years ago. We made a commitment as a government to bring it up to \$100 million within four years. Over the last three years, it has gone from \$60 million to \$70 million to \$80 million, and this year to \$90 million. We're extremely grateful. This is an economic development fund that has created or retained 12,000 jobs in northern Ontario—an extremely important economic development fund. We have a commitment to raise it to \$100 million next year.

For all northerners, there's a recognition that the McGuinty government understands the challenges we're facing in northern Ontario, and our March 25 budget certainly strongly reflects that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen attentively and respectfully to the member from Thornhill. He's an expert in communication. He has certainly got this right, in my view.

He outlined—and he said in conclusion there's so little being done—that he was supporting it while at the same time pointing out that the hypocrisy of it really runs deep in this bill.

The genesis of this particular bill was actually in the budget. I'm holding up Premier McGuinty's document here. It's on page 8 and it says here, "The 2010 budget also announces our intention to create a three-year industrial electricity program," as well as electrical rebates for northern Ontario.

The hypocrisy is that it should have been in Bill 16. Here we are, spending debate time and all that stuff on

something that should have been in the budget. It was in the budget, and it's out here now to sort of separate it from—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The point, really, is this: Why are you making such an issue out of something that's so little? What it does is it addresses something that's very important. This is the real truth of it all: It's an announcement that their energy policy is a complete failure. That's what it is; Madame Speaker, you know this yourself. In all sincerity, this is an admission that their energy policy has failed northern Ontario.

Look at the pulp and paper industry; look at the mining industry. There are boards on all the businesses in the northern part of this province, and it's your policies that have failed them.

Some members have said that we did nothing. We retooled the Pickering nuclear plant. It shows how little you know. We also retooled the Bruce plant on energy. We closed the only coal plant in this province. That was closed in 2003 by Elizabeth Witmer. This minister is an embarrassment to me and my riding, which champions energy. I can't believe a thing they say.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a minute or so to respond to the speech given by the member from Thornhill.

Although he says he's not from the north, there are those who believe that north of Steeles is the true north. From that context, he would be from the north in that sense.

Just a couple of things: Clearly, this is an acknowledgement or a recognition of special circumstances that exist in parts of the province. The north is a special part of the province in that regard. It has its own particular challenges when it comes to business and industry, climate and geography, and this is one way of acknowledging that.

As a simple comparator, my vehicle registration, I think, is \$74 or \$80 a year. I think we still have a differential vehicle registration for northern Ontario. That's a clear recognition of the distinction within northern Ontario because of vast distances, costs and weather that occur and opportunities for employment. This is part of that acknowledgement and broad recognition here in the province of Ontario.

I need to speak, in the few seconds, about the member from Thornhill and the email he referenced from—I believe he said a senior, but it really doesn't matter—and this huge, huge increase that PowerStream is proposing. I presume it's the equalized billing that they're putting in place.

A few years ago, my family grew from my wife and I when some of our children decided they wanted to come home; we invited them and they brought more with them. I watched my hydro rate go from a very modest amount to a very high amount. Veridian, in our community, bumped up my monthly billing average because they saw

my consumption going up. Now it has dropped way back down again.

I can't imagine—and I'm not going to dispute what he's saying or that individual—that PowerStream has increased their monthly payment—I presume it's their equalized billing—by 100% in any way, based on anything that's happening with policy in Ontario. That's an absurd conclusion—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you to the member from Welland, the Minister of Northern Development, my friend from Durham and, notwithstanding that last comment, my friend from Pickering–Scarborough East.

I want to reiterate a couple of points that I made in debate, but I'd also like to read into the record the comments of the Minister of Finance when he introduced this bill. He said:

“I am pleased to rise today to introduce the Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act. This was a key proposal presented in our 2010 budget. The McGuinty government's five-year plan to open Ontario to more jobs and economic growth was laid out in our recent speech from the throne. Our 2010 budget moves that plan forward in a fair and balanced way. Our plan supports job creation and enhances programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training,” and so forth.

The point in reading this into the record is to say that this is an example of a government that has become so arrogant that the finance minister can rise, as do many of his colleagues with increasing regularity, and take credit for doing something that they want the credit for without saying that there is a quid pro quo; that for anything you get, you're going to pay, and by the way, you're not going to pay double, you're not going to pay triple, you're probably going to pay quadruple or more for the privilege of getting whatever it is you've got.

The fact of the matter is that there is something duplicitous about all of this. The concept of giving people money back by way of a refund because they happen to live in the north and are somehow or other disadvantaged as to energy but it can't be given uniformly across the province, the fact that all kinds of northern MPPs are standing and taking credit for a variety of things that have nothing to do with energy, bothers me more than a little bit. This bill is not fair on a variety of levels, and that's for the record.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill on behalf of the NDP caucus. Howard Hampton addressed it at length yesterday, as a matter of fact—Howard Hampton from Kenora–Rainy River, a northerner if there ever was one. Gilles Bisson spoke to it yesterday and then again today, yet another northerner.

You've got to recall, when I was a kid growing up down in Crowland, as a matter of fact, which is now part

of Welland, in a working-class family, there was the occasional neighbour kid who used to talk in the summertime about going up north with his family. We were horribly envious of them because we didn't go on vacations. Once in a while we'd go to Nickel Beach down by the nickel plant in Port Colborne and sort of wade through the oil slick and pretend we were swimming. So I was envious of these friends who went up north.

It really took a number of years till I finally went up north. It was somewhere south of Huntsville and it was one of those cottage arrangements where the cottages are side by side. If you reached out your window you could touch the side of the other cottage and you could hear the most intimate grooming behaviour of your neighbour cottagers in the morning.

