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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 29 March 2011

Mardi 29 mars 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 29 March 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 29 mars 2011

The House met at 0900.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We will begin with the Lord's Prayer, and then the nondenominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ
ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2011, on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege to stand here and speak to this debate. I want to preface my remarks by an amazing event that I attended at the injured worker speaker school on March 22, because what was told to me that night by six very eloquent speakers speaks volumes to what this bill is about, or what this bill should contain and does not.

There were six speakers. They came from many lands, but they all suffered the same fate. They had been employed in factories, in hospitals and at hotels, and they found themselves without any protection under workers' compensation and with no protection with workplace health and safety.

The first speaker was named Flores. She gave an absolutely excellent account of the history of the WSIB and how it had failed her. She talked with great pathos. She talked about how, in the end, all of the money went to protect the employer and not the employee, and how she found herself destitute. She was a nurse and found herself destitute and today is living in poverty because

the employer did not protect her in the workplace and because there were inadequate health and safety protections for workers such as nurses.

The second speaker up was named Shu Fang Ren. He had a delightful sense of humour and he talked about the work that he was forced to do—very heavy menial work, pushing around huge bins—until his back gave out. At 56 years of age, it has been very difficult for him to get other jobs. The employer did not protect him in the workplace, and today, they send him off to school.

He told a very poignant and funny tale. Because he was a Chinese national—he's now a Canadian citizen—his English was not very good. After he hurt himself, the Workers' Compensation Board, or WSIB, said that they were going to send him back to school to improve his English so that he could get other work.

He started at grade 2 English. He studied for two months and had made it to grade 4 English, and really wanted to get grade 10 English so that he could apply for jobs that did not require heavy lifting for a man of 56 years of age with a bad back. When the school found out that that was the only requirement left, in one night he was magically awarded grade 12 English. He wondered how he was able to gain eight grades in a single night. He thought it was magic.

Heather stood up and she told a very good story about being a hotel employee at the Royal York Hotel. She was actually a singing waiter until she succumbed to mould. She collapsed on the floor, and it was later discovered that there was mould throughout her workplace and that she was so hypersensitive and allergic to mould she couldn't work there anymore. The hotel, of course, won't pay, and she is—again, just like all the others—left with no money, no career.

We had Basil, who commented that he had appeal after appeal. He was a new immigrant. He got a job, and he became permanently disabled. He's had depression and fear. He had a very good analogy called the luxury ship, and when he read his speech he talked about that. He hired a lawyer and has been fighting for five years for better health and safety. His life was shattered.

Amy Leung stood up. She too worked as a nurse, and she said that the WSIB was nothing more than a fantasy, because nobody was there to protect her health and safety, and none of the safeguards were available to her after she was injured. All they keep wanting her to do is return to work, which she simply cannot, given the circumstances of her life.

The last speaker was a gentleman named Negassy. He started out saying he was a very proud Canadian, but by the end of the speech one had to wonder why, given everything that had happened to him. He has gone to appeal after appeal on health and safety issues, and nothing has ever happened. He talked about having a bare cupboard, having to go down to the food bank. He talked about his children, who are now suffering because they're in high school and he can no longer afford to have them looked after, not having any monies coming in. He is an older worker—again, 56 years of age—and he talked poignantly about politicians and their failings, about how the bills that are put forward never seem to be enough.

I say all this because I don't think, for all the good intentions of this bill, that enough has been done. I want to echo what I heard on March 22 from six very good speakers who had something to tell us. I wish all members of the Legislature could hear that and see the real-life crises of people where the system has absolutely and totally failed them: people who expected health and safety protocols in their workplaces; people who expected to be protected; people who relied on the WSIB, only to be turned down, appeal after appeal; people who were sent for meaningless work training upgrades, knowing full well that they would never get jobs; people who magically, in one night, could get eight grades of English awarded to them simply because the WSIB wanted to wash their hands of them and their problems.

New Democrats feel that this bill does not go far enough. New Democrats feel that a whole bunch of things have to happen before this bill meets the conditions set out in the Dean report. This bill was a half-hearted attempt, as many Liberal bills are, to partially go towards what needs to be done. Every day I listen to the Premier and ministers saying, "This is a good first step." Everything is a first step. Nothing is ever doing what needs to be done to remedy the situation.

There are some amendments that need to be made to this bill before New Democrats would even consider supporting it; I have a whole list of them here. Firstly, we need to clearly articulate the powers of the chief prevention officer in the bill so that there is a clear accountability and authority to effectively lead and manage the prevention system.

0910

We need to require that the minister give the prevention council and the chief prevention officer 30 days' notice and reasons for any intent to change the delegated authorities.

We need to require the minister to consult with the chief prevention officer of intent to make a significant change to the prevention system, including exercising the minister's powers under sections 22.4, 22.5 and 22.6.

We need to include a statement similar to section 5 of the clean drinking water act to require the minister to consider recommendations of the chief prevention officer and the prevention council in exercising the minister's powers and duties.

We need to require that the prevention council shall be composed of an equal number of members representing employers and trade unions and restricting the number of other members appointed to the prevention council to no more than one third of the council's membership.

We need to include a statement in Bill 160, under the minister's duties, similar to the purpose section of WSIA that states that its purpose is to promote health and safety in workplaces and prevent and reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and disease.

We need to reduce the documentation that a co-chair of a joint health and safety committee must provide to an employer under subsection 7(1) of Bill 160 to make it less onerous on a co-chair to exercise this right.

We need to enable an inspector to be permitted to appear before the Ontario Labour Relations Board in situations where an inspector has direct evidence of an alleged reprisal on a worker.

We need to change the threshold to 50 employees for the Office of the Employer Adviser to provide support to small business in section 50 reprisals, rather than the 100 set out in Bill 160.

We need to make the wording in section 12 clearer. Some stakeholders have commented that stating that "a failure to comply with a code of practice is not a breach of the legal requirement" does not make it clear that there is an opportunity to consider other practices instead of the code. Those are just some of the things that need to happen.

New Democrats hope that this bill will be strengthened. It is now, at most, a half-hearted measure to meet some of the needs of employees halfway, while at the same time, of course, protecting employers. We believe that the employees need far greater protection. Those people who stood up and poured out their hearts at the injured workers' speaking school need to be heard, and they need to be heard with a better bill.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was listening to the member from Beaches—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: East York.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Beaches—East York; thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's the riding right next to yours.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I know. I keep wanting to say "Beaches." Beaches—East York.

I know his stories about the vulnerability of workers are shared amongst all three parties. Many other previous speakers on this bill have brought up similar stories about vulnerable workers or workers who are not getting enough training or protection at their workplace.

The new bill that's being proposed here, Bill 160, does create, as was pointed out earlier, a chief prevention officer, but it's also important to understand that that officer has a prevention council made up of three different groups: labour, employers and safety experts. All those people will work together and provide advice to the chief prevention officer, who will then provide advice to the

minister. I think this is all based on the Tony Dean report, which was prepared over the past several months. As a result, this bill has come forward.

It's quite evident in the bill that we're here to protect workers and we're providing extra enhancements to the workplace environment, especially for health and safety issues. That's why this bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act more than any other bill has done in the past 30 years. Of course, the other bill that's being amended is the WSIA, and those changes, I think, are quite significant in making sure that workers are protected.

I look forward to this going to committee and further debate on this very important bill.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to provide a couple of comments on the speech from the member for Beaches–East York.

I appreciate also the comment just made by the member for Scarborough Southwest about committees, because I've received a number of emails already about this bill going to committee. Unfortunately, the emails that I've received haven't really flushed out the concerns or the questions of some of the constituents, but I know that this bill has a tremendous amount of interest. I know that many support the intent of the bill, and I appreciate the speech that the member for Beaches–East York made.

However, I know that there is some concern about the creation of a new bureaucracy, a new agency. I know that there are many concerns about creating a new level of bureaucratic committee that would deal with it, but I think, from our perspective, many on our benches on this side support the intent of the motion. I know that occupational health and safety is a very important aspect.

I learned a lot, both from the workers' side and from the management side, in my years in the newspaper industry. That was my first opportunity to be on a committee and to chair, and I know how much education is key to coordinating employees and management on occupational health and safety. In those years that I had in that local industrial setting I learned a lot, and I was given the opportunity to take courses and understand how to operate and manage in a safe workplace.

So I appreciate some of the concerns that Mr. Prue has brought forward and I look forward to hearing from those constituents who are emailing me, when Bill 160 gets to committee.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Beaches–East York for his comments. In this portfolio, I certainly am not happy with some of the parts of this bill that are weak, to say the least. Once again, we're putting half-measures forward and we're not dealing with it properly.

We've had lots of concerns from safety groups throughout the province about many aspects. Two of the most important aspects that I'm concerned about are that

it's giving the ministry too much power and, also, it does not allow ministry inspectors the power to investigate alleged reprisals, to reinstate workers and to order back pay and damages, and also fine the companies on the spot. That's an important part of this function, because I know, when I was in industry, that lots of times the ministry would order a company to fix a particular piece of equipment within a certain period of time. The company would drag its feet. The inspector wouldn't get around to the company for three or four months, and then an individual worker would be injured or killed, even though the order had been in place. The company would get a slap on the hand and a "You shouldn't have done that," instead of serious fines and reprisals from the ministry for their lack of initiative and lack of following the orders given.

So I believe that an inspector who is designated by the ministry to carry out the rules of the ministry should have the ability to fine and shut down equipment and places of work if they haven't complied with the orders that he has issued. That's where we lack. I've seen it many times over the years where people have been injured unnecessarily because of lack of attention and lack of enforcement, and that has to be changed.

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

Mr. Pat Hoy: I rise to make some comments on Bill 160, which is actually the Occupational Health and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act. We have been debating this for some time now in the House, and I think there have been some very reasoned comments made to the bill. I suspect that this bill, like most of our government bills, will go to committee and there will be more conversation, at least, about this bill. Perhaps there will be some amendments; one never knows about that, but the committee will do its work in that regard.

Of course, this bill and the proposed amendments are flowing from the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety, which has been mentioned by others, and the fact that it was chaired by Tony Dean and was composed of representatives of labour, employers and academia. We need to thank them for their fine work in putting forth their efforts into finding solutions.

0920

The expert panel consulted extensively across Ontario. They didn't work within a vacuum; they went out and heard from other people. They received 400 responses from employer and worker groups and held 50 meetings across the province. We need to thank all those people for their fine work and for bringing forth something that the government could put into place, as we are debating here today.

We're moving forward with the changes to our health and safety system that will make workplaces safer for all our workers here in Ontario and ensure that they come home safe each and every day. Employees would have enhanced safety training and a more effective reprisal complaint process. I think that's very important in a

modern world, where they have at least that safeguard. There are many more mentioned throughout the bill that would assist people, help save lives and prevent injury among Ontarians.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Scarborough Southwest, Leeds–Grenville, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Chatham–Kent–Essex for their fine comments.

The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex made a very good statement about the Tony Dean report and all the work that went into that report, from employers and from labour and from people who have been injured—all the deputations. All we are saying in the NDP caucus is, please implement all of the recommendations. The failure of this bill is not because the bill is doing nothing; it is taking little tiny steps. But the Dean report quite clearly set out things that are not contained within the body of this bill, and for the fine work they've done, all of the recommendations should be contained within the four walls of the bill.

The member from Scarborough Southwest: I know he's the PA and he has to defend the bill, but he did say something very important, and that is that the government is looking forward to committee and possible amendments. We can only hope that the amendments that we are suggesting might strengthen the bill and that it might be made good for all people.

The member from Leeds–Grenville talked about emails and changes to the bill that are coming now into his office. I think it's quite clear that all MPPs are getting these kinds of emails and people saying, "Well, look: I'm looking at this bill and it can be better." We are here to say that it can be made better, and in our view, it must be made better before we can support it at third reading.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek talked about it being a weak bill and about the lack of reprisal powers, and I think this is key to the bill. If a worker is going to endure a reprisal from an employer for taking up the cudgel and fighting for himself or herself and fellow employees, then I think we need to protect them. The bill needs to have that insurance that anyone who stands up for their rights will not be subject to dismissal.

I thank the members for their comments.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Let's face it: To put it simply, it's not a safe place to work in Ontario, anywhere. Under the current system—and to give a backdrop to Bill 160—this is a Legislature, a government, under McGuinty which has just taken away the right to strike. The very basic right of any worker is to withhold their labour. The very basic right of a worker is to withhold their labour under dangerous or threatening circumstances. We've just taken it away, in this Legislature, from a whole body of workers who work for the transit union. That's the backdrop.

Another backdrop to this bill is the fact that we refuse to pass anti-scab legislation in this House. Again, the

very basis for occupational safety is threatened when you have scab labour brought in during a strike. This is a government that refuses to pass anti-scab legislation. This is a government that refuses, except in some instances, to pass card-check certification, which would allow the extension of unionization to workers who aren't unionized. We should all know that the real protection for any worker in the workplace comes from collective bargaining; it comes from a union that backs you up. This is a government that refused that.

This is a government that puts itself in the role of a kind of ambulance chaser: When something horrific happens, like migrant workers falling off scaffolds or Lori Dupont getting killed in her workplace, then and only then do they act, and they act with something as small and tepid as Bill 160, which really won't save any lives. Because that's what we're talking about here this morning: saving lives of workers. To do so, you don't react after the fact. You actually act to prevent deaths and injuries in the first place, and this bill won't do that. In essence, that's why we in the New Democratic Party have problems with this bill. It won't save lives. It won't prevent injuries. This bill won't do that. My colleague from Beaches–East York was absolutely correct when he talked about the Dean report and its recommendations. At the very least, this government should adopt those recommendations—at the very least.

I have a motion on the order paper calling for a 25%, one-time inspection rate for all places of employment. We don't have adequate inspection in this province for employment standards or for occupational health and safety. We simply don't have it; it does not exist. Only one in 100 places of employment will ever see an inspector from the Ministry of Labour.

I'm not alone. I know that many members of provincial Parliament here have stories from their constituency offices of folk who come in and talk about the very basic employment standards being breached, the very basic occupational health and safety standards being breached in places of employment, and employees virtually helpless to do anything about it. Why? Because they'll lose their jobs. Dangerous though they maybe, illegal though they might be, they'll lose their jobs. They have to work to feed themselves and to pay the rent.

There's nothing we're doing here that is going to prevent that from happening, that is going to protect them. I certainly have had many, particularly from racialized communities, who've come into my office, who talk about employers who don't pay minimum wage, employers who force them to work on construction sites without the basic safety implementations. When I say, "Can we complain on your behalf to the Ministry of Labour?", they say, "No, no, no. Please don't. I'll lose my job and I also might lose my status," if they happen to be illegal. "I also might lose my status."

This bill doesn't help them, doesn't address them. It doesn't protect the whistleblowers who want to come forward, who want to complain, but who need a job. It doesn't protect them. It doesn't enforce the very basic

standards in a way that makes employers sit up and listen. You've got to have adequate enforcement if you're going to actually have laws that work. This bill doesn't address adequate enforcement. My colleague from Hamilton–Stoney Creek talked about the politicization in this bill of roles that shouldn't be politicized, that shouldn't come under the ministry, that should have some arm's length from the ministry. That's also in this bill. That's a negative.

Another bill that's before this House is around post-traumatic stress disorder. There's a whole series of injuries, if you will, that aren't covered at all for our front-line workers, those whom we send into something approximating battle from time to time. Paramedics, police, firefighters who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder are not covered. There's no presumed diagnosis for any of that. That's not covered.

Home care workers and migrant workers who are forbidden to unionize—nothing addressing that. That puts them at incredible risk. Home care workers who work on their own in a home, surrounded by employers—frightened to call. We've dealt with this in many ways in this House, but we haven't dealt with it, because they're still out there. They're still working. They're still unsafe. They still can't unionize. This bill doesn't address that either.

What would we in the New Democratic Party like to see in terms of workplace safety in the province of Ontario? First of all, we'd like to see some. This bill doesn't give us some. It doesn't give us external enforcement; it doesn't provide internal enforcement. I addressed that with the whistleblower aspect. It doesn't enforce and strengthen the reprisal provisions of the OHSA. It doesn't improve and extend health and safety training in a way that's meaningful. It doesn't increase health and safety support and resources for workers. It doesn't provide a regular review of health and safety systems legislation and regulations. So the very question is, what does this bill do? What does Bill 160 do?

I'll tell you what it does. It's a public relations gesture on behalf of the McGuinty Liberals. That's what it is. It's a public relations gesture, like so many of the bills we see in this place; a kind of nod that, "Oh, there's a problem, and yes, there should be some solution." But it's not the solution. It's not the Dean report recommendations put into law. That's not what we have in front of us. That's what we hoped to have in front of us, at the very least. That's not what we have in front of us.

0930

We have a public relations gesture that actually could be more dangerous than it is helpful. That's what we have in Bill 160, and it's severely disappointing. It's beyond disappointing, because we're talking about lives at risk here. Those same lives that were at risk before this bill was penned are still at risk: that's what the viewers at home need to know. This does not change that. This does not help them. This would not prevent the deaths that we've seen in Ontario. This would not come close. In a sense, it's simply a nod, as I say, in a kind of ambulance-

chasing way, that after the fact we should appear to be doing something.

In a very real way, Bill 160 is an insult to the families of those victims, the families of those injured workers who need this government to act; who need somebody to take their side, because right now their situation is as precarious as it can be.

My colleague from Beaches–East York went through the recommendations that we've heard from our labour friends to amend Bill 160. Certainly, when it comes to the committee stage, you will find New Democrats there arguing for those amendments. But it's a very sad day when, really, a bill on such an important topic, the very lives and limbs of our workers in the province of Ontario, is put forward in such a callous way, in a way that says, "We want to appear to do something, but we won't really do anything."

I think New Democrats, and the public in Ontario, quite frankly, have long lost patience with such moves by government. The public in Ontario would really like to see action to prevent the kinds of deaths we've witnessed in the time that we've sat here during this Parliament. They'd really like to see actions to prevent the kinds of deaths that we read about: the Lori Duponts, the migrant workers, the nannies. This bill does none of that.

In short, we look forward to the committee, where we will, again, push for amendments; push for amendments, I must say, without a great deal of hope for getting them.

This is, in fact, a historic opportunity lost. This is a historic opportunity lost to prevent the deaths that will most certainly occur in the future because of the lack of any kind of real legislative push in this bill, Bill 160. In a very real way, it's worse than doing nothing. It appears to do something when we need dramatic action.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park.

We're all concerned about labour. We're all concerned about what's going on outside in the workplace. Although we can say that this is a knee-jerk reaction, this is, I would argue, an evolutionary change in workplace culture. Mr. Tony Dean, in his report, mentions that there is a culture out there that needs to be changed and provides recommendations. Those recommendations can be debated as to how important or not important they are, but I would argue that they are important in the fact that they create a chief prevention officer and a chief prevention council. As I was mentioning earlier, the council will provide advice to the prevention officer, who then will provide that advice to the minister, and the minister will have to be accountable to this House. If the opposition asks questions about what is happening out there in the labour world, the minister is accountable for that.

There's lots of criticism about the bill. The bottom line is, this is a system integration. We have two major pieces of legislation that are out there, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and an act that governs the WSIB, and they're kind of working on their own. What this bill does

is, it brings them together to work together and have everything reported through the chief prevention officer and the council. It's a substantial change, I would argue, to the present system that we have right now. System integration is the key to making this transition to a whole new system.

This is why this bill is not an end; this bill is a beginning. There will be further consultation. I'm sure that the chief prevention officer, with his council, will provide further information to the Minister of Labour, and that will cause more debate in the future.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Parkdale–High Park always brings insight and passion to debates on almost all bills, and there's no exception in Bill 160.

We're of the view that the tragedy back in 2009—certainly the government's response has been to bring in, if you will, the armaments of a government that's trying to do something. In fact, if you really look at it, in fairness, there were already rules in workplace safety that could have intervened and been responded to more quickly and appropriately for these families who have now been altered by an accident by perhaps unscrupulous operators. I don't think this bill will ever change that. It drives things underground.

Now they have created another level of bureaucracy, which is more red tape, sort of like the Ontario Power Authority: another level that will bring in some highly paid experts. I admire and appreciate the work done by Tony Dean, former assistant Deputy Minister of Labour when Elizabeth Witmer was minister, I believe, and his experience as secretary to cabinet. He prepared a report with the best of intentions, with some well-known experts.

I'm curious about this role of the chief prevention officer. I understand from the bill that there are some provisions that there will be some outlined duties to investigate, but it actually removes some of the powers under the current provision and uploads them, if you will, or downloads them to the chief prevention officer. This would be in consultation, I hope, with the WSIB, which is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Here again we have another solution to a problem that is to build up more bureaucracy. Really, those families and those workers still remain exposed, in my view.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Parkdale–High Park. She hit on some very important parts and some aspects of this bill that are not covering the needs of the workers of this province. We in the NDP are certainly not happy with a lot of the content of this bill. We think the bill has simply been put forward to appease certain friends of the governing body, and I really don't think that's the way you should go about this.

The member from Scarborough Southwest says that it's a good start, and it's moving in the right direction. Listen, I've been in industry myself for over 35 years.

Why are we starting now? If we're going to do it, why aren't we going to do it right? Don't piecemeal it. This is not new knowledge, that people get injured at work; it's not new that people get killed on the job.

If you're going to do a bill that covers health and safety, do it right, and make sure that the inspectors have the power to follow the ministry's guidelines and follow their rules so that they can go into the workplace and fine the company—and not just a little tap on the wrist. If they don't follow the orders of the inspector, if they fall short and someone gets injured between the time the inspector had been there until the implementation of what they should have done, then they should be hit hard. The only way you're going to get the attention of business and companies in this province is to hit them hard if they don't follow safety to protect the people who work in their facilities, because they have to go home to their families and be safe. That's critical.

Everyone talks about safety; everyone talks about wanting the same thing, but if you don't enforce it, they're not going to take you seriously. They haven't for the last 85 or 90 years in this province because you don't do anything. You talk a good game, but nothing happens.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to speak this morning as both an employer and an employee with union staff and non-union staff and to represent all sides. My company is now run by one of my family members, but over 50 years, I've certainly seen more than my fair share of safety concerns and the dos and don'ts of what should be done for the safety of our staff and the safety of all employees.

0940

It's ironic; one of the first comments I noticed on this was that we're here to make sure that workers come home from the jobsite at the end of the day. That was pretty much always our theory. We worked with people. We found that there were errors on both sides. As an employer, you have to take responsibility for some of those errors. Some of your employees can do little safety things, like take a guard off a machine. It might be regulated that the guard should be on the machine, but with this Bill 160, there's more strength and more enforcement in some of these items which escape us.

If you happen to take a guard off a machine and wrap a typical work rag around your fingers for convenience, in case you have to wash down a press plate or some such thing, the first thing you know, that rag could catch in the tip of a gear, pull the rag and pull your whole hand into the gear.

There's a multitude of things that we used to do on a monthly basis to provide safety and, again, I tell you that I really think the transfer of prevention responsibilities from the WSIB to labour is a very positive item. I'm positive that this is going to make a great deal of difference, and I fully add my support to Bill 160.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To put it succinctly, here's what this bill does not do: It does not adequately allow inspection that's meaningful of enough workplaces; it does not allow meaningful enforcement; it does not allow, truly, the right to refuse unsafe work; it certainly doesn't do anything—and neither does this government—to increase real protection for workers, which is increased unionization.

This is a government, remember, that doesn't support anti-scab legislation, that doesn't support card-check certification for everyone and, in fact, took away the very right to withdraw labour from a whole group of labourers who work for the transit union. So this government is not pro-union; it's anti-union. That is the most dangerous reality for workers.

Finally, what we've got in the bill is a public relations gesture that seems to do something about the Dean report recommendations but actually doesn't. Our labour allies and friends have said it very succinctly. They've said, "Kill a worker, go to jail." There's nothing in this legislation that says that. There's nothing in the legislation that says that if you kill a worker you should go to jail. In fact, what this legislation really says is, "Kill a worker, be subject to a review and maybe a fine."

If you're a worker in the province of Ontario, watch out. If you are the family of workers in Ontario, watch out. You're not safe. You weren't safe before Bill 160, and guess what? You're not safe after Bill 160, either.

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

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be a deferred vote until after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER
REGISTRY) AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT
LA LOI CHRISTOPHER
SUR LE REGISTRE
DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 28, 2011, on a motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It came as a little surprise; I didn't realize the government was going to call this bill this

morning. I didn't come here with my notes, so I'm going to have to wing it.

I had an opportunity yesterday to be in the House when the member from Welland stood up, and he spoke quite brilliantly and quite passionately for an hour of the many things that were wrong with the bill. One of the things that he said which struck me and which I think bears repeating is that there is no provision in the bill that will allow for people who are minors at the time of committing serious sexual offences to be included in the registry. The member from Welland put it quite rightly: A person who is 17½ years old who commits a sexual assault on another person would be protected under the law and could not be included in the registry.

I do know, and I will say quite publicly, that I support the Young Offenders Act—and I know many people in this country do not—because we need to protect the overwhelming majority of young offenders from having criminal records and from going through the same justice system as adults because, by and large, most of the offences committed by young people are not hugely serious offences. They can be things like shoplifting. They can be things where young people get in trouble, maybe possession of marijuana; the kinds of things that one can expect in a young group of people who have not matured yet. I know that oftentimes, when you read in the newspaper all those clarion calls saying that we have to get tougher on youth offenders, I sometimes wonder whether this is well placed.

But I do have to tell you: If you get a violent youth offender who commits sexual assaults, I do not believe that there should be any freedom to exclude them from the list, because if you're going to commit that kind of crime at 17½, there is every reasonable possibility that you're going to commit it again at 18½. We need to look to that, the same way as my colleague from Welland said, and just wonder whether or not the correct decision has been made here.

He went on and talked about some other things in Christopher's Law. Quite frankly, the main point I wanted to make was that simple one right there. I wanted to make the point that I can support this bill, because I think we need to upgrade the list. We need to make sure that police have every opportunity to look at the list. But we also need to make sure that every single person who deserves to be on that list is contained within the body.

I think that's probably all of the 20 minutes that I need. I just wanted to make that point for the record. I hope that when this goes to committee, the members opposite will take a very good, hard look at it.

I am mindful of the constitutional argument and the whole thing around young offenders. I am very mindful of that, but I also think that the protection of our most vulnerable people, our children and women in this province, needs to be safeguarded. Whatever we can do together in a non-partisan way to do that is, of course, important.

I look forward to this going to committee. I look forward to some considerable debate and input from all

sectors of society. We need to strengthen this bill and make it even stronger than it is now.

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

Mr. David Zimmer: We've had debate about a lot of the details of the bill, but I just wanted to lay out three points which really cover the rationale for the bill; the context of the bill, if you will.