I realized, first of all, I wasn't very far north and, secondly, it wasn't very romantic. It wasn't till quite a bit later in my life that I truly—during the course of my teens I got up to Sudbury and North Bay and places like that, and Manitoulin Island, as a matter of fact. I can't remember the name of the hotel but when you're driving south from Elliot Lake on Highway 6—Highway 6 is a great historic highway. Highway 6 goes from Port Dover, which is Toby Barrett's riding and the home of the Erie Beach Hotel and the finest perch in the world, unless you're from Penetanguishene, in which case that's the finest perch in the world.

So you start at Highway 6 down in Port Dover and you can drive all the way—well, you've got to take the ferry over to Manitoulin. We were coming south from Elliot Lake.

1720

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Espanola.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right, Espanola. We'd been driving a good stretch of time, and we were looking for a hotel to stay—not to drink, to stay. It was late at night. We were really tired, bleary-eyed, just couldn't think of driving any more. We found a hotel. We asked the bartender if they rented rooms. He said, "We do," and we said, "Okay, we'd like to rent a couple." He said, "Well, you can." It had been a long time since that hotel had been frequented by tourists. It was one of the more interesting and novel nights of my life.

Every tavern in every part of the world has the same smell of spilled beer and other things, and that quaint hotel—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —in Espanola, Mr. Brown says—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was right where you pick up the ferry.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There you go. I haven't been back there. Maybe some day I will.

What's interesting, you see, is that the member for Nipissing talked—and of course she's entitled to call herself from the north, but to be fair, North Bay is a far

cry from, oh, Timmins, or when you want to really get up north, you get up into Howard Hampton's and Gilles Bisson's north and you go up to places like I have with Bisson, places like Peawanuck or Attawapiskat, those very remote native communities—a totally different world.

Again, the incredible burden that northerners carry—and they carry it with grace, quite frankly, and great courage. There was a time when the north was prosperous, a time when the lumber mills milled lumber, when the pulp mills made pulp, when the mines were producing ore and when the paper mills made paper. In a lot of those small towns—of course, the other time that people travel through northern Ontario is when they're on the TransCanada Highway headed out through Winnipeg to western Canada, and you visit many of those towns. Those are one-industry towns. I've had the luxury of going to them, being in them, spending time in them, meeting people in them, talking to people in them, from time to time being on the occasional picket line in those towns, but they're one-industry towns. When that mill shuts down, even the Tim Hortons doesn't stay open, if they had a Tim Hortons to begin with.

I don't think most of us from down here in southern Ontario really have any idea of how thoroughly the north has been devastated by the loss of mills and the undermining of the economy. Howard Hampton has spoken often about the need for fair, predictable, affordable electricity rates. There isn't a single member of this Legislature who's more familiar with the production and pricing of electricity than Howard Hampton. He is undoubtedly the expert. He's the author of the book.

For the life of me, I don't understand how this Bill 44—and you heard me refer to it earlier. This isn't public policy. This is an election campaign. This is pretty thin gruel and it's pretty sad if this is all this government has to offer northern Ontarians—or, for that matter, southern Ontarians—because they offer northern Ontarians a pittance, a maximum benefit that starts to reduce once you make \$45,000 for a family, a maximum benefit that starts to get—who said "sliced and diced" earlier today? It starts do get sliced and diced the minute you start reaching \$45,000. You know, \$45,000, when you're living in northern Ontario, doesn't go very far; \$45,000 when you've got to pay the gasoline prices that northern Ontarians pay for gasoline; \$45,000 a year when you've got to send two, three or four kids to school and get them clothed in winter clothing.

Again, it's been noted earlier, driving—there are no subways. I'm not talking about the sandwich shop; I'm talking about public transit. There are no subways or streetcars in Timmins. I'm not trying to pretend I have lived the northern experience, but I've been there often enough and talked to enough northerners to have a pretty good feel. If you live in a remote community in the north, it's not unusual to drive a couple of hours to get groceries. Heck, in Toronto, you walk to the grocery store. There's a Sobeys on every block—not every block; I'm being hyperbolic. But you walk to the supermarket. In

northern Ontario, as often as not, you drive an hour or two hours. So driving isn't an option.

And of course, the climate itself: northern Ontario is—well, this chamber is pretty cold right now. I made a reference once to brass monkeys and balls. I remember the Speaker got all twisted; it was young Mr. Arnott. He jumped to his feet because I identified the weather outside. I had to explain to him that the phrase had nothing to do with the gonads of apes or chimpanzees. The brass monkey on a sailing ship was the brass plate beside the cannon upon which the cannon balls were mounted in that pyramid, because you had wood planking. So heavy cannonballs—I guess it has something very much to do with balls—they were made of iron, I trust, but not made of brass. You wouldn't make a cannonball out of brass—brass is a softer material. The brass plate was there to mount the cannonballs on. And when it got cold, because of the different reaction of these materials to cold—one contracts and expands at a faster rate than the other—the brass plate would expand or contract in the case of getting cold, and the cannonballs would roll off the brass plate because of the contraction of the brass plate. Hence the phrase, it's cold enough—and the brass plate, course, is what's called a monkey. Hence the phrase—

Mr. Frank Klees: I would caution him, Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, it's on record. I've told this story before. But there have been new members elected, and I thought they might want to see how it is that we can sometimes take the long way to get to our destination because it's the more colourful way. Hence the phrase, "It's cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey." I say it has nothing do with chimpanzees, apes, gorillas or other furry beasts.

It's cold up north, and the reality is that natural gas isn't piped the way it is down here in southern Ontario. That means that a whole lot of heating is done with electricity. Even if it isn't done with electricity—let's say it's done with propane and a forced air furnace. You know, Speaker, because Howard Hampton told us so a million times, if none, that two of the biggest electricity consumers in your house are your refrigerator and the motor on your furnace. So northerners, right off the bat—I mean, the mere fact of it being colder, and if you're using electric heat, that speaks for itself; but if you're using a forced air furnace, again, the furnace motor alone.