As you know—and I think I've made the point earlier in my remarks—there is a federal piece of legislation dealing with this issue of sex offenders and their names going into a registry. There is an Ontario piece of legislation that covers the business of sex offenders and how they should be placed into a registry and the various rules surrounding that. That's known colloquially by the acronym of Christopher's Law, which was legislation where Ontario was at the very cutting edge of social policy in dealing with the whole question of sex offenders. The two pieces of legislation require a registration under the federal legislation, and also a registration under the provincial piece of legislation. In examining the two pieces of legislation, federal and provincial, it became apparent that there were some inconsistencies—perhaps that's too strong a word, but some differences.

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We decided as a government that we really wanted to reconcile those two pieces of legislation for this purpose, to make sure that someone who should fairly and legitimately be in the registry is in the registry, and that nobody slips between the cracks. That's why we've introduced this legislation: to bring the two pieces, the federal and the provincial legislation, in sync. As the debate continues, we'll look into that.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I look forward to a few minutes to speak to this bill myself, but suffice it to say that the New Democrats have long been supporters of a sex offender registry, period. The comments that I'll be making when it's my turn to speak—and I commend my colleague from Beaches–East York for saying what he has about the minors in this bill, and that, perhaps, is a loophole. We look forward to going to committee to strengthen the bill, not weaken it.

There are other aspects, too. We're dealing with some of the most horrendous crimes that humans can commit against humans—that of adults against children. I certainly live in a riding where this has been an issue. Maria Jones, the mother of Holly Jones—and I'm going to talk a bit about her—is in my riding and has made moves. Holly's law, which again is a motion on the order paper, attempts to deal with the prevention side of this because, as we know, most attacks upon children are not from a stranger. It's not “stranger danger”; it's family danger. So I'll talk about that.

I'll also talk about the horrendous statistics that if a child is abducted, the police have about an hour to catch the offender. About 40% of children or more are dead within the hour, and about 91% within 24 hours. We

need to be able to give our police the tools. You can imagine the pressure upon them to find the perpetrator, and fast. We need to give them the tools they need.

So in what other ways can we strengthen the registry and the information it provides to actually do the job that it needs to do, so that police can catch the perpetrator, save the life of a child and do it quickly? That's the point of the sex offender registry.

How can we strengthen it? That's what I'll address in my few minutes, and kudos again to the member from Beaches–East York, especially for pointing out the problem, the loophole, around minors.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to this bill which is before us today, Bill 163, to amend Christopher's Law.

Our government has proposed technical changes to the sex offender registry that, if passed, would align the provincial registry with recent changes to the federal government's national registry. We've proposed a number of amendments in the following areas for reporting obligations, which enable the province to require sex offenders to report within seven days instead of the current 15. In addition, offenders convicted outside of Canada would have to report, and the addition of sex offenders pardoned under the Criminal Records Act—prior to the proposed amendments coming forward.

To date, the Ontario sex offender registry has proven to be extremely effective. Our compliance rate is over 97%, which is the highest compliance rate of all sex offender registries in operation, including registries in the United States. One of the key points is that the Ontario sex offender registry is accessed by Ontario police services more than 745 times every day, on average. Of course, since 2003, overall crime in Ontario has declined by 17%, which is a surprising statistic, because other parties are always talking about crime punishment and building new jails, when we've actually seen the rate drop.

Even with the changes to the national sex offender registry, our provincial sex offender registry is superior in a number of respects. The national registry only provides access to the OPP, while the Ontario registry is open and accessible to all police services in the province, which provides much greater coverage and greater safety for the residents of Ontario.

I think it's a good move, and I look forward to hearing the remainder of the debate.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to focus on one aspect of this particular proposal, and that is to allow information to be shared between both the Ontario registry and the national registry to support local crime investigations and to help police services better protect their communities. While it's a phrase that you can say very quickly, the benefit is in the details and in making a clear interface between a national database and a provincial database.

Believe it or not, there are often legal silos that force the databases to essentially be islands of information. You ask yourself, how come you can't access information that's simply stored in another database? Very often the reason for that has to do with out-of-date regulations. So among the changes proposed in this particular law, Christopher's Law, are going to be regulations that allow the two databases to talk to one another so that information that's already entered at one level or the other can be quickly, efficiently shared between the national database and the provincial database. While that's just an afterthought in the bill or a small mention in the bill, it's perhaps one of the greatest benefits that the bill is going to confer on police forces and communities by assisting them to not have to reinvent the wheel, not have to re-key the data, and to be able to access the information that already exists and use it immediately.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Willowdale, Parkdale–High Park, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Mississauga–Streetsville for their instructive comments.

I did now get a quote that I wanted to use in my speech which I didn't have. I think it's really important if we look back to what the Auditor General had to say on this very issue. In 2007 the Auditor General looked at Ontario's sex registry program. On page 272 of this report he notes, "Even though sex offender registries have existed for many years and can consume significant public resources, we found surprisingly little evidence that demonstrates their effectiveness in actually reducing sexual crimes or helping investigators solve them, and few attempts to demonstrate such effectiveness."

I think this is important because this is what this bill is attempting to do. As you have heard from the member from Parkdale–High Park, as I heard yesterday in debate as well, more than 40% of victims are dead within an hour and 91% are dead within 24 hours unless the police can find them. We need to give every single tool available to police officers to try to find predominantly children but also women before they are dead. If that tramples on a few sensibilities, then indeed it must do so. I think that when this goes to committee, all of us need to take a deep hard look in our souls to determine whether or not we are going to give the kind of tools that are necessary, including expansion to include young offenders who have committed violent sexual crimes in the past, so that the police have every opportunity to save a life.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to rise because it gives me an opportunity to speak not only about the sex offender registry but about something far more important, I think, in terms of the safety of our children, and that is what we could be doing in this Legislature in terms of prevention of sexual abuse of our children.

In my riding I've had two instances which were horrific. One, we all recall Katelynn Sampson, the little girl who was found. Even seasoned police officers were horrified by the scene when they found her. She was looked after by so-called guardians. Again, there was a move to tighten up the system of guardianship around that.

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Particularly to those of us who knew her mother—and we know her mother, Bernice—and to others in the community who knew this little girl, and to the principals and teachers and students in her school who were all traumatized by this, what was critical is to say: What could have been done to prevent it? In a sense, when you've gone an hour or 24 hours, even with a sex registry to find the perpetrator, that's not the answer; it can never really be the answer. We need to do more to prevent it from happening in the first place.

With Katelynn's death, there were steps that could have been taken. There were problems we could have addressed that might have resulted in that little girl being alive. One of the ways in which we could have prevented that death was to actually have a fully funded public school system. That sounds strange. But here's why: The principal, who was often blamed by the media and reporters—"Here was a little girl absent from school for many months. Didn't you do anything?"—said to me, "We did all that was within our tool kit to do. We phoned. We were told that she was back home on the reservation—she was a First Nations child. We phoned and were told that she was with legal guardians in another jurisdiction. We couldn't do more than that. We don't have the resources to do more than that, even if we suspect."

There was a day, if we remember, when there were truancy officers. There was a day when social workers would be sent out to investigate. They didn't have those resources. They don't have those funds. Those jobs have been cut out of our public school system. That's sad. That's prevention.

On the order paper, we have Holly's law. Holly's law, to put it simply, is something that has been asked for by Maria Jones—again, a very well-publicized case.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. I'd ask the members to either pay attention to what is being said in the chamber or take their conversations outside.

You may continue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's sad when we don't want to focus on an issue of such import.

Maria Jones is a phenomenal woman. Again, a horrific crime, if we remember the death of Holly Jones, a death that in many ways could—perhaps the police could have been helped by a sex registry; perhaps not. What has she done in the aftermath of this horror? She has become extremely proactive about preventing child sexual abuse. She knows, and so do her supporters—I count myself as

one of them—that the vast majority of child sexual abuse does not happen by a stranger. It's not stranger danger; it happens in the home by people the child knows, so, to address that, she has asked that teachers have materials available in the classroom that would help them help children disclose what's happening in their lives. There are phenomenal programs—I can think of one obvious system called Boost, but there are others—to make those materials available to teachers. We've talked to teachers' unions, and we've now, through the Ministry of Education, made those materials available. Certainly, if anybody is watching who has any chance of speaking to teachers or school boards, please recommend that they look at these materials. They are now available. We worked and Maria Jones worked to get them available for teachers. Use them, because they will allow children to actually talk about what's happening in their lives. That's what teachers need to be able to intervene and to find out. Again, this is a survivor of a horror who has tried to do something to prevent another child from being hurt. Let's use those materials and let's promote them.

I also want to thank many in my riding and across the province of Ontario who take part in circles of support. For those who don't know what circles of support are, they were started by the Mennonites, people who have worked in other areas of disease and war to bring about change. Here they're working around sexual abuse. The Mennonite circles of support are set up for those abusers who have served their full time and are released. What they do—it's voluntary; the abuser has to agree to be part of it—is gather a group of volunteers who literally monitor this person. Again, it's voluntary, but the work is profound. They monitor the person, and the person meets with the circle of support. They assist with housing and job creation, but most importantly, monitor them. Day in, day out, these meetings are required. Again, kudos to the Mennonite circles of support. For those who have them in their ridings or don't know if they have them in their ridings, find out. Because if you do, you'll discover a group of amazing people who are doing profound work and, again, preventing the horrors from happening, preventing abuse from happening.

To get back to the sex registry, though, you've heard my colleague from Beaches—East York talk about the oversight of the 17½-year-old who might be an offender. There's also the oversight of those who aren't on the registry; that's a concern for New Democrats. Those who don't voluntarily come forward and put themselves on the registry are classically the ones most likely to re-offend. So we need to close that loophole; we need to make sure that all of those who have been convicted at any time of sexual abuse be on that registry.

We also need to do studies around the efficacy of the sex registry, because to my understanding, to my knowledge, those studies have not been done. Are they working? We've heard some evidence that they seem not to be working. Why aren't they working and how can we make them work better?

One of the obvious ways—and certainly when you talk to members of the circles of support, people like Maria Jones or the mother of Katelynn Sampson, they're quite horrified to discover there's not a kind of specific information included in the sex registry. That is to say, what was this person convicted of? What is their proclivity? Are they pedophiles? Is it young boys that are at risk when this person is out? Is it young girls? What really is the situation with this person? Again, when you're thinking of that critical 24-hour period when a child goes missing who's abducted, children like Christopher Stephenson who inspired this bill and others, we heard that within the first hour almost half of them are dead. Within 24 hours, 91% of them are dead. It's a critical period.

So if the sex registry is going to help our police—and God bless our police. Imagine being a police person who's in that situation with the pressure on, knowing that you've got at most a day to save the life of a child. Imagine being that officer. We want to be able to provide that officer with as many tools as possible, and if the sex registry is just a compilation of names without detailed information that can help them truly identify a possible perpetrator, then maybe it's not as useful as it should be. Again, how can we strengthen this?

My colleague here just passed me something to say that sex registries are not new. No, they're not. In fact, anybody who's interested in LGBT rights should know that in the 1940s in California the sex registries were used to target homosexual persons. This moniker followed them throughout their lives until the cultural climate and the laws changed around the issue of homosexuality. So they don't have a particularly auspicious beginning in North America. That's something that one might want to look at as well.

Ultimately, what we should be about, and I believe what we all are about, is the protection of our children. There, the sex registry is only a small component part. It's an important one, it's one that we think should be strengthened, but it's not the be-all and end-all. What we need to be looking at are the prevention angles, to prevent what is the most common form of child sexual abuse, which is that which happens in the home.

Again, kudos to Maria Jones. Kudos to the Mennonite circles of support, who do what they can. Kudos to those who have been supportive of Bernice Sampson, whom I see regularly these days, and to all of those who suffered the death of Katelynn Sampson in my riding and who call on the government to put the money back into public education that needs to be there to protect children in the future, to follow up on children who go missing, to knock on the doors of children's homes where they suspect a problem lies. That's what we need.

Let's face it: If we had more child care in the province, that's a first line of support for children who may be at risk. These are adults whose other eyes on children at risk might help prevent a tragedy.

So let's look at prevention; let's strengthen the loopholes in this act itself, which I'm sure we will do at com-

mittee through the able person of our justice critic from Welland; and let's certainly make ourselves individually aware of what's happening in our own ridings in terms of what we can do as representatives to protect our children.

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

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Mr. David Zimmer: I did want to address a question that has come up, and that is, why will the public not have direct access to the registry? The policy position there is that first of all, in Ontario, we've got one of the highest compliance rates among the jurisdictions that have this kind of legislation; it's 97%. Secondly, the police and the investigating authorities have immediate access to the registry.

The best advice that we get from people who are following these issues is that if the public has direct access to the registry, it does create, in the minds of the people who should be registering in the registry—the sex offenders—a fear that they will be, if you will, targeted on the streets or subject to vigilantism and so on. There is some evidence in other jurisdictions that indeed this is the case. The further evidence is that if the person who should register knows that the only people who have access to that registry are the police and investigating officials, they're more likely to voluntarily comply. That certainly has been the experience here in Ontario, where the compliance rate is 97%. If the idea is to get these people into the registry, we do not want to do anything to incent them not to register because it's that information in the registry that provides the investigating tool. On balance—you have to balance these options—it's more effective to allow only the investigating authorities and police to have access to the registry.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Parkdale–High Park this morning has made an informed comment with respect to two bills, this being the second one. It's a positive reflection. I think back to when I was here with many other members who were here in 2000, when Christopher's Law was passed. It's important to recall the members who are no longer here—the great work they did. David Tsubouchi was one of those people. I say, thank you, David. I also say thanks to David Young, who was Attorney General, I think, and Jim Flaherty, at the time.

This was a very important act at that time. It's a compliment from the member from Willowdale admitting that it was very well developed and designed. A compliance rate at 97% is something to be proud of for Ontario.

I think imitation is the finest form of flattery that is possible. In this case, Premier McGuinty is just updating the existing bill to be in compliance with the federal legislation, Bill S-2, I believe it is. It's good news.

As far as I'm concerned, the member from Parkdale–High Park, who works, I think, often with persons who are potential victims or at least in the community as a

minister of religion, would certainly be a good person for them to go to.

It's a good time to reflect on a good piece of legislation. I think it certainly will have public hearings to make sure it's in order.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was very pleased to see both the members for Beaches–East York and Parkdale–High Park participate in this important debate.

The member from Parkdale–High Park spoke about a very important service that's conducted. She spoke about the Mennonite community monitoring sex offenders who have completed their prison sentences. One of the things that we talked about yesterday is that at the end of the day, most sex offenders are going to be back in the community. Most sex offenders receive sentences that are served either at the provincial institution—two years less a day—or in the lower ranges of federal terms—two years plus. The problem is that once that person has finished his or her sentence, they are suffering from a condition that has probably not been adequately treated in the institution, and then they're thrust back into the community. They don't have any parole obligations if they have finished their sentence because parole, of course, is part of a sentence. There's nobody to assist them, assuming that they have a commitment to avoid offending again and not offending.

I think it's an incredibly important activity. It's the sort of activity, along with a lot of other post-sentence aids and supports, that has been abandoned in the province of Ontario, first during the course of the mid-1990s and through to the present time. We've gutted our jails of corrections. There is no correction in correctional services anymore. We've turned them into warehouses. All we do, then, is make criminals better criminals and angrier criminals when they're released and more dangerous criminals. We've abandoned all the supports that can be useful at a post-sentence point.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing a different perspective, a different view, for the debate taking place in this place.

The sex offender act: This issue is incredible for all of us across the province of Ontario, especially when you have people leaving jail and going back to the community, as the member from Welland mentioned. Sadly, not very often do we have mechanisms to deal with them in the community. A priest, or people like the member from Parkdale–High Park, take charge and try to counsel those people and try to do their best to try to fit them back into the community, because it's a big, huge transition.

But the most important thing in this bill, as has been mentioned by my colleague the PA for the minister, is to make sure that our laws in Ontario align with the laws of the federal government. That's the aim of this bill: to

make sure all the laws that are being passed by the federal government are respected at the provincial level, even though we have, in the province of Ontario, a strong sex registry act, which has a lot of tools and strength in it and allows the police from different jurisdictions across the province to have access to the offenders across Ontario, to have more pictures, more details and more information about them, unlike the federal laws.

But in the end, as has been said in this place many, many different times, we have to work in conjunction with the federal authorities, especially through the OPP we have in the province of Ontario, to make sure all the sex offenders are located and under the microscope of the authority in the province—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, let's say right off the top that of course we're going to work to strengthen this bill and to see that every possible loophole is closed.

Having said that, what I hoped to bring into the discussion was yet another discussion which I believe is an incredibly important one, and that is: What else can we do? As the member from Welland pointed out, one of the things we can do is to make sure that those sex offenders who are released from prison are still monitored and to support those groups that do the monitoring. Right now, they do it out of a sense of love and responsibility to the communities, but they need our assistance to continue that extremely important work. That's really where we're helping prevent more incidents of abuse, and they are, in fact, as efficacious as, if not more efficacious than, a sex registry. We need to be looking at resources that we put into after-incarceration monitoring, particularly in the instance of child sex abuse.

We also need to look at the proper funding of our public school system so that there are what used to be call truancy officers, the social workers who can follow up with children at risk. We need that. We don't have that now. Teachers are often put in an incredibly horrible situation when they know there are bad home situations that they're sending the children back to, yet they don't have the resources to really bring to bear to prevent anything horrible from happening. These are ways in which we can prevent the tragedies from occurring. These are all actions that this House should take.

That was what I wanted to bring to the table, and also to really give kudos to Maria Jones, Bernice Sampson and all of those who, in my riding, have worked around and through such hideous tragedies and turned them into modest triumphs in terms of the work they do for our communities.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being past a quarter after 10, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1019 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce my nephew Richard Neville, who's a councillor in the township of North Stormont. I'd like to welcome him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and page Gemma Ricker, to welcome her mother, May Lynne; her father, Brian; sister Bethany; and sister Silken. Welcome to the Ricker family.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome back to the Legislature Kirk Perrin. Kirk is visiting Queen's Park today with some of his fellow brothers from the Delta Upsilon Fraternity, University of Guelph chapter, including Paul Collins and Ryan Sellars. Gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. My understanding was, he is going to be here today.

Interjection.

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

The member from Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you.

Premier McGuinty has a spending problem. In seven years, the McGuinty government increased spending by 70% even though the provincial economy grew by less than 10%. Premier, you're hardwired to tax and spend. Why do you think Ontario families will believe you've changed from the tax-and-spend Premier they know you to be?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the unique perspective brought by my colleague and the party that she represents. There's no doubt about it: There is a different set of choices when it comes to dealing with the deficit that we have rightfully acquired, I would argue, based on the supports we've provided to Ontarians either directly or to our businesses at the time of a terrible economic recession.

We won't do as my colleague opposite advises. We will not be shutting down hospitals. We will not be laying off nurses. We will not be shutting down full-day kindergarten in the province of Ontario. We will not be hacking and slashing social assistance. We won't be getting rid of the Ontario child benefit. We won't do those kinds of things. We reject that approach.

We'll proceed thoughtfully and responsibly. In keeping with the values of the people of Ontario, we will protect health care, we'll protect education and we'll grow this economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario PCs also don't believe in making families pay and pay and pay. You're running massive deficits that are causing our children and our grandchildren's families to pay for your spending.

Last year, you broke Bob Rae's record with a \$19.3-billion deficit. This year, you're patting yourselves on the back that you have a \$17-billion deficit, more money than you brought in in revenue.

Why would Ontario families believe you will deal with your spending problem now when huge deficits didn't shame you into changing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to figure out from day to day where the Conservatives stand on these kinds of issues, and I'll give you a specific example. My honourable colleague opposite, the member putting the question to me, was part of a select committee on mental health. There was no dissenting opinion from that committee, as I recall that report, and one of the recommendations is that we invest further in mental health in the province of Ontario. Is my colleague opposite telling me now that she's distancing herself from that report, that she's no longer prepared to stand by that report, that we should not invest in mental health in the province of Ontario? I'm asking that question. I think—

Interjections.

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

I just remind the members of the motto of this chamber; it is, "Hear the other side."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): When the member from Sarnia—Lambton interjects, it's very difficult to hear the other side or for the other side to hear the Speaker commenting.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not helpful from the Minister of Community Safety as well.

I recognize that there is something very important happening today, and many people are excited by what is taking place. But we do have a job to do, and this current job to do is question period. I would just remind all members to be respectful of one another.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is about priorities and spending. Premier, your record-setting deficits are piling up the provincial debt. Premier McGuinty is doubling Ontario's debt. In just eight years, he spent so much that he matched Ontario's debt from Confederation to the time he took office. It takes a special kind of spending problem to double the debt in such a short time.

Why would Ontario families trust you to tackle your spending problem when not even doubling the debt has shamed you into changing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No doubt about it: We're bringing a decidedly and markedly different approach to dealing with these kinds of issues. For one thing, we're going to present the budget in this chamber. Secondly, there will be no hidden deficits; we're very up front with the people of Ontario. Thirdly, we will not hack and

slash. We will not shut down our hospitals; we will not lay off nurses.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford, the member from Simcoe—Grey and the member from Simcoe North, please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If we just dwell for a moment on one of the solemn commitments made by my colleagues opposite—that is to take \$3 billion out of health care—I think people need to understand the consequences of that. What it means—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a number of unparliamentary comments. I can't attribute them to any one individual. I just remind individuals of the use of proper parliamentary language in this chamber.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Or if they prefer, if you reduce the HST by 1%, that's like taking \$3 billion out of health care.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Simcoe—Grey.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A warning to the member from Oxford.

New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My next question is also for the Premier. Trusting Premier McGuinty to control spending is like trusting Michael Ignatieff not to form a coalition. Even when you say you won't raise taxes, you raise taxes. Take the time during the 2003 election when you signed an oath not to raise taxes. After the election, you brought in a health tax.

Why would Ontario families trust you when you say you won't raise taxes now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If my honourable colleague is looking for my—not so much permission, but if she's looking for leave of this House to go somewhere canvassing, she has that. I just want to make that clear. She doesn't have to stay in here.

But just to remind her, we are, in this House, responsible for the delivery of good-quality health care to Ontario families; for the delivery of good-quality, publicly funded education; for the protection of our natural environment; and for doing whatever we can to work with our private sector partners to engender growth and new jobs as part of a vibrant economy. That's our responsibility. I want to remind my honourable colleague opposite about that.

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HEALTH CARE

The good news is that we have now recaptured 91% of the jobs that we lost since the height of the recession. That tells me one thing: We're moving in the right direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Premier, even when you say you won't raise taxes, you do. In the last days of the 2007 election campaign, you said you wouldn't raise taxes. After the election, you raised the HST and used your greedy tax grab as coverage to sneak eco taxes past families. Now McGuinty Liberals are openly musing about new taxes on water and carbon and an eco tax on cars.

Why would Ontario families believe you won't raise taxes when even McGuinty Liberals know that you will?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of the HST, I want to again take the opportunity to commend Minister Flaherty for his unwavering support in this regard. If it was not for the support of the Conservatives in Ontario, we could not possibly have moved ahead with the HST. It is a difficult step forward, but is absolutely essential.

We've learned that it is already having the intended effect. Businesses are making new levels of investments in equipment and productivity-enhancing technologies. We're talking about 600,000 new jobs over the course of 10 years. A difficult decision to make, but again, without the support of that party we simply could not have gone there.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families simply don't believe Premier McGuinty any longer. The first time you swore to Ontario families you wouldn't raise taxes and then did, shame on you. The second time you said you wouldn't raise taxes and then did, shame on me. But if we believe you when you say for a third time that you won't raise taxes, then shame on all of us. You won't change, so it's time for a change. Why is it that the only way Ontario families will see real change is to elect a PC government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: More than anybody else in this Legislature, I would argue, I'm looking forward to Ontarians gaining a better understanding of the stark contrast between the views of the future represented by that party and our party. They will pander to fear. They will exploit concerns about the economy and those kinds of things. We're the party of hope and opportunity.

The fact of the matter is, our plan is working. We have recaptured 91% of the jobs that we have lost. We now have the shortest wait times in the country when it comes to health care. Some 94% of Ontarians now have a family doctor. Our students are now performing among the top 10 globally when it comes to standardized testing. We're putting 60,000 more spaces in our colleges and universities, and we're going to move forward in a number of other directions through this budget at the same time as we grow this economy.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Across the province, I hear from Ontarians who are frustrated with our health care system. Whether it's people having difficulty accessing primary care being told by hospitals to pay up to \$1,800 a day for a bed or the long waits for long-term care and home care, Ontarians are frustrated. They are losing confidence that our health care system will be there when they need it. Can the Premier tell us if his government has a plan to fix the problems in the Ontario health care system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I welcome the question from my honourable colleague. I am much less pessimistic, both in terms of my assessment of where we find ourselves today and our opportunities for tomorrow. I want to remind my honourable colleague that we will not be taking the approach that they brought in NDP Manitoba, where they closed some 50 hospitals. That's not an approach we intend to take here in Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, we have made significant, measurable progress. There have been real, substantive steps forward. I think we have 11,000 more nurses and 2,900 more doctors. We have 200 family health teams treating 2.3 million patients. We have the first nurse practitioner-led clinics in all of North America and, according to an objective assessment, we now have the shortest wait times in Canada. To me, that represents progress.

Is there more work to do? Always, and we look forward to doing it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The reality is that over 20% of all hospital beds are designated as alternate level of care. Hospitals are forced to work with over 100% capacity, and there is no concrete plan for seniors' care in Ontario. In fact, seniors are often stuck languishing in hospital beds because of inadequate long-term care and inadequate home care services. This causes ripple effects throughout the entire health care system.

Will the Premier tell us if his government has a plan to improve home care and long-term care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is well aware of the plans that we have in place in this regard.

I just want to raise an issue which I think is worthy of mention. At some point in time, I'm hoping that my colleagues in the NDP are going to begin to put a few questions to those who sit to their immediate right. Are they not concerned about the removal of \$3 billion from our health care system? Are they not concerned about what that party would do to social assistance rates in the province of Ontario? Are they not concerned about the loss of full-day kindergarten that would be imposed by that party? Are they not concerned about the removal of the Ontario child benefit, which is helping 1.3 million children who are growing up in poverty in the province of Ontario? Are they not concerned about those issues?

Because I would argue that those would concern NDP supporters.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I do have some concerns, but they're not the ones that he just listed. The concern that I do have is that this government has been in place for eight years and they're not ready to hunker down and fix the real problems. What happened? Our health care system and the people of Ontario continue to suffer.

Not only do we have hospitals over capacity; we have jammed emergency departments throughout Ontario. Not only do we have inadequate long-term care and home care services; we have contracted them out to the lowest bidder. We have grossly starved our community services.