But I'm hard pressed, and I know that people will get these cheques—and again, it's not always what it appears to be, because it says \$200 but it's not really \$200 because once you start making more than \$45,000 as a family it starts declining until you make \$65,000, and then it's zip, nada, nothing, zero, the big doughnut hole. You don't get a cent.

1730

I picked up a used book called *The Myth of Parliament* by Roman March at a used bookstore the other day. Mr. O'Toole saw me reading it and he remarked—I wasn't aware—that it was a text. That's how these guys

sell their books, the professors who write these books; they make them compulsory texts in their courses.

It's an interesting book, as most of these books are. There was an interview with backbenchers—and mind you he's focusing on the federal level, and Lord knows it could be entirely different here. But the question was in a survey, in research, asking whether Parliament offered enough opportunities, through ministerial contacts, caucus, committees, etc., for backbenchers to exercise their influence on front-bench policy. Here are some of the responses. This is in Roman March's book, *The Myth of Parliament*, Prentice-Hall, and his footnote for it is the *Globe and Mail Magazine*, May 2, 1964. Here's one of the responses: "Opportunities to influence"—this is from government backbenchers—"the front bench now exist, though many ministers are not influenced by the view of backbenchers until they become rebellious." I'm familiar with that. I can confirm that. Rebellion has—there's some value in it and some payback of many types.

Another backbencher responded—because, of course, one of the concerns of March in this work, insofar as I can tell—he talks about the myth of Parliament, about who really wields power, whether elected people yield power. Another comment from a backbencher was, "It's not a question of enough opportunities. Backbenchers will never be a decisive factor in the parliamentary system."

Yet a third one, one that I'm well aware of after as many years here as I've been—not as long as Norm Sterling, but then again, who wants to?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Or Jim Bradley, my dear friend whose riding—as a matter of fact, we share the city of St. Catharines. I get the smaller portion, he gets the bigger portion, but we share representing St. Catharines.

Here's another comment from a backbencher: "Most of the time, front-bench policy is already decided before a backbencher has a chance to exert influence."

Those are three very remarkable observations. Now, mind you, some who want to dispute this would point out that that book was written in 1974. I'd suggest that the experience of folks over the last 20 or 30 years is that those comments are not only true today but they're truer because, of course, as we know, one Mr. Trudeau—you might remember him—the Canadian Prime Minister referred to backbenchers, and he said—correct me if somebody here knows the exact quote, if somebody has memorized it or written it on it their palm like Sarah Palin. But Trudeau said that once a backbencher is 15 minutes away from Parliament Hill, he's a nobody. What these poor folks were saying when they were interviewed for this *Globe and Mail Magazine* article is that even when they are in Parliament, they're nobody. There just aren't the opportunities to affect public policy.

The observation has been raised as well: What about the family that lives one mile south of that boundary, one mile south of the North Bay boundary that Ms. Smith represents, my dear friend the government House leader? They don't get a cheque, but their neighbour one kilo-

metre to the north does. Why? Did all of a sudden they enjoy all the benefits of southern Ontario, if indeed there are any, in this climate, in this economic climate that Mr. McGuinty has created for working families across Ontario? This is so phony; this is so artificial; this is so catering, in the most cynical way, in a way that I don't think northerners are going to buy. They're going to cash the cheques, and they're going to say, "Okay"—I mean, I can hear a guy telling his wife, "Okay, dear. We've got the cheque. Whoop-de-do. What now? Oh, the electricity bill is how much this month?" That cheque doesn't even cover one month's electricity bill. You know what your electricity bills were, you folks from southern Ontario, last winter. That's for those of you who might live in modest houses, like I do, never mind those of you who might live in big 5,000-square-foot houses.

Then the other issue is, somehow this bill suggests that northerners have issues around electricity costs, and they do. What about the folks where I come from? What do you think, we just run an extension cord to Niagara Falls, plug it in, and the electricity is free? Come on, now. What this bill does is ignore the crisis around utility costs that's confronting every household, every family, every senior, every retiree, every young family. Young families—jeez, young families: two or three kids, trying to do their best, playing by the rules, getting hammered every step of the way. This bill insults them. One, because it's not much of a subsidy, is it? There's not much compensation here for this government's malfeasance when it comes to handling the electrical energy file. The fact that it's northern—they're trying to paint it, they're trying to spin it, they're trying to frame it as if somehow this is one of their northern policies. They're trying to throw a lifeline to people like the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan, although for the life of me I don't know how or why he should think that this is going to save him, come next provincial election.

What do you say to the rest of the people? What does Dalton McGuinty say to the rest of the people of Ontario? They don't suffer the burden of outrageous electricity prices, along with outrageous natural gas prices, along with job losses after job losses? I heard Mr. McGuinty this morning in his morning scrum, saying, "Oh, I see we've lost 250,000, maybe 260,000, maybe 275,000 jobs." All of a sudden, he wasn't saying that there's been no net job loss.

Very peculiar stuff. I may have a chance to speak for two more minutes after people do questions and comments, if you're so inclined.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I always appreciate the conversation from my friend the member from Welland, and particularly as he recounts his adventures in parts of northern Ontario and in particular in the fine riding of Algoma—Manitoulin, as it stretches—a very small part of it—from Espanola through to South Baymouth.

I was particularly interested in his explanation of a certain saying. I was in the Chair one time when he

explained to me the merits of "tinker's damn." I'm hoping that in his response, he gets around to explaining that one, Madam Speaker—which by the way, is in order.

I just want to point out that this bill is about providing relief to northern folks for energy costs—not necessarily electricity, perhaps propane. It could be heating oil; it could be gasoline for their car; it could be firewood. It could be what the person chooses to use that money for. There are many options, but there is no debate that the weather is colder. There is no debate that our heating season is longer. There is no debate that many of the communities I represent don't have the opportunity for perhaps a natural gas situation, which often is much less expensive. Those are unique challenges to living in northern Ontario. I think this is what this bill does: It recognizes that, as it does with vehicle licences, as it does with the northern Ontario heritage fund, as it does with all of those things that use exactly the same borders we're talking about here.

1740

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few comments in response to the very, very eloquent speech that the member for Welland made in his comments.

As I'm sure a number of members in this House remember, many years ago I was a mayor at the age of 22. I got elected at 22, and I remember going to my first Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. I sat at a big round table on the floor of the Royal York, and I remember talking to my council at the time—at that time they were called "aldermen." There were both men and women on my council at the time, and I remember asking them some advice about what to do at AMO when resolutions came forward. The one thing they told me—and they were very specific about this. They said that when you're at AMO, you have to support those northern road resolutions. When those resolutions come up for northern Ontario, you have to support them because they have it tough up there. So with all due respect to the member for Algoma—Manitoulin, the member for Thornhill talked about the support for the north on this bill and the fact that many are supporting this bill.

However, the one quote that I want to again reiterate—and I'm not going to talk about brass monkeys or any of the other wonderful things the member for Welland spoke about. But I'm going to use one of the quotes that he made, because I think, coming from eastern Ontario, it's very appropriate. The quote I want to make is, "What about the folks from where I come from?" I think that was an excellent quote from the member for Welland, because this issue is all through Ontario. It's every household; it's every family. People are, using the word the member for Welland used, getting "hammered" by the energy policies of this government. I think that's the issue we need to also put on the floor today.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to join this debate, although I'm not a member from the north, but I am from eastern Ontario. Like the previous speaker, I want to focus on some of the questions that the member from Welland and, actually, the member from Thornhill suggested.

The question that was posed to me as well was, "What about eastern Ontario"—the area that I represent—"versus the north?" It's not very difficult to explain that, yes, we do have some challenges in different parts of Ontario, but the north faces some extraordinary challenges.

When you hear about the member from Welland and his travels in the north, I just wonder if he ever noticed those signs where the price of gasoline sometimes was 20%, 25% higher than it is in southern Ontario, whether or not it's rural. And it's for real, as my colleague from the north just mentioned, about the longer seasons.

What we're trying to do here is equal the playing field a little bit. Yes, we can always use more in other parts of the province. There's no question about that: We always need more. I get demands every day from my riding about things that are really needed, but I think what's important here is that we're trying to be fair. There are some extra challenges. Their construction season is a lot shorter than it is here, so things are compressed and it normally costs more.

To be selfish, to just think of my part of the province—yes, there are times when we have to do that, absolutely, because those are the people who send us here. But I think we need to be fair and wear the provincial hat to recognize those challenges that we're facing in other parts of the province. I think we need to do that.

So I urge members on all sides of this House to support this. Let's get on with it.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Welland is well-known for his insightful comments, and I came in specifically because he was quick to point out the injustice of some parts of the bill.

Even my good friend from Leeds–Grenville was also saying, "What about my area?" It isn't really about that. The broader issue is the issue of fairness. What you think you are doing as government—as government gives away, it implies that they take away. That's the inequity that you don't seem to understand. You have no money. All the government does is move the money around on the top of the Titanic that you're on.

Here's the point. It's a deck chair issue. If he's giving someone something, he's taking it from someone else. They seem to think that they have largesse or some privilege of position here to direct and redirect. What I see in my riding are people, the senior citizens—and I'll be speaking later tonight. I'm cautioning the viewer that I will get into very specific cases and it will take a considerable amount of time to make my point.

But the real issue here is one of fairness. I think it has been made over and over again, but it demonstrates one

thing here. They have a failed policy on energy. It affects northern Ontario, arguably, worse than anywhere else, with the possible exception of Hamilton, which has been devastated by their policies.

It's a foolhardy government that thinks they can solve the problems at the expense of another portion of the population. It's simply unfair and could arguably be undemocratic.

I know what they're trying to do. They're trying to have it both ways, but that's typical of this government, trying to have it both ways—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Any further comments or questions? The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The government member says that this is relief. I suppose so. I'm inclined to agree, though, with Frank Klees, when he says, "You really want to provide some relief for folks up north? Then cancel your stupid HST and give every family another \$800 back into their pockets that you're going to take from them as a result of this tax hike."

If you want to provide some relief for the north, then pass Gilles Bisson's legislation, the bill he moved and had second reading on last Thursday, which would give a better crack at making sure that we process some of the ore that's being mined here in Ontario—that we process it here in Ontario, too.

If you want to provide some relief for the north, then get some of those paper mills back up and running and get some of those one-industry towns some life support that they've been waiting for.

You want to give some relief? Then focus a little more on the reindustrialization of this province rather than abandoning that value-added manufacturing factor or facet of our economy, the true wealth-creation part of our economy.

You want to provide some relief? Then don't claw back the child benefit from families that are the lowest-income families.

You want to provide some relief? Part of me wants to say: Then just resign now and let people who are more capable of doing it perform the role.

The government misses the boat. They think that this—oh, man, they're going to have cheques in the mail. We went through that once before. I recall it very distinctively. It didn't cut it then; it's not going to cut it now.

This isn't relief; this is a slap in the face.

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

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I represent one of the larger constituencies, actually the third-largest constituency in Ontario. It is roughly the size of all of southern Ontario. The 86,000 square kilometres of Algoma–Manitoulin stretch from a small but wonderful place called Killarney on the east side of Georgian Bay, where you will find the finest fish and chips in the world at Bert Herbert's fish bus. If you read the Air Canada magazine of a couple of months ago, they point out that that last statement of mine is absolutely true.

The constituency goes all the way across the North Shore of Lake Huron, including the largest island in fresh water in the world, Manitoulin, and the fine island of St. Joseph Island just off the west end of Manitoulin. The people of St. Joseph Island are famous for maple syrup and other things. The total North Shore stretches from Nairn Centre, where there's a sawmill that has recently been sold and hopefully gets back into full production shortly; the fine paper town of Espanola, which has been producing fine papers for the world for at least a couple of generations lately with the absence of a few years during the Second World War and I guess in the 1930s—before that, they were also doing that; and the fine uranium town of Elliot Lake.