The Premier may talk a good game and want to send arrows to my colleagues to the right, but through his actions, he shows that he is not able and willing to act. Can the Premier tell us if Ontarians can expect anything of substance in today's budget so that we see real improvement in our health care system, and not tinkering at the edges?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I appreciate the perspective put forward by my honourable colleague, but I just don't share her negativity and her pessimism. I think we've made some real, substantive progress with respect to health care.

I can say, first of all, that at a minimum we will do something that that party to her right would not do: We will protect the gains that we've made in health care and education. Notwithstanding the fiscal challenges that characterize our day, we will find a way to make more progress in health care for Ontario families.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, Brett Clarkson from the Niagara Falls Review did an interview with your appointee, Mr. Ritter, last week, and in this particular interview, he said that, "Ritter also stressed that the panel is not investigating Agent Orange." He quotes Mr. Ritter as saying, "The charge to this panel from the minister is quite clear.... We are to look at 2,4,5-T, and that's not Agent Orange."

Can you tell us what the heck is going on?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak about this issue again, and I want to reiterate how very concerned we are about this issue and how committed we are to sharing the facts and the information in a very transparent fashion.

As I've stated before in this House, this government is doing something very unusual: We are actually leading the charge on the use of 2,4,5-T that was used in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and possibly the 1980s. We continue to ask our federal partners to work with Dr. Ritter and his independent panel to ensure that we all have the information that we need, whether it's in Niagara Falls or anywhere else in Ontario.

The federal government, through Health Canada, regulated the use of herbicides in this country. This particular herbicide was registered by the pesticides directorate of Agriculture Canada, the federal department responsible for registering pesticides. The people in Ontario are depending upon us to conduct an independent investigation, and that's what we plan to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the minister. People in this province are concerned that the province of Ontario, through different agencies and ministries, used Agent Orange. You've got the person that's leading the charge in the investigation saying, "Oh, no. We're only looking at half of it. We're not going to look at 2,4-D; we're only looking at 2,4,5-T." The two chemicals are the mix that makes Agent Orange. That's what people have been exposed to.

So I ask you yet again: Why is your appointee all of a sudden saying that he's not going to investigate the use of Agent Orange and only half of what was inside that mix?

1050

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: This government understands that there need to be some tough questions asked. We know that Dr. Ritter has the expertise to ensure that this issue receives the full attention that it deserves. We asked him to chair the panel, and he's going to be selecting panellists who will help inform the decisions that he makes. We have fulfilled our commitment to set up that independent panel.

I trust that Dr. Ritter will use the kinds of individuals that he needs to help inform that decision. He's going to be supported by panel members who will serve on a part-time basis. They'll be selected upon their expertise available. That independent panel will be submitting that report to this government, and we will be making those details available to people across Ontario.

I know that, based on the letters and the phone calls we've received, there are many individuals across Ontario who have concerns about their health. We want to make sure all those answers are available. We know how important it is to people across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the minister: Let me surmise why I think that he's not looking at Agent Orange.

Dr. Ritter is on the record as one of the experts who for years has been saying that 2,4-D is not harmful to human health. Therefore, he doesn't want to look at Agent Orange because we know what he himself has already pronounced when it comes to one half of the mix, being 2,4-D.

My question back to you is: Why would you put somebody in charge of an independent investigation on the use of Agent Orange if we clearly know that this individual has actually pronounced, a number of times, on 2,4-D, which is half of the mix of Agent Orange? Isn't this about you limiting your liability and ensuring that you don't get the kind of information back that people can go back and get compensation for?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I think the member opposite has spent an inordinate amount of time focusing on whether the panel was independent at the beginning and now is trying to dismiss the credentials of someone I feel is very well qualified to lead this committee. To discredit this individual I think is unhelpful, particularly when people across Ontario expect us to do an independent investigation. We've worked very hard to make sure that we posted the information, that we've contacted someone like the chief medical officer of health to help us with this.

We need to understand that MNR stopped using this herbicide back in 1979 and the federal government removed it from its herbicide registry back in 1985. We are committed to documenting the herbicide activities and where they were sprayed across Ontario, but we must recognize that there's a lot of information. There are a lot of questions—more than we have answers to. We are having difficulty locating all the information. This was in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s. We're committed to getting all the facts. We know that the people of Ontario expect—

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

BUDGET SECURITY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. How much did you spend on security for the budget this year, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's an interesting question—to some, I gather. I don't have that specific information, but I can say that we will do what is appropriate, what is reasonable and what is prudent in the circumstances. We can keep costs down, we found, by presenting the budget in this chamber. It's a lot more expensive if we take it off the premises and do it elsewhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: No supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Budget details have been leaking out like a sieve since Friday. In fact, Rob Benzie of the Toronto Star presented so much of the budget that he has a right to claim part of the salary of the Minister of Finance. Whatever you spent on security was a waste. Why did you bother?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleagues are very interested in the details of the budget and, shortly, as I say, we'll be presenting those in this very chamber. It'll be right here at 4 o'clock. I would encourage my honourable colleague to be here.

The budget will make it clear that we are bringing a thoughtful, balanced, responsible approach, which is inspired by the values shared by Ontario families. They want us to protect their health care, they want us to

protect their education and they want us to protect the growth that is taking place in this economy. They also want us to protect their futures by finding a way to responsibly address the deficit over time. Those are exactly the values that will inform the budget to be presented here this afternoon.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Joan Moskowitz is a constituent of mine who worked for a social service agency. Last year, she was injured on the job and couldn't work. She expected to have Workplace Safety and Insurance Board coverage to support her while she recovered from her injury. To her shock, she found that her employer was exempt. There was no coverage, no support. She had great hardship holding together her household, her family. When are you going to act to ensure that Joan and workers like her are covered by WSIB?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I think everyone in this House would sympathize with the hardship that anyone would face if they get injured on the job or if they're unable to work. There are services available, as you well know, in Ontario. We have a universal health care system that provides assistance when anyone requires it. But in regard to those that are exempt from WSIB coverage, if that is the case that we have—it is a no-fault insurance that has been provided to safeguard those in construction in hazardous instances, and that's what we have with WSIB at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: That was kind of an "I feel your pain" response but, you know, Ms. Moskowitz deserves more than that. Next month, the Arthurs hearing will commence into the coverage and funding of WSIB. You, Minister, can help Joan and millions of working people like her by putting the question of expanding WSIB coverage to all workers on the agenda. Will you help those workers, or will you ignore them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The WSIB is responsible for being financially stable and accountable to some of those issues. We are looking and, as I mentioned, Harry Arthurs is performing a review of the WSIB as well as the unfunded liability, and they're taking a lot of things into consideration. We will continue to provide for that report. We'll see how they proceed and, from there, we'll make some decisions as to what we need to do going forward.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Attorney General. Today marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. For half a century now, the commission has played an important role in upholding Ontario's commitment to human rights.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, there are numerous individuals who work tirelessly every day to ensure that equality and fundamental rights are not only guaranteed but, in fact, are achieved for all. My constituents are proud to live in a province with a long tradition of leadership in promoting respect for human rights.

Although Ontarians can be proud of our achievements, our society is constantly changing. With this change comes new challenges and, in a province as diverse as Ontario, we must constantly be aware of potential threats to the commitment to equality that has been part of our collective identity.

Can the Attorney General tell us what is being done to ensure Ontario remains a leader in protecting and preserving our strong tradition of human rights?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Ontario does have a very strong tradition in protecting and defending human rights. The member from Ottawa Centre has spoken passionately about this system and our need to do so over the years.

Yesterday, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. There were members of the commission here in the Legislature to hear the statements of all.

It was a system set up as a result of the work of many, such as people like Hugh Burnett, who came back from the Second World War, having served his country in defence of freedom, who was working as a carpenter and then couldn't get served in a restaurant because of the colour of his skin. It was a system that was set up because of the work of people like him and others to protect and preserve human rights as the foundation for the society that Ontario is and wishes to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: We certainly have come a long way in a relatively short period of time when it comes to fighting injustice in our society. I've spoke often about my family coming to Ontario and Canada to ensure that we do continue to live in a free and open society.

Thankfully, protecting human rights is something that has been a commitment of all governments in this province over the past half-century. I know our government recognizes that in order for our system to effectively protect the rights of Ontarians, it must allow for claims to be dealt with quickly and fairly.

Can the Attorney General tell us, on this 50th anniversary of the commission, how our human rights system is now working to encourage respectful dialogue and to lay firm foundations for mutual respect in our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: There's lots of commentary from across the aisle about whether this is new. No, it's not new. Ontario's defence of human rights has existed for decades, through all parties, and we want it to continue. Ontario's defence of human rights has consisted of rights that are outlined in a code and remedies for those who feel that they've been aggrieved or had those rights violated. You can't just have a statement of

rights; you have to have rights and a remedy; otherwise, the rights can't be supported.

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We defend a system that has a Human Rights Commission that can deal with policy issues, has a code that outlines the rights, has a tribunal which people can access and a support centre for those who need legal assistance. We will not shy away from our defence of human rights in this province, today or in the future.

Interjections.

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

New question.

COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Jim Wilson: Clearly the Liberal leadership campaign has started over there.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, weeks ago we told you about problems with your broken victims-of-crime program and we told you what the solution is. You voted against our plan to release the surplus money to victims and said you needed to talk about the program some more. Now Donna Dixon of Hamilton has been told that she had to witness her son being kidnapped, shot, incinerated and put into bags of animal feed in order to be treated as a victim of crime. Premier, when will you stop talking about fixing your broken victims-of-crime program and actually fix it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Everyone in the House—and I know everyone in the province of Ontario—has sympathy and empathy for the family, for the mom, for this terrible tragedy.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You were passionate about the last question.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Premier has committed, I have committed and on this side of the House we have committed to make sure that we have the appropriate compensation for those who deserve it. We're now studying the options and we'll have an answer to this very soon.

The CICB has not yet, I understand, had an actual hearing on this case, and pre-hearing awards tend to be rather rare. But we'll make sure that we have the appropriate system to deal with all cases that should be dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: There's something wrong with a government that says you have to witness the murder of your child to get victim-of-crime supports.

There's no mystery to what the problem is or how to fix it. You were told what the problem was by the Ombudsman in 2006. You were told what the problem is and how to fix it by your own commissioner, the Honourable Roy McMurtry, in 2008. I say to the Premier: What

is your timeline to stop revictimizing Ontario families and fix your broken victims-of-crime program?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know what? What my friend's question doesn't mention is that we're spending about three times as much on issues relating to victims as the party opposite did. Where was the comment then? Where was the passion that he evidences when he was in power? It wasn't there.

What he fails to mention is that the commission into the CICB was to address many of the issues that had developed over the time they were in office. Where was the passion then? Where was the determination to fix?

What he failed to mention is that the wording of the CICB has existed for many years. Where was his passion then? Where was his determination to fix?

We've committed to fix and to continue to—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: To the Minister of Health: On February 24 I asked this minister in this House to help my constituent Michelle Fernandes. Curative surgery exists for Michelle in the United States only. There is no physician in Ontario who can skilfully perform the surgery she so badly needs. Despite these facts, OHIP has denied her prior approval applications for full payment of insured out-of-country health services. The minister will remember that Michelle has been in constant agony and has exhausted her personal resources funding her multiple surgeries while she continues to wait for over five years for a hearing at the Health Services Appeal and Review Board in respect to OHIP's denial.

Why hasn't the minister been in touch with Ms. Fernandes when she promised to do so?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member opposite for the question. I do not recall saying I would be personally in touch with the individual, and if I did, I apologize for that.

What I can tell you is that we work very hard to ensure that Ontarians have access to the best possible health care. Most often, that means they can get the care they need right here in Ontario. In fact, we are making increasing investments to ensure that Ontarians do get that care right here in Ontario, as close to home as possible. It is better for those individuals; it is also better for their families.

In very rare cases where we do not have the expertise here, then we do review the case and arrange for that person to go out of this country or out of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's quite obvious why the minister doesn't want to touch this. Significant changes to the funding of the OHIP out-of-country program will be made on April 1—this very Friday. One of the changes will make it virtually impossible for Michelle to have her appeal granted by the board. This change prevents an appeal from being granted by the board if an Ontario

physician can perform the surgery within his or her scope of practice—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask our guests in the gallery that, as much as you may wish to participate in the proceedings, you can't. You just need to sit, not gesture, and just listen, please. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: —irrespective of whether or not he or she has actually ever performed the surgery before.

The minister has adversely affected Michelle's appeal and can be considered to be interfering with the administration of her appeal in the province of Ontario. Will this minister undertake that the changes will not prevent the board from granting Michelle's appeal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look to the gallery, and I see that Ms. Fernandes is here, and I do now recall having had a conversation with her following question period. I apologize. I did not link the name to the face, but now I do that.

I want to say that my heart goes out to Ms. Fernandes. This is a very, very difficult situation. All I can say is, there is a process, and she is well aware of the process and going through that process. We will undertake to ensure that Ms. Fernandes and all Ontarians have access to the very best possible medical care.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Recently, the Canadian Institute for Health Information reported that Ontario is a national leader in wait times reduction for key procedures. The Wait Time Alliance and the Fraser Institute have also given Ontario's wait time strategy top marks.

Will the minister tell this House about the Ontario government's commitment to reducing wait times?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When we came to office, wait times for procedures were absolutely unacceptable. We have made getting those wait times down a very high priority for us, and we are pleased that that work is being recognized by many different organizations.