1750

I just want to talk about that for a few minutes. Elliot Lake went from being a city that had 4,000 uranium miners actively working in the uranium mines when I was elected back in 1987—this is about energy. My friends in the New Democratic Party promised that they would maintain those contracts from the uranium mines in Elliot Lake and that all the uranium used in Ontario's nuclear reactors would come from Elliot Lake. Then, within six months of taking office they announced they were closing the mines of Elliot Lake.

Interjection: They closed it. Peter Kormos was in cabinet then.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They closed it. The good news is, however, that this fine municipality refused to die. It reinvented itself as one of the retirement communities in Ontario, probably the best-known of retirement communities in Ontario. It is now a very proud city, supporting 11,000 or 12,000 people who are mostly retirees.

Why I'm talking about these folks is because they are particularly sensitive to energy prices. My office in Elliot Lake deals with electricity issues on a daily basis, if not an hourly basis. We try to assist my constituents in sorting out hydro bills. They have huge problems with energy retailers. We haven't talked about those folks who are a problem, I think, across the province. We've taken action in this House to try to rein some of their more adventurous practices in, which have preyed upon particularly seniors. We're looking forward to hopefully getting the number of phone calls to my office about the practices reduced.

What this bill does—it's important to those folks in Bruce Mines. Lars Moffatt is the page from Bruce Mines; I should recognize him. What this does is provide northern families who reside or rent in northern Ontario with a \$200 cheque to assist them with their energy costs, and \$130 for individuals. People say, "Well, you know, that's nothing." I guess for people from the south, a hundred bucks isn't worth much, but we in northern Ontario think it is worth something. So \$130 for a single person that I think goes until—I should look at my note here—the credit goes for people up to \$35,000 for a single person and is eliminated when their income becomes \$48,000. I think that's a reasonable sum. It is helpful to these folks.

It helps them in addition to their licence plates, which people would know they pay half as much in licensing fees for their automobiles as people in southern Ontario. This just kind of helps another little bit to cope with the 2,234 kilometres that are actually provincial highways in Algoma–Manitoulin, those ones that we need to keep in good condition and have proudly done so as government.

For a family, though, it's \$200. I should get these numbers right: Up until \$45,000 of family income, you will receive \$200 in a rebate from the province to assist with your energy costs, whether they be fuel oil, propane, natural gas, electricity, gasoline for your car; you will receive that. It's something that I and the northern caucus thought was really important that we do for those folks in northern Ontario to assist them at least a bit in dealing with circumstances that are beyond their control.

I look right now at my colleagues, and I'm sure everyone in the House is concerned about the events in the Gulf of Mexico these days, off Louisiana. What that potentially has the ability to do is change the cost of petroleum products in this province. It has, or could have, a huge impact on supply, which could have a huge impact on the price of heating oil, natural gas—

Interjection: And shrimp.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Not natural gas. He threw me off, Madam Speaker. He talked about shrimp, and I don't think that actually falls into this category. But it will have, or could conceivably have, an effect on petroleum, so we are concerned that that may happen.

We are concerned that—you know, electricity isn't really energy. Electricity comes from renewable resources. It comes from falling water, from wind. It comes from uranium that we convert into power. It comes from coal, natural gas, oil—it comes from all those things. It's just a way to move energy from one place to another. Electricity is not, in and of itself, the energy. It is a way of transporting the energy from one place to another. So all of those products, whether it be coal or uranium, whether it be the wind that blows or the water that falls, have an effect on how we deal—

Mr. Jeff Leal: The sun.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Solar power, my colleague from Peterborough points out, is important.

In my constituency, we are very eager, and have just had 16 projects announced under the FIT program, the feed-in tariff program, for renewables across Algoma–Manitoulin. We're very proud of those. Some of them are water, hydroelectric; some of them are solar; some of them are biomass. Some of those—I am missing one.

Interjection: Wind.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Wind. Algoma–Manitoulin actually has, and has had for many years, the largest wind farm in all of Ontario. Now, I think it's not the largest any longer. I think it has been usurped by at least one or two others. It is in Prince township. It provides roughly 200 megawatts of power to the grid. It's 120 windmills that proudly stand near the airport area of Sault Ste. Marie but in Algoma–Manitoulin and in two adjacent unorganized townships. We're very proud of that.

We're very proud of the renewables that Algoma-Manitoulin are providing to the people of Ontario. We're very proud that we are leaders in providing renewable energy sources to the province, whether it be from our dams on the Mississagi River or the dams on the Magpie or Michipicoten rivers. We have provided huge amounts of electricity to the people of Ontario. And we are also consumers.

Every year, some of my colleagues and I go snowmobiling. We like to promote—or I like to promote—snowmobiling and winter sports in northern Ontario. I take a number of members with me. This year, as usual, we had a number of members from the Legislature accompany me to Wawa. In Wawa, late in January, the problem was, there wasn't a great deal of snow cover. We had a fine time, but you didn't want to go much past Dubreuilville because there wasn't a whole lot of snow.

What does that mean, and what does that have to do with renewables? It means there isn't a lot of moisture coming out of the snow, and therefore not a lot of runoff. The spring freshet probably isn't, and that will cause our hydroelectric facilities to operate at less than capacity. We will have some interesting issues, I think, as we go forward into this summer.

Pressure on electricity moves people to use other sources of energy. That sometimes means increased costs for other sources of energy. All of that needs to be reflected in a bill for something, whether it be for electricity, whether it be for gasoline, whether it be for natural gas or any of those other things. I'm here to tell you that it is extraordinarily important, at least to my constituents, that they will receive money to offset the problem of living in northern Ontario in terms of longer winters, shorter days, those sorts of things.