I would like to read from the CIHI report: "The proportion of patients who received knee replacement surgery within the recommended six-month wait ranged from 42% in Nova Scotia and 57% in Manitoba to 83% in Quebec and 89% in Ontario." We're the best in the country when it comes to knee replacement surgery. "For cataract surgery, 48% of patients in Alberta and 62% of patients in Saskatchewan received their surgery within the recommended 16 weeks, compared with 88% of patients in Ontario."

We have made remarkable—

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, I appreciate the information you have provided. I know that the success of this government's wait time strategy is welcome news for Ontarians.

But what about our ERs? Minister, can you please inform this House what the government is doing to reduce the wait times in the emergency rooms in our hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks again to the member. Ontario is also the leading province in Canada when it comes to reporting ER wait times; in fact, we were the first province to measure ER wait times and to develop a strategy to bring them down. Our most recent data show that 83% of complex patients are treated within the eight-hour target; 87% of uncomplicated patients are treated within the four-hour target. Our goal is to get both of those to 90%.

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Ontario's success in reducing wait times in our key procedures and in the ER is a direct result of very strong collaboration between all our partners: our hospitals, our physicians, our local health integration networks, other health care professionals and the government. We are working hard to bring down wait times in emergency departments and we're also making investments outside hospitals—

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Since my election, I've said that the South East LHIN is neglecting the health care needs of Leeds–Grenville. Now I have proof that they're not only neglecting us, but they're actively working to pull the plug on programs we do have by eliminating the surgical department at the Brockville General Hospital.

Minister, I'm outraged and disgusted that this option, contained in a consultant's report, is even being discussed. Minister, I'm asking you: Will you pick up the phone and call your unelected, unaccountable and largely anonymous LHIN and ask them to scrap this plan that will cut the heart out of Brockville General and our community—or are they carrying out your plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This question gives me an opportunity to talk about the value of the local health integration networks. It might come as news to the member opposite, but in fact local health integration networks, because they replace two layers of bureaucracy that existed when that party was in power, actually cost no more than what was in place before. What they do add is a local voice. The local planning that is happening in the community, community by community, to drive the change we must see in order to ensure that our health care system is responsive to the needs of the community is what they are doing, and they are doing a remarkably fine job.

I'm very proud of the work of the local health integration networks. They are driving integration and they are driving change. I want to take this opportunity to applaud the local health integration networks for their collaboration—

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

Mr. Steve Clark: This plan by your LHIN would be the death knell for an outstanding community hospital. Dr. Bill Redmond, the chief of surgery, was quoted in the news this weekend, saying that last year, Brockville General performed over 9,300 surgeries, and he admitted that they are still actively pursuing another general surgeon. Your LHIN's plan will make it impossible for us to attract new doctors and will leave our emergency department without essential surgical services.

The people of Leeds–Grenville won't sit back and let your LHIN gut our hospital, and neither will I. Minister, don't let the LHIN do your dirty work. Stop the double-talk. Step out from behind your political cover and do the right thing. Will you assure residents of my riding that this plan will be scrapped and thrown in the trash can today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The LHIN is doing its work, and I think it would be appropriate if elected representatives actually took time to understand that.

But I tell you, the plan that I will not sit back and let happen in this province is the cut to health care that this party opposite did when they had the chance, when they were in power. They are committed to cutting health care. Let's not pretend that we can strengthen the hospital in Brockville if you're going to cut \$3 billion out of health care. Cutting \$3 billion means firing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member to speak about government policy, and I ask the member from Lanark to withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If the Minister of Energy was listening yesterday, and I trust that he was, I reminded members of the importance of question period. An important component of question period is talking about government policy.

New question.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. The city of Hamilton has just received \$8.5 million to reimburse it for the costs of administering the province's 2009 social service programs, a two-year delay to pay for the McGuinty Liberals' downloaded social service costs, which they have had six years to fix—

Interjections.

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

I just remind the members that this is an important time of the day. This also, particularly on a budget day, gives a number of members an opportunity to talk about local issues. So often this question period is dominated by the leaders. One of the good things about budget day is, it does give backbench members an opportunity to ask questions that are important to their communities, and I

would just ask the honourable ministers to be respectful of those members.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: —a two-year delay to pay for the McGuinty Liberals' downloaded social service costs, which they have had seven years to fix. Will the province guarantee that the city of Hamilton will receive the reimbursement for 2011 social service costs immediately after the end of this year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the Premier for allowing me to answer this question because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the importance of partnerships. It gives me the opportunity to talk about how important it is to get along with municipalities.

It speaks to the importance that this government placed in the opinions of municipalities when they said, "Enough with the downloading. We can't afford it any longer. Please provide us with some relief. Please provide us with the opportunity to be fair partners. Please start the uploading," and we did. We entered into an agreement with municipalities. We entered into an agreement with municipalities that was based on trust and respect.

We understand the significant challenges that municipalities faced under previous governments. We're doing something about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: They're doing something about it, all right. They're a little late with the money.

It's obvious that there are major flaws in a system that requires a municipality to administer the province's social service programs but requires the city to wait two years to receive the full cost of these programs. Is this Liberal government finally going to fix the real problem so that cities don't have an annual trek to Queen's Park, hat in hand, to plead for the real annual cost of these social service programs? Get with the program!

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I guess it's always good to compare. The leader of the third party says that New Democrats would inject more than \$2 billion into municipal coffers over four years and will put Ontario on track to reverse the full provincial share of costs by 2015. That's what Andrea Horwath said: \$2 billion over four years. That's only \$500 million a year.

We provided an average of \$2.2 billion to municipalities over the course of the last three years for infrastructure alone, because we listen to municipalities. Sophia Aggelonitis understands the importance of listening to municipalities. We will continue to do that because we know municipalities are equal partners in this type of a confederation of three levels of government. We only hope and wish the federal government would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'd like to call the members to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final warning for the member from Peterborough. Final warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I just remind the honourable member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek that if he's not satisfied with an answer, there is a mechanism within the standing orders that allows him to do so.

New question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, the first day of spring is already behind us, and we all know what spring means to the province's construction and road workers: It's construction season. In Guelph, we're looking forward to a busy construction season as workers finish up numerous infrastructure stimulus projects.

Minister, you have stood in this house and spoken at length about the good work your ministry is doing to ensure the safety of construction workers and all workers in Ontario. Can you tell this House what your ministry is doing to keep workers safe as they head into the 2011 construction season?

1120

Hon. Charles Sousa: As part of Safe at Work Ontario, the Ministry of Labour regularly conducts health and safety blitzes to help workers and employers correct workplace hazards before they occur. These blitzes are designed to raise awareness around sector-specific hazards and increase compliance with health and safety legislation. This May, our labour inspectors will conduct blitzes in the construction sector, including home builders and low-rise projects. Later in the season, inspectors will look at equipment, including ladders, suspended stages and elevated work platforms in the construction sector.

Blitzes are also planned for new and young workers, crane suppliers and tower cranes. As well, we will be looking at the mining and health care sectors.

Together with employers and workers, our team is working to develop a strong health and safety culture in Ontario's workplaces.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We know that most often, the incidents that lead to injury or death are preventable or avoidable if people take the proper precautions, but I still hear the opposition talking about our health and safety inspectors, saying that they're bad for business and just more red tape. Minister, can you tell us the kinds of results you've seen with past blitzes and more about the importance of health and safety inspections?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We all know what the opposition means when they talk about cutting red tape. By their very actions, that meant cutting the number of inspectors. The last time that happened, we had tainted meat scandals and the Walkerton water tragedy.

Since June 2008, we have conducted 25 blitzes that address specific hazards in a number of industries, and

our approach is working. The lost-time injury rate has decreased by more than 30% since 2003—that's 25,000 fewer lost-time injuries—and we're not stopping there.

As members of this House are aware, we've introduced a bill that, if passed, would appoint a new chief prevention officer and a council with representatives from labour, employers and safety experts. They will help the ministry to set new training standards, revamp the reprisal process and develop codes of practice that help businesses comply and protect workers.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, I spoke to your policy adviser this morning, just to indicate and give him some background on my question.

The Barrhaven and Riverside South communities of Nepean–Carleton are two of the fastest-growing communities in all of Ottawa, if not all of Canada. In Barrhaven alone, our population has risen to 52,000 from 2001 to 2006. It's nearly doubled, and it's expected to double again to over 100,000 within the next five years. That means there's been a demand on the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board and the other three in my riding for more public education.

The Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has reached its capacity at four of the seven schools in Barrhaven, and they've requested provincial assistance to build a new elementary school. I guess my question, Minister, is: Will you approve the funding request from the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It is interesting; it is a spend question. The first question from the Conservatives this morning was, "Should we cut spending?" However, in the second half of question period, they have a different strategy.

What I can say to the honourable member is that we have worked with school boards across Ontario since coming to government to assist them to meet their capital needs. That is why this government has actually built 400 schools since 2003 in the province of Ontario. There are another 100 schools in the works. That is in stark contrast to what the previous government did when they closed 500 schools.

I believe we have a record. We do pay very close attention to the capital requests that come to us from school boards. We will be looking very carefully, obviously, in the Ottawa region; wonderful representation there—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's unfortunate. I did take the opportunity to contact the minister's office beforehand. This is important to my riding. It's important to parents and it's important to the students in my community. I thought I'd get better than a political response.

In 2008, I first brought to the attention of the previous Minister of Education, Ms. Kathleen Wynne, whom I

was fortunate to be able to work with, the need for a new high school in the Riverside South community due to high growth in that community. The population in Riverside South is growing by 52% per year and the Steve MacLean elementary school right now needs to be expanded to accommodate the population pressures. High school students right now in that community are either being bused out of our neighbourhood or they are turning to the Ottawa Catholic School Board so that they can stay in their community.

Minister, my next question for Riverside South is: Will you commit to keeping up with the population pressures in Riverside South by expanding the Steve MacLean elementary school and building a new public high school in Riverside South?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, I would say to the honourable member that our commitment to build schools in the province of Ontario has been a priority. That will continue to be the case.

What I do know, though, is what parents in the riding of the honourable member are most interested to know about: For the year 2012, we have announced eight schools that will be getting full-day kindergarten.

Their commitment is not to move forward with that. That is what the people in the community are very concerned about. We listen to all of the people on all of the issues. Accommodation is a very important issue, as well as the commitment to full-day kindergarten. We are—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the member from Nepean–Carleton to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw calling her a liar.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

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

HEARN GENERATING STATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy: OPG has applied to demolish the historic Hearn generating station in my riding. Why did you allow them to apply for this demolition permit?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This question goes back some time ago. What I would say is that this particular facility is leased out. It's a long-term lease; I don't remember the exact number of years. The person who controls the site holds the lease and that entity has the right to do what they want to do with the site. It was something that was set a very long time ago. They're working, I understand, with the city through a process, but certainly, if the member wants an update as to where that process stands, I'd be more than happy to obtain that update for him and share it with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: At least allow that the demolition was irresponsible. What will you, Minister, do to stop that demolition from going forward?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said before, the tenant or the person or the entity that holds the lease now has the right to do what they're doing, as far as we've been advised under the law, short of trying to somehow or another break the law or break the arrangements. I'm not really sure what the member would want me to do.

This lease wasn't signed when we were in power; it was signed under the previous government. The person who currently controls the property, the entity, has the right to do what they're doing according to the legal advice that we've received. If the member has information that is different from that, I'd be pleased if he would share that with me.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: A question to the Minister of Labour: Several months ago, I stood in this House and proposed Bill 114 to deal with people who are being literally ripped off in their places of employment. You were not the minister at that point, but can you tell us today—because we are getting letters every day, as you are: Are you going to do anything about this bill or are you going to let it die?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the member asking the question. I understand that the bill is trying to address tip-sharing and so forth in the restaurant business.

Nine out of 13 provinces do not have tips included in legislation. The Employment Standards Act provides civil protection for restaurant employees and anyone who believes they are being mistreated by their employer. They can contact us, as always.

I also would like to take this opportunity to speak to what we've done in regard to the notions and the issues around restaurants, and the minimum wage, particularly. We've increased it seven times over the last seven years consecutively. We will continue to do what's necessary, but that's been a 50% increase since we came to office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member?

Mr. Michael Prue: As the minister should know, tips are not wages and therefore they are not covered by your ministry and they cannot be investigated by the very people you hire.

We have received a letter—and I know the minister received the same letter—from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business telling him exactly what he's supposed to do with this file; that is, he's supposed to kill it.

1130

Are you marching to the orders of the CFIB, or are you listening to the hundreds of thousands of servers who are having their tips taken off them? Which one is it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are doing what's important for the workers and the employees, and no one else. I'm disappointed that the member would make such accusations. He stands here and talks about situations that occurred in restaurants, when in fact it's untrue. I speak specifically to an issue out in Brock and so forth. What we know is that those employees want to have those jobs

and they do have working relationships with their employers.

I say that we will continue to do what's necessary to stimulate economic growth, to ensure that those companies have the work necessary for those employees and that everyone gets the benefit of having that job.

In regard to tips, we are looking at your proposal. We'll see what takes place.

At this point, we are going to continue to take every step necessary to ensure the safety and the health of those employees.

TENANT PROTECTION

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In Barrie, there has been some real discussion on the rights of tenants and landlords. Many of the constituents have questions regarding the Residential Tenancies Act and, more specifically, whether or not it has enough teeth to hold landlords accountable. I understand that the NDP plans to reintroduce a new version of the Tenant Protection Act, which would see a variety of changes to the current rules. I thought we already had one of the best tenant protection acts in place. Can the minister responsible clarify this for me so that I can get back to my constituents?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for Barrie for her advocacy and for her work, especially on this file.