1800

I didn't mention some of the other things that impact here. The one that I think is interesting is the three-year northern industrial electricity rate program, which will average about \$150 million annually to provide electricity price rebates of two cents a kilowatt hour to qualifying large industrials. That would be mills—pulp and paper mills—mines, the major employers in many of our communities. They need to commit to an energy-efficiency and sustainability plan—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TOBACCO CONTROL

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-

Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Revenue concerning students using illicit tobacco. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has five minutes in which to state his case, and the parliamentary assistant or the minister has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Last week I asked the Premier about illegal tobacco. Mr. McGuinty deflected the question to the Minister of Revenue. I'm curious to see who will answer today. Hopefully, we will see a more fulsome answer than was received last Thursday. Since I addressed the question to the Premier, perhaps the minister was not paying attention and did not properly hear or was not prepared to respond to what I had asked.

Just to reiterate, Ontario's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has been surveying student drug use, the use of addictive substances, since 1968 and they report 60,000 students in Ontario now smoke contraband tobacco. As well, half the smokers in Ontario also smoke illegal tobacco.

Those 60,000 young people are now part of a criminal network that supplies cigarettes at something in the order of \$15 a carton as opposed to the regular price of somewhere between \$60 and \$80 a carton. This is unprecedented. Nowhere else in the world does this occur.

Surely members present would know and agree that smoke shacks and the business they are in are illegal, whether it's on public land or private land. I ask members, if you do agree, then I want to know here today why in my area alone there are at least three smoke shacks, out of several hundred smoke shacks, that sit on Ontario government land. This is adjacent to Caledonia.

As you drive south on provincial Highway 6, on the bypass, there is a large handmade sign that says, "Slow down." The first shack you come to sits right under a gigantic power tower on a Hydro One right of way. You come around to the bottom of Caledonia's main street, Argyle Street, and there's another smoke shack that sits on Ministry of Transportation property. Then farther down the road, on the west side, there is another smoke shack, again on the MTO right of way adjacent to Highway 6. It's known as the Hawk Shop. This particular smoke shack was the scene of an AK-47 shooting a couple of years ago, which I reported here in the Legislature, two fires and numerous confrontations.

That shooting was from a car sitting on provincial Highway 6. The smoke shack, sitting on MTO land, was shot up by a fellow wielding an AK-47. One fellow was badly injured in his arm. I just happened to be at a meeting at West Haldimand hospital when he was brought in. The shop itself was sprayed with bullets. There were a number of other people in the shop who were not injured. Just before the shooting at the smoke shack, the fellow with the AK-47 was down at Douglas Creek Estates right adjacent to Sacred Heart elementary school.

This government's Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the tobacco tax hikes have created, as I mentioned, several hundred smoke shacks in my area alone, primarily New Credit and Six Nations. Six Nations police and the local

newspaper cover this issue quite regularly and report on those who benefit—the Hell’s Angels for one, and other organized criminal groups.

I’ve raised this in the Legislature before. I quote from the Six Nations Tekawennake newspaper, “There is specific evidence of the presence of major motorcycle gang operations, the Italian mafia, Russian mafia, Sri Lankan and Asian mafias, as well as Jamaican drug gang operatives working in the relative safety of native communities.” Not good for the area.

It’s very difficult to believe that this government is taking any action at all on contraband when we see the numbers continuing to go up, certainly in the Niagara area and my area through to Brantford. The plan is not working, and obviously we need some new direction from this government. Losing control has had devastating effects not only on crime but on social and economic life, and my question is why? Why has this continued to be allowed to go on?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Parliamentary assistant, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Minister of Revenue, and I thank the member for raising this issue. It is a very important issue.

As you’re aware, our government takes the issue of contraband tobacco very seriously. It is something which needs to be dealt with. It’s an illegal activity which the government is constantly working towards curtailing. It’s a very complicated issue. As you are aware, we’re working very closely with the federal government, the First Nation leadership and numerous policing agencies at the federal, provincial and local levels to ensure that effective enforcement is taking place in order to undermine, to curtail the contraband tobacco business.

Most recently, the Ministry of Revenue, the RCMP and the OPP announced the resumption of Cornwall Regional Task Force, which is an excellent example of government and police forces working together to further strengthen tobacco enforcement. That’s very key, given the multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency aspect to this problem.

We’ve also enacted enhanced enforcement measures under the Tobacco Tax Act over the past five years. Just to mention changes that were brought in through the 2009 Ontario budget and the Tobacco Tax Act, some of the changes to enhance enforcement are as follows:

- enforcement provisions aimed at individuals where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that the individuals have contravened the act;

- authority for the court to suspend the driver’s licence of persons convicted of offences under the act involving the use of motor vehicles;

- provisions that prohibit the possession of any quantity of unmarked cigarettes, unless otherwise permitted in the Tobacco Tax Act;

- authority for the minister to apply for a court order to permit the retention of things seized that may afford evidence of a contravention of the act; and

- provisions that align certain penalties imposed upon persons convicted of offences under the act.

These are just the changes that were brought in in the 2009 budget.

As a result, convictions under the Tobacco Tax Act have more than tripled for the fiscal year 2007-08 to fiscal 2008-09 because of these steps. Combined seizures of illegal cigarettes by investigations have almost doubled, increasing by 47% in fiscal year 2008-09 compared with fiscal year 2007-08. Over the two years ending on February 20, 2010, about 74 million illegal cigarettes, 294,000 untaxed cigars and 32 million grams of fine-cut tobacco have been seized by ministry investigators and inspectors. Since March 2006, penalties assessed against those violating the Tobacco Tax Act total over \$14.2 million.

1810

As you can see, there’s a lot of emphasis on enforcement. The results are starting to appear. We are making sure that, through the work of various governments and law enforcement agencies, we are curtailing the trade in contraband tobacco.

The last point I want to raise is that there is expert opinion out there that just cutting the tobacco tax is not the answer, not the solution, to undermining contraband tobacco, and the focus has to be on enforcement. Michael Perley, for example, who is the director of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco—which includes the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Non-Smokers Rights Association, the Ontario Lung Association and the Ontario Medical Association—has stated quite clearly that cuts to tobacco taxes are not the answer. We need to continue to focus on enforcement, we need to continue to work with our aboriginal leadership, and we need to work with our federal government, the RCMP and the OPP to make sure that we are undermining this illegal trade in contraband tobacco.

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Newmarket–Aurora has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Children and Youth Services concerning speech-language therapy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I thank you for granting my request for this special debate on the state of speech-language pathology services in York region’s public and Catholic schools.

Since raising this issue in the Legislature last week, it has come to my attention that this is an issue right across the entire province, and therefore I believe that we can confidently conclude that the source of the problem is right here at Queen’s Park. This makes it all the more critical that the government and the minister responsible

are aware of this growing crisis and the consequences to thousands of children and their families.

It was in response to calls and emails from distraught parents that I asked the Central Community Care Access Centre to confirm the number of students on the wait-list for speech-language pathology services in York region and to provide me with an explanation as to why students are not being released from that wait-list. I also asked for the CCAC's plans for bringing those students into service.

In a letter dated April 16, the CCAC confirmed that 12 months ago there were 449 students on the wait-list for speech-language pathology services, and that today there are 1,023 children on that wait-list. The reason for the growing wait-list was not given, but the letter made it clear that it all comes down to the CCAC's funding agreement with the government.

I gave that information last week to the Premier here. At that time, I asked him this question, and I quote from Hansard: "Can the Premier tell us why more than 1,000 children in York region are being denied essential speech-language therapy and why their parents are being told they have to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment" for their children? That was my question.

The Premier referred the question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who proceeded to talk about preschool speech and language services rather than answer my question. It was apparent to everyone who listened to the minister that she was either uninformed or was intentionally deflecting the question.

It should have been clear to her by the very fact that I was referring to the wait-list administered by the CCAC that this had nothing to do with preschool children. The CCAC wait-list deals only with students ranging from ages five to 18, and it's that list that has almost tripled in the last 12 months.

I'm certain that even the minister has to admit, after reading her response in Hansard, that she missed the mark. So I want to give her this opportunity to speak to the issue that I raised with the Premier last week.

Again, there are more than 1,000 students in York region schools alone who are struggling with speech and language disorders. Without timely intervention and support, these students are at risk of increased severity of their difficulties, not to mention the impact on their academic achievement and social integration.

In addition to the appeals for help from parents, I have heard from teachers who see first-hand the impact on these students. I've heard from many speech-language pathologists who share the concern of parents and teachers that this wait-list continues to grow while their client list continues to dwindle. Here's what one speech language pathologist had to say: "I will have eight clients in my caseload this May compared to 25 clients that I had the same time last year. Many of my colleagues are in a similar predicament and are wondering why the referrals have suddenly stopped."

On behalf of students struggling with speech and language disorders, their parents, their teachers and

speech language pathologists, I ask the minister to answer the following questions: (1) Why has the wait-list for speech and language pathology services in York region grown from 449 a year ago to 1,023 today? (2) Why has the CCAC stopped referring children from that wait-list into therapy? (3) Why are parents being told that if they want timely treatment for their children, they should pay for private therapy? Finally, what will the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Education do to ensure that the more than 1,000 children on York region's wait-list will receive the speech and language pathology services they need?

I am disappointed that the minister herself is not here to respond. I will look forward to the parliamentary assistant at least addressing these questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Parliamentary assistant.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The member from Newmarket–Aurora has asked a question about the wait times in York region and speech-language pathology. I'm glad to have the opportunity to respond to this particular issue. I certainly agree with the member that early intervention is important when we are talking about our young children and the need to have speech therapy available to them.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services funds the preschool speech and language program in York, and that has increased, since 2003, by 78%. We spend \$2.4 million to support this important service, and 2,814 children are receiving services.

There is a number of programs across the province that offer speech-language pathology, and I would say that the member has mentioned the fact that he is more concerned about the speech pathology programs for school-aged children and how they are receiving programs and service through the school health support services. That is funded by the Ministry of Health.

School boards, as the member will know, are responsible for establishing the priority waiting lists for students who require speech and language supports. The Education Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code require that school boards provide special education programs and services to students with special education needs. Decisions regarding how to use special education funding to best provide supports for individual students are made by individual school boards with consideration of the parental preferences.

Some school boards have staff assigned to provide speech and language programs and services, while others contract with the community care access centres, CCACs, as the member has mentioned, to provide those services. These services can include assessment, direct therapy and consultation support for the classroom teachers. The contracting of this service is done through the school health support services program. CCACs have had an increase in spending on the school health services support program of over \$20 million, or nearly 42%, since 2003.

Our government is currently reviewing the school health support services program, looking at the mandate and delivery model funding and coordination, to ensure that it is working to serve the children as effectively as possible. This is a multi-ministry review, including the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, with the Ministry of Health as the lead. That review was begun in the fall of 2009 and we are anticipating a report by this summer.

It's also important to address the government's funding in York region. We have increased funding for many programs related to children and youth: a 56% increase in the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program in York region—and that is a \$4.2-million program that has allowed 9,000 new mums to be screened and over 1,800 mothers to receive home visits. We introduced the blind-low vision program, which invested over \$20,000 in York's children. Our infant hearing program has had a 45% increase since 2003. Our infant development program has received \$1.2 million in funding to serve 20 families in York region.

There are 12 agencies in York region providing services to children with mental health challenges, and we've provided them with \$41 million in yearly funding

so that these agencies can serve over 7,000 children and youth. The York region and Simcoe county children's treatment centre also received important services and funding this year. Last month, we announced that they will be receiving a \$1.16-million increase in their base funding to reduce the wait times for children with special needs.

There's no question, as we move forward, that the issues around providing for children and youth are critical. We have increased the dollar values and the funding that has gone to those agencies. We know there's still more to be done, and we are very much working to make sure that those children are served in the best and most efficient way possible. But what we need to do is make sure that we are getting the best service for the dollars spent on behalf of—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): No, there are no points of order on late shows.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1822.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

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

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, 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–Brook	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of 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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Taxation

Mr. Jim Brownell 1206
Hon. John Wilkinson..... 1207

Members' privileges

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1207

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Ms. Helena Jaczek..... 1207
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1207

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Douglas Craig Blake

Mr. Toby Barrett 1207

Dutch liberation anniversary

Mr. Reza Moridi..... 1208

Children's mental health

Mr. Peter Shurman 1208

Northumberland–Quinte West Day

Mr. Lou Rinaldi..... 1208

Community Living Day

Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... 1208

Natural resources

Mr. Gilles Bisson 1209

School facilities

Mr. David Oraziatti..... 1209

Linda Johnson

Mr. Jim Brownell 1209

Agri-food industry

Mr. Pat Hoy..... 1209

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1210

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Government Agencies

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1210
Report deemed adopted..... 1210

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Mr. Tim Hudak 1210
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1210

**Physical Fitness Day Act, 2010, Bill 49, Mr. O'Toole
/ Loi de 2010 sur la Journée de l'aptitude physique,
projet de loi 49, M. O'Toole**

First reading agreed to..... 1210
Mr. John O'Toole..... 1210

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Norm Miller..... 1210

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Pat Hoy..... 1211

Wind turbines

Mr. Ted Arnott 1211

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Lou Rinaldi..... 1211

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Ernie Hardeman..... 1211

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Michael A. Brown 1212

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Jim Wilson..... 1212

Climate change

Mr. Phil McNeely..... 1212

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1212

Mental health services

Mr. Bill Mauro 1212

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Bill Murdoch 1212

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Yasir Naqvi 1213

Ontario pharmacists

Mrs. Julia Munro 1213

Taxation

Mr. Jeff Leal..... 1213

Ontario pharmacists

Mr. Steve Clark 1213

Changement de climat

M. Phil McNeely..... 1213

Presentation of petitions

Mr. Peter Shurman 1214

Mr. Peter Kormos..... 1214

Mr. Peter Shurman 1214

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1214

Mr. John O'Toole..... 1215

Mr. John Yakabuski 1215

Mr. Peter Kormos..... 1215

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1216

Mr. Bill Murdoch 1216

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)..... 1216

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Lowering Energy Costs for Northern Ontarians Act, 2010, Bill 44, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur la réduction des coûts d'énergie pour les Ontariens du Nord, projet de loi 44, M. Duncan

Mr. Gilles Bisson	1216
Mr. Bill Mauro	1217
Mr. John O'Toole	1218
Mr. Peter Kormos	1218
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	1218
Mr. Gilles Bisson	1219
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	1219
Hon. Monique M. Smith.....	1221
Mr. Norm Miller	1222
Mr. Peter Kormos	1223
Mr. Jeff Leal	1223
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	1223
Hon. Monique M. Smith.....	1224
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1224
Mr. Peter Kormos	1227
Hon. Michael Gravelle.....	1227
Mr. John O'Toole	1227
Mr. Wayne Arthurs.....	1228
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	1228
Mr. Peter Kormos	1228
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1231
Mr. Steve Clark.....	1231
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	1232
Mr. John O'Toole	1232
Mr. Peter Kormos	1232
Mr. Michael A. Brown.....	1232
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	1234

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Tobacco control

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	1234
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	1235

Children's services

Mr. Frank Klees.....	1235
Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	1236

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 4 May 2010 / Mardi 4 mai 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, Bill 46, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2010 sur l'excellence des soins pour tous, projet de loi 46, Mme Matthews	
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1185
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1185
Mr. Steve Clark	1187
Mme France Gélinas	1187
Mr. Khalil Ramal	1187
Mr. John O'Toole	1187
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1188
Mrs. Christine Elliott	1188
Mme France Gélinas	1190
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	1190
Mr. Steve Clark	1190
Mr. Shafiq Qadri	1191
Mrs. Christine Elliott	1191
Mme France Gélinas	1191
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	1194

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten	1194
Mr. Ted McMeekin	1194
Mr. Paul Miller	1194
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1194
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	1195
Mr. Tony Ruprecht	1195
Mr. Rick Johnson	1195

Legislative pages

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1195
---------------------------------------	------

Members' privileges

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	1195
Mr. Norm Miller	1197
Mr. Peter Kormos	1197
Hon. Monique M. Smith	1197
Motion agreed to	1197

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Senior citizens

Mr. Tim Hudak	1197
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1197

Hydro rates

Mr. Tim Hudak	1198
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1198

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1199
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1199

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1200
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1200

Taxation

Mr. Garfield Dunlop	1200
Hon. John Wilkinson	1201

Correctional services

Mr. Peter Kormos	1201
Hon. Rick Bartolucci	1201

Public transit

Mr. Ted McMeekin	1201
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	1201

Pharmacists

Mr. John O'Toole	1202
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1202

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Michael Prue	1202
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	1203

Asthma treatment

Mr. Dave Levac	1203
Hon. Deborah Matthews	1203

Services for the developmentally disabled

Ms. Sylvia Jones	1204
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur	1204

Public transit

Ms. Andrea Horwath	1204
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	1204

Agri-food industry

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	1204
Hon. Carol Mitchell	1205

Conservation

Mr. Tim Hudak	1205
Hon. Brad Duguid	1205

Conservation

Mr. Paul Miller	1206
Hon. John Gerretsen	1206

Continued on inside back cover