The truth is that we have one of the strongest systems in place right here in Ontario. It balances the rights of tenants and landlords. We find it is very, very important to strike that balance. When we amended the Residential Tenancies Act in 2006, we brought forth a variety of changes that strengthened the overall system, that provided that balance. Our government brought forward stiffer fines for landlords who withheld vital services.

This government will continue to stand up for tenants. We will continue to understand the importance of striking that balance. We will ensure that there is fairness in a very, very complicated—

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

Hon. Aileen Carroll, P.C.: My constituents are going to be very happy indeed to hear about the government's commitments to their needs, but I still would like the minister to provide some more information.

As I mentioned in my earlier question, the NDP is introducing an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, specifically with respect to tenant protection. The bill claims that licensing landlords is the key to getting rid of bedbug infestations and a variety of other problems. Minister, is landlord licensing something that this government is considering?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, I thank the member from Barrie for the questions.

The simple answer is no. We are not considering licensing landlords because municipalities already have

the power. They have it under the Planning Act. They have it under the Municipal Act. They have it under the City of Toronto Act. Many have already utilized these tools to license landlords. Unlike the NDP, we believe that municipalities are capable of operating in their best interests.

I find it very, very strange that in the face of accepting the strongest legislation in place, they voted against our Residential Tendencies Act amendments in 2006. In doing so, they voted against the strongest regulations put in place, regulations that truly made a difference.

The reality is, we will—

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, from time to time, I have brought to your attention an ongoing fill operation in my riding of Durham, on the Oak Ridges moraine. As you are aware, you've done nothing so far. It began in the township of Scucog on Lakeridge with the company Earthworx flouting municipal bylaws. Mayor Mercier of the township was forced to get an injunction from the Superior Court to halt the dumping at the cost of the taxpayers. Now it appears that Earthworx has simply picked up shop and moved down the road to Morgans Road in Clarington.

The mayors of Clarington, Uxbridge and Scucog have all asked me to bring this to your attention, to do something to protect the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt. When will you take action to stop illegal dumping in the Oak Ridges moraine in Durham?

Hon. John Wilkinson: My question is, where has the member from Durham been? I can assure you that our ministry has been very active on this file. We have a number of director's orders on Earthworx. We're expecting them to comply, and they are. We've been on this file from before it was first raised to me by the member from Durham.

It is very important for people to understand that, in the province of Ontario, you are not allowed to take dirty fill and put it anywhere—specifically not in the Oak Ridges moraine and not into the greenbelt. It's very important that the good people in your riding understand that the Ministry of the Environment has been all over this issue. We will continue to make sure that the laws of the province of Ontario are upheld.

It is possible, of course, to have clean fill. We've been working very closely with the municipality, requiring testing to ensure that the Oak Ridges moraine is indeed protected, and it will continue to be protected by our government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended. I congratulate the honourable members on the shorter questions: We were able to get 18 questions in today.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I beg your indulgence to allow me to make some comments on the standing orders. Specifically, we look at 23(j) and 23(i).

We understand that charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood is not allowed and, we accept, should not be allowed. It seems to be unclear on 23(i), "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

I know we've had this discussion before, but I do beg your indulgence because, as you said, the climate here appears to be changing as we grow ever closer to an election here in the province of Ontario. You alluded to that point in dealing with some issues respecting elections in other jurisdictions as well.

It is becoming quite troublesome, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is for you as well, for, without any evidence to support the statements, the Premier, members of the cabinet and members on the opposite side—on the government side—continue to make statements impugning the policy of the Progressive Conservative Party and the opposition here in the House. They continue to make statements that are not supported in any way, shape or form with respect to what we are planning to do in health care. I'll say it: They continue to say that this party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I will encourage the honourable member to get to his point.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They continue to state that this party will remove \$3 billion out of health care. It has never been stated by this party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the members to please come to order. I want to hear the honourable member.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It has never been stated by this party or our leader—not once. In fact, the only statement we have made on that subject is that we will protect the vital service of health care in this province. If they continue to make false statements about our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to provide guidance to all of us in this House concerning standing order 23. My reading of 23 is clear in that it states that the Speaker shall call to order any member who "makes allegations against another" or "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

1140

The Premier today, on a number of occasions, has very strongly stated facts—the way he positioned it. It is a fact, according to the Premier, that this party intends to cut \$3 billion from the health care budget. Speaker, I would like to know from you—if that is not imputing false and unavowed motives, I don't know what is.

What I would ask you to do is to at least explain to us—having made that case very clear that that is not the intention and it is not the policy of the Progressive Conservative caucus or party—if that is not a false or unavowed motive, what is? And if that has been stated, will the Speaker agree to call any member in this House to order when they make that accusation?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member from Newmarket–Aurora for their comments regarding standing orders 23(i) and (j). I will remind the members on all sides that on a number of occasions, I have attempted to provide clarification on the issue of imputing motives within this House and I will ask the table to provide any member copies of previous statements that I have made regarding this issue to the members. They are available.

I do recognize that members do take exception to comments that get made from time to time. But as much as they may not like the comment that is made, it does not of itself constitute imputing motive. I remind the honourable members of that.

I think what we see regularly in this chamber is a disagreement between members. It is an issue that has been part of this chamber since time immemorial and my sense is it will be here for many years to come.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning the Brockville hospital. The matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care regarding OHIP's out-of-country funding. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning funding rebates for social services to the city of Hamilton. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nepean–Carleton has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Education concerning new schools for Barrhaven and Riverside South. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail et la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne la santé et la sécurité au travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to occupational health and safety and other matters. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

On March 8, Mr. Sousa moved second reading of Bill 160. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia
Albanese, Laura	Elliott, Christine	Murdoch, Bill
Arnott, Ted	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Best, Margaret	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	MacLeod, Lisa	Van Bommel, Maria
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wilkinson, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Clark, Steve	Matthews, Deborah	Witmer, Elizabeth
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Yakabuski, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Mitchell, Carol	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Miller, Paul
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 73; the nays are 6.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon. I remind the members that the bells will begin to ring at 3:55.

The House recessed from 1154 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2011 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2011

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I remind the honourable members of the opposition that they will have their opportunity to respond to the budget.

I seek the indulgence of the House. Just before the pages start, please ensure that your aisles are clear for the pages and that all chairs are pulled in as well. I remind the honourable members that the 2010 budget was delivered in 25.54 seconds. The record is 20.35 seconds, so let's wish the pages well. Let the pages deliver the budgets, please.

Interjection: What was the time?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'll leave everyone in suspense until the conclusion.

Have all members received a copy of their budget?

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Ontario's 2011 budget.

Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

L'Ontario remonte la pente vers un avenir meilleur.

Five consecutive quarters of growth, higher business investment and a resurgent manufacturing sector are all evidence that the global economic downturn is behind us.

Jobs and growth are returning to our economy as we embrace innovation and continue building the best education system in the world.

Strategic investments in education and health care lay the foundation for a future with more jobs, increased productivity and a better quality of life for all our families.

Mr. Speaker, this budget builds on our government's plan to return Ontario's finances to balance while protecting the gains that Ontarians have made together.

Our government believes that strong public services are essential to a strong economy.

Notre gouvernement estime que des services publics solides sont essentiels à une économie vigoureuse.

Good schools and hospitals strengthen the economy by making our people more productive and our businesses more competitive.

In turn, a strong economy creates jobs and supports education and health care.

Ultimately, this results in a better quality of life.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is how we, on this side of the House, measure progress.

That is why we have been working so diligently to build schools, hospitals and infrastructure.

One of our most important jobs is to ensure that Ontario businesses have the tools they need to build opportunities for people.

Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth is making businesses more competitive and is strengthening investment.

We cut the tax rate on new business investment in half, making Ontario a much more attractive place for businesses to invest and create jobs.

With our tax plan, a software publisher in Ontario will pay 58% less in provincial corporate and sales taxes.

For a restaurant, a small business, it's 67% less.

For a manufacturer in an economy that is growing again, it is 89%—leading North America.

This makes it easier to do business in Ontario.

Companies big and small are already responding by leading the country in new investments in equipment and technologies.

Investments by the private sector in buildings, machinery and equipment rose by 7.4% in 2010—almost a new record. It speaks to the commitment of our private sector partners in rebuilding our economy.

At the same time, research by economist Michael Smart finds that about two thirds of business savings from the harmonized sales tax had been passed through to consumers only six months after the implementation of our tax plan for jobs and growth—an important development for Ontario.

We have significantly decreased costs for employers, but there's more to do to ensure we become even more competitive.

Jobs are coming back to Ontario.

La création d'emplois reprend en Ontario.

So far, we have recovered 91% of the jobs lost during the global recession.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The opposition may laugh, but StatsCanada tells us that 84% are full-time, good-paying jobs. Shame on you for laughing at unemployment.

The United Kingdom has recovered less than 40% of the jobs lost during the recession while the United States has recovered less than 15%.

Ontario's plan for jobs and growth is working.

Le plan de l'Ontario pour stimuler la création d'emplois et la croissance fonctionne.

Gross domestic product rose by 2.8% in 2010, and all private sector forecasters expect sustained growth in the years ahead.

The average private sector forecast calls for Ontario economic growth of 2.6% in 2011 and 2.8% in 2012.

That means the economy is turning the corner.

Cela signifie que l'économie ontarienne remonte la pente.

To be prudent, our plans are based on growth assumptions below those of the private sector.

Therefore, we are projecting GDP growth of 2.4% in 2011 and 2.7% in 2012, which still means more jobs and a better economy for all Ontarians.

In our first five years as a government, we worked with Ontarians to repair and rebuild the province's neglected schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, roads and bridges.

We also eliminated the hidden \$5.5-billion deficit that we inherited from those people across the aisle, and then we balanced three budgets in a row.

We did what was necessary to put our province on a stronger competitive footing and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please come to order. As I said earlier, and I'll repeat again—and I remind the honourable members of the motto of this place: "Hear the other side." I think we all want to have the opportunity to hear the other side. You will have your opportunity to respond in due time to the budget.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did what was—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me. I just made a comment asking the House to come to order. I didn't even have the opportunity to sit down, and you already started to interject. Once again I will remind you: You will have the opportunity to respond to the budget.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did what was necessary to put our province on a stronger competitive footing and create more opportunities for more Ontarians.

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As part of the global effort to stimulate the economy during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, our government, like those everywhere, ran a deficit.

We invested in infrastructure, we created and protected hundreds of thousands of jobs, and we took steps to make our economy more competitive.

Others would have slashed services which are essential to a growing economy.

We chose to protect education.

We chose to protect health care.

We chose to protect investments in infrastructure.

Others would have cut people loose.

But we chose to invest in people.

And we choose to preserve and safeguard our quality of life, and that is what's important to working Ontarians and Ontario families.

We have modernized Ontario's tax system.

We have rebuilt Ontario's run-down electricity system.

We have kick-started our clean energy sector, we have protected the auto sector, and we are implementing full-day learning for all kindergarten students in this great province of Ontario.

These investments and choices pay dividends to the people of Ontario.

Employment is up.

Manufacturing is up.

Business investment is up. The economy is better. More people are working and have a brighter future than they did even several months ago as a result of the situation in our economy.

Another major investment we made is paying dividends to our citizens.

Ontarians worked together to help their neighbours across the province who have jobs in the auto industry.

Together, we made emergency assistance of \$4.8 billion available to General Motors and Chrysler to protect the hundreds of thousands of jobs in a key driver of Ontario's economy.

This year, auto production is up 40%, jobs have been protected, General Motors has paid back its loan, and the future is bright once again for the automotive sector here in Ontario.

This is an example of the kinds of choices Ontarians have been making.

Choices to protect and create jobs.

Choices to protect our water and food supplies.

Les choix faits pour protéger nos hôpitaux et nos écoles, qui nous sont si précieux.

So now, we're applying the same prudent, proven and responsible approach that saw us through the global recession to the challenge of the deficit.

Already, we have shown improvement from the deficit targets outlined for 2010-11 to 2012-13 in last year's budget.

In fact, deficits over these three years are projected to be \$4.7 billion less than what we projected last year.

This year's budget is projecting a deficit of \$16.7 billion for 2010-11, which is \$3 billion lower than was projected last year.

For the people of Ontario, this means we are tackling the deficit challenge aggressively.

We will accelerate our plan to improve productivity and efficiency within the government, and we will help reform the public and broader public sectors over the long term.

We will make government more streamlined and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Looking ahead, we know there continue to be risks on the horizon.

We've been talking about these risks for some time.

They include the high price of oil, the US economy and the possibility that interest rates could rise sharply.

In recent weeks, the earthquake in Japan and political volatility in North Africa and the Middle East have created more uncertainty in the global economy.

A strong Canadian dollar poses real challenges for a number of sectors in our economy, and they are responding.

Ontario exporters are becoming more innovative, and merchandise exports rose by 16% last year, supported by an increase in total manufacturing sales of over 11% in 2010, and that in the face of a dollar that has now gone above par.

Opening Ontario to economic growth and jobs while protecting the progress we have made with our schools and health care requires a commitment to prudent fiscal management and balanced budgets.

Favoriser la croissance économique et la création d'emplois en Ontario tout en préservant les avancées réalisées par les Ontariennes et Ontariens dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la santé exige une gestion financière prudente et des budgets équilibrés.

Although the economy is recovering, Ontario cannot simply rely on economic growth alone to eliminate the deficit.

Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline.

In addition to posting three balanced budgets, we have overachieved our budget targets in five of the last seven years.

The expenditure management measures introduced in the last budget produced immediate dividends. Total expense is projected to be \$3 billion lower than forecast a year ago, which demonstrates our commitment to keeping growth and spending down as we balance the budget and protect our education and health care systems.

This is the second year in a row that total expense has come in under projections.

We continue to look for ways to deliver services more efficiently and even more effectively for the people of Ontario.

The changes we have made add up to significant savings and service improvements.

This year's budget outlines nearly \$1.5 billion in new savings over three years.

We are choosing to fight the deficit while protecting education and health care.

Nous choisissons de lutter contre le déficit tout en protégeant l'éducation et les soins de santé.

These two goals can be pursued at the same time.

Doing so requires balanced and thoughtful choices.

Cette option exige des choix équilibrés et judicieux.

This approach requires lower growth rates in other program expenses.

It will require us to re-examine the way programs and services are delivered to people.

There are other choices.

Choices we reject.

Choices such as a reduction in the HST, which would require deep cuts to health care, deep cuts to education,

and would hurt Ontario families and undermine this province's competitiveness.

The choice could be made to slash benefits for our low-income people. They could let our infrastructure age or allow our universities and colleges to fall into disrepair—the same kinds of choices that were made in 1995.

Or you could lay off 33,000 teachers.

Or you could reduce the number of doctors in Ontario by 12,000.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean–Carleton, that is the second time today that you have used unparliamentary language. I ask that you withdraw the comments that you have made. If you say it again, you will be named.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Mr. Speaker, I can't withdraw. He is a liar.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I name the member Lisa MacLeod, from Nepean–Carleton, and ask that you escort her from the chamber.

Ms. MacLeod was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable members to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew is inviting a warning himself.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the warnings that were issued this morning, please remember them.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Or you could eliminate funding for 37,000 nurses.

Or you could cut funding for 80% of all the beds in long-term-care homes.

Any one of those choices would save about \$3 billion.

And \$3 billion is about the same as a 1% cut in the HST.

We reject those choices and call upon other parties in this House to reject those choices as well.

We know from past experience that across-the-board cuts do not work.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I trust that all the members are conscious of the fact that there are many viewers across the province right now. There are many individuals who are in this chamber. The nature of the decorum taking place right now does not reflect very well on all of us, and the sad part is that a minority of the members cause it and it reflects on this House as a whole.

For the third time, I will repeat, and I don't want to be up and down in the course of a budget: The loyal opposition and the third party will have time allocated to respond to the budget. Those points that they disagree with in the budget presentation from the Ministry of Finance—they will have the opportunity to make those

points. Let's be respectful. Allow the Minister of Finance to finish his budget speech.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe North.

Allow the finance minister to finish his speech. You will have the opportunity to talk to your local media, talk to the media and deliver your comments.

Interjection.

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

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We choose, instead, what Ontarians would have us do: We choose to protect jobs, we choose to protect our vital public services, and we choose to protect our economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, just as people and families do, governments must live within their means.

Tout comme les familles et les particuliers, les gouvernements doivent vivre selon leurs moyens.

To help protect education and health care while also eliminating the deficit, we know that the status quo is not an option.

We will continue to reform the way government delivers services to people.

We will build on our track record of reform.

The 2011 budget identifies over 20 new initiatives to drive change and reform in public service delivery, including:

- instructing major agencies to deliver savings of \$200 million by 2013–14;

- reducing the size of the Ontario public service by an additional 1,500 positions between April 2012 and March 2014. This comes on top of the reduction of about 3,400 positions by March 2012 that was announced in the 2009 budget;

- closing less efficient jails across Ontario and moving inmates to newer, more efficient jails to deliver better value to taxpayers and to keep our streets safer; and

- reducing funding for executives at hospitals and universities and other government agencies.

We will explore new ways to export and create value from Ontario's excellence in delivering those public services that are recognized as being the best in the world.

We will also look to determine whether the current ServiceOntario model delivers the best value and service to people.

In addition to these shorter-term initiatives, the government will establish the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, which would be chaired by Don Drummond. The commission will advise on more fundamental reforms: changes that will help protect health care and education over the long term, while accelerating the elimination of the deficit.

In my pre-budget consultations this year, I participated in telephone town halls—directly reaching out to more than 120,000 people across the province.

I heard from moms and dads who want to know that their kids have a bright future.

I heard from working people who want to know that jobs are being created—good, high-paying jobs.

I heard from seniors, who told me that they worked hard to ensure a better tomorrow for themselves, for their children and for their grandchildren.

They want to make sure that the savings are there for them when tomorrow becomes today.

People told me they want the governments they elect to give them the tools they need to prosper.

People told me they want the governments they elect to continue to improve the way they do business.

To reform the way they do things—essentially, to make government work even better.

Les gens m'ont dit souhaiter que les gouvernements élus continuent d'améliorer leur façon de se livrer à leurs activités.

De réformer leur façon de faire les choses — essentiellement, de faire encore mieux fonctionner le gouvernement.

Governments are elected to serve the needs of the people they are privileged to represent.

We—as a government—are motivated by the trust the people of Ontario have placed in us.

We are driven by our obligation and responsibility to deliver.

To build a better future, we must invest in each other—in people and in partnerships.

The McGuinty government will continue to partner with business to create the right conditions for jobs and growth.

Over the next several weeks, Ontario and several private sector partners will be announcing new investments of over \$1.3 billion, including nearly \$175 million from the province, creating more than 2,100 new jobs and retaining a further 7,800 jobs right here in Ontario.

We are taking steps to protect jobs on our farms.

Now, more than ever, Ontario needs a strong farming sector.

Volatility in commodity markets can make it difficult for farmers to manage their business risks.

I am pleased to announce the extension of the current risk management program for grain and oilseed farmers.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government will also implement new risk management programs for the cattle, hog, sheep and veal sectors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham. Member from Thornhill.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Timmins–James Bay.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the second time, member. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to announce that we will also implement a self-directed risk management program for the edible horticulture sector; that is, the fruit and vegetable sector in our economy.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Peterborough.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The cost of these programs will be shared between the Ontario government and farmers.

Ontario strongly encourages the federal government to partner with both the province and farmers. I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, who put all the effort into this to make it a reality. Unfortunately, the federal government kept saying no, and I hope people in rural Ontario will ask candidates of all political parties to do the right thing and stand up for Ontario's family farms; to build a better rural Ontario and a better future for all of our people.

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These programs are innovative.

Risk management programs provide bankability, stability and predictability for Ontario's farmers.

The McGuinty government will continue to invest in people and job creation.

Just as we modernized Ontario's tax system to help our businesses compete in the global economy, we cut personal income taxes and introduced a wide variety of tax credits and benefits that give money back to people.

With the changes we've made, people, on average, have more money in their pockets.

In fact, more than two thirds of households—those with incomes of \$90,000 or less—have more money in their pockets.

With the changes we have made, 86% of senior households have more money in their pockets.

Working together, we are building a stronger Ontario for everyone.

An Ontario that cares for its people and its families.

An Ontario that helps businesses expand and create jobs.

An Ontario that is alive with opportunity for all who live here and are proud to call this great province home.

We are also helping Ontarians get further ahead through ongoing investments in post-secondary education.

Des experts affirment que 70 % des emplois de l'avenir exigeront une éducation postsecondaire.

So we want our workers to be the smartest, most capable and creative workers anywhere.

We want them to create the innovative products and services that the world wants to buy.

Ontario has a higher post-secondary attainment rate than any OECD country.

We want 70% of our people to go to college and university. It was only 56% in 2002.

Our commitment is that no keen and qualified Ontario student will be turned away for lack of space on our part or lack of money on his or her part.

There will be room, and there will be support.

That's why the 2011 budget announces additional funding that will create places for more than 60,000 additional college and university students by 2015–16.

Through one of the most generous student financial support programs in the country, we are also helping to keep education affordable.

We've known for a long time that a strong start in school makes for a strong finish.

Si nos enfants ont un bon départ, ils auront de meilleures chances de finir leurs études secondaires, d'obtenir un diplôme collégial ou universitaire, de suivre un programme d'apprentissage, de jouir d'une bonne qualité de vie et de contribuer à l'édification d'un Ontario plus fort.

That is why we chose to introduce full-day kindergarten last September.

It is the first program of its kind in North America.

This year, full-day kindergarten is available in nearly 600 schools for up to 35,000 children.

In September 2011, it will be available in an additional 200 schools, benefiting up to 50,000 children.

The program will be fully in place in September 2014, benefiting some 247,000 Ontario children.

Full-day kindergarten helps moms and dads too—saving them both time and money and making their own workdays easier and more productive.

Our government has chosen to strengthen our publicly funded education system—from kindergarten to graduate school—because we believe building education is more than sound social policy.

It is essential economic policy.

To compete with the best in the world and win, we also need a healthy workforce.

A strong, public health care system gives our workers and our businesses a real competitive advantage, which is why we chose to strengthen it.

Étant donné qu'un système de santé public vigoureux donne à nos travailleurs et à nos entreprises un avantage concurrentiel tangible, nous avons choisi de le renforcer.

We have built 13 new hospitals and five more are under construction.

We have added more than 10,000 more nurses.

And we have added close to 3,000 more doctors.

We have gone from zero to 200 family health teams, serving three million patients.

In another first for Canada, we now have nurse practitioner-led clinics.

Today, 94% of all Ontarians have a family doctor.

That is 1.2 million people more than were covered in 2003.

Hospital wait times are coming down. Ontario has the shortest wait times in Canada.

Together with Ontarians, we have chosen to build a strong public health care system that helps care for our families, improves our quality of life and increases our competitiveness.

We choose to keep protecting and improving our quality of life.

That's why the 2011 budget announces additional funding of \$15 million over three years to provide 90,000 more breast cancer screening exams, expanding current screening to reach more women who are at high risk. I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his advocacy on this issue.

Mental health and addiction problems affect people during many stages of life.

One out of five Ontarians will experience some form of mental illness.

It touches all of our families.

We can and we will do more to help.

We are introducing a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy.

At the outset, our focus will be on children and youth.

By 2013-14, funding to support the strategy will grow to \$93 million per year.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Last year members of an all-party committee worked together and tirelessly, hearing from people across the province about mental health. The committee's report is a great example of how all parties can work together to produce recommendations that led to today's meaningful results. I want to congratulate all members of the committee, members of the Conservative caucus, members of the NDP caucus and members of the Liberal caucus for their outstanding work.

Beginning in April, more pharmacy services and support will be available to people covered under the Ontario drug benefit program, including seniors.

That means more people will get the hands-on support and follow-up help they need.

We know that Ontarians want their federal and provincial governments to work together to improve health care.

They want us to focus relentlessly on improvements to our publicly funded health care system.

And they want us to ensure that Ottawa pays its share of our most important national program.

That is what Ontarians accomplished together when the last deal was signed in 2004.

So we will continue to ensure that Ontario is treated fairly when the health accord comes up for renewal later this year and early next year.

The choices that we have made to build a stronger economy and protect our vital services have been guided by the facts.

The fact is, our economy is growing.

Fait: les entreprises investissent et créent des emplois.

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The fact is, more and more people who lost their jobs during the recession are now finding work.

Ontario is turning the corner to a better tomorrow.

L'Ontario remonte la pente vers un avenir meilleur.

Our plan to help Ontarians through the recession and build for the future is working.

Those are the facts.

Now we need to face another fact confronting all governments—the reality of slower global economic growth and a deficit.

We need to move forward by making the same kinds of prudent, balanced choices we have made in the past.

So I am introducing a budget that supports job creation.

It will continue the necessary work we have already undertaken to eliminate the deficit.

At the same time, we choose to protect education.

We are choosing to protect our children's schools and make room for all four- and five-year-olds in full-day kindergarten. It is not a frill.

We will protect our economy and our workers by making room for the growing number of young Ontarians who are choosing a post-secondary education.

We will continue to build a strong health care system for our seniors, our young people and all of our families.

We will continue to make the same kinds of choices that Ontarians are making for themselves.

We will continue tackling the deficit while we protect the services that people rely on.

The world faces challenges here at home and around the globe. The people of Japan are showing resilience as they recover from that horrible tragedy.

Our armed forces who are serving around the world are showing their ability to overcome the challenges they confront every day.

Back here at home, the people of Ontario are pulling together as the province is turning the corner, and we will continue to build a stronger Ontario.

I am proud of the choices we are making and proud of our plan.

I know I speak for all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that we are more passionate about building that future today than we have ever been.

We are delivering a plan that leads to real progress, progress with a purpose, progress that offers a better tomorrow and a great future for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you very much.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move adjournment of the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I request that the House revert to introduction of bills.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BETTER TOMORROW
FOR ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2011
LOI DE 2011 SUR DES LENDEMAINS
MEILLEURS POUR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 173, An Act respecting 2011 Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 173, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires de 2011, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

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

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On division, carried.

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

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

I'd just like to take this opportunity to say, they almost did it. They were 0.25 seconds away: 20.6 seconds. Congratulations, though.

There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1645.

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 Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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 Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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 and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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 / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Oakville Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River 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) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex 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) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldeep (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge 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) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan 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) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans 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) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, 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, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
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 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, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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 the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
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	
Vacant	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Peter Fonseca
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
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Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Helena Jaczek
Norm Miller, Leeanna Pendergast
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
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Donna H. Cansfield, Aileen Carroll, P.C.
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Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
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Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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des comptes publics**

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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
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Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX
Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité
spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le
London Stock Exchange Group**

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